

# Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

*A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world*

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## Mali-France tensions and anti-UK protests in the Virgin Islands

Anu Maria and Padmashree Anandhan



UK's latest proposal to impose direct rule has provoked protests among the people of the British Virgin Islands. (Image Source: <https://caribbean.loopnews.com>)

## Mali terminates defence accord with France over security violations

### In the news

On 3 May, the Mali government announced the termination of defence ties with France, condemning multiple violations of its sovereignty by the French troops. In a statement, the military spokesperson, colonel Abdoulaye Maiga said: "For some time now, the government of the Republic of Mali notes with regret a profound deterioration in military cooperation with France." The accords that Mali ended were the framework for France's intervention in Mali, which was signed on 1 August 2014 to fight against Islamist militancy.

He cited multiple instances of French forces violating the country's air space. He also referred to France's decision on 3 June 2021 to end the joint military operation and on 17 February 2022 to withdraw its troops. A French foreign ministry spokesperson called the junta's decision

"unjustified". He said: "France considers that this decision is unjustified and absolutely contests any violation of the bilateral legal framework".

The announcement came following the Mali junta accused the French army of "spying" and violating its airspace after Paris released drone footage of mass burial by "Russian mercenaries" at a former French military base. With the end of the agreement, France and European forces can no longer enter and move freely within the country.

### Issues at large

First, Mali-France defence ties. France's defence ties with Mali began in January 2013 as Operation Serval, helping the government in their fight to clear Islamic militants from their urban stronghold in northern Mali. Turning into a prolonged conflict, Operation Serval was transformed to Operation Barkhane in August 2014. The objective was to provide continued counterterrorism support to the G5 Sahel member states. Approximately, 2,400 of France's 4,300 troops deployed in Sahel were stationed in Mali scattered between the large base at Gao, others at Kidal, Timbuktu, Tessalit and Gossi. However, in February, France withdrew its troops from Mali following the breakdown of its relations with the country.

Second, growing tensions between France and Mali. Tensions between France and the military government increased since the coup in August 2020, reaching their peak with the second coup in May 2021. The relationship worsened as the junta resisted international pressure to oblige at the given time, returning to a democratic civilian rule. Besides, France opposed the junta's efforts to negotiate peace with the jihadist groups. Whereas Mali publicly accused France of training "terrorist groups" in the region and expelled the French ambassador. The growing presence of the Kremlin-linked security firm Wagner of deploying in Mali fuelled the tensions. These major disagreements, coupled with alleged abuses by the French troops, the failure of Operation Barkhane with further deterioration of the security situation in Sahel, France, witnessed a popular drawback.

Third, Russian involvement. The military junta has built closer links with Russia after its relations severed with the West, particularly France. Russia's presence in Mali positions itself to fill the power vacuum as French and European forces withdraw. Nearly 1000 Russian officials and instructors from the mercenary, the Wagner group, are deployed. The government claims that the Russians are military instructors helping to restore order. However, the United Nations has accused the Wagner of human rights violations, including indiscriminate killing alongside the regional forces. The suspected role of Russian mercenaries participating in an operation with Mali's army in March, in which about 300 civilians were allegedly killed over five days has raised concerns.

### In perspective

First, the end of a long term relationship points to France's reluctance towards Mali's governance crisis, despite the rhetoric calling for democratization and Mali's resistance towards France's overwhelmingly militarized approach and involvement in its internal affairs.

Second, taking advantage of widespread anti-French sentiments and lack of trust in state institutions, the transitional military government seems to have captured public support that it is better capable than France and democratically elected officials.

Third, for Mali, the Russian involvement introduces a partner capable of fighting the jihadists without binding to the Western demands to respect human rights and pursue democratic

governance. The new partnership, not concerned itself with trivialities like democracy, is likely to make the democratic transition difficult.

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## The Virgin Islands: Protests against a direct rule by the UK

### In the news

On 28 April, the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) reported the arrest of the premier of the British Virgin Islands in Miami under the suspect of money laundering and scheme to import drugs. Following the arrest, a report was released on 29 April by the governor, Queen Elizabeth's representative, John Rankin, which stated that millions of dollars of state funds were found to be mishandled by the politicians. Apart from this it also found dishonesty with regards to sale of public property and exploitation of appointments. It said: "the corruption, abuse of office, and other serious dishonesty," was found in the country's governance.

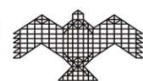
On 29 April, the report mandated for the suspension of the constitution, dissolution of the government and proposed for direct ruling of the British Virgin Islands from the UK. According to Rankin: "He notes that the people of the BVI deserve better, and that the UK government owes them an obligation to protect them from such abuses and assist them to achieve their aspirations for self-government as a modern democratic state." On the same the UK foreign secretary Liz Truss said: "shows clearly that substantial legislative and constitutional change is required."

On 2 May, an investigation was launched, which was led by the UK judge Sir Gary Hickinbottom. After looking into the case of corruption, he recommended for the Island to be administered from London for next two years.

On 3 May, the proposal from UK to impose a direct rule, triggered demonstrations outside the Government House. The rejection comes due to the colonial link of the region and the UK. The slogans held by the protestors said: "No to British rule, and no going back to chains." One of the protestor voiced out: "How can you speak for us if you have not had a conversation with us, the people? It is possible for us to condemn the actions of corrupt leaders and also believe that we can be authorities on good governance as well."

### Issues at large

First, the Island's link with the UK. The link between England and the British Virgin Islands dates back to 1672 before signing of the Treaty of Westminster. Where the British took control of the Islands from the Dutch, which slowly led to slavery. The increase in the slaves, led to mass revolts resulting in abolition of slavery and end to British colonialism. Later, the Island was brought under new constitution, followed by first elections in 1967, which established the self-governance to a limited extent and further expanded in 2007. Since then, the island territories came under a single realm of the Crown. These Islands are majorly operated for offshore financial reasons and each of overseas territories constitutional status differs as per the British Nationality Act 1981. A white paper on the constitutional position released on 2012 stated: "powers are devolved to the elected governments of the Territories to the maximum extent possible consistent with the UK retaining those powers necessary to discharge its sovereign responsibilities."



Second, the report by the UK government. The UK published the Hickinbottom report found the principles of good governance, transparency, and rule of law was ignored. It also included gaining contract, grants of assistance, disposing of Crown land, and misuse of enormous amount of public money. It also found evidence of "chronic lack of governance," dishonesty, and gross deficiencies. It posed four recommendations based on the evidence: suspension of parts of the constitution, which looks into the assignment of elected representatives; carrying out a constitutional review through setting up a commission to put the mechanisms back in place; to bring transparency in government decisions for good governance; and an "independent and impartial" auditing in areas of decision making and expenditure.

Third, the response of the Islanders. At the state level, the acting premier has raised concerns about UK's plan to impose direct rule. This means there will be no more elected representatives to represent the people and territory. With no elected representative brings the challenge of understanding and bringing reforms for the benefit of the public. At the spiritual level, the Baptists have taken the front in organizing the protests, bringing the religious unity amongst the people to go against UK's proposal. At the civilian level, people gathered to protest against removing their rights to choose their representative. They demand a new elected leader and elections to take place.

#### In perspective

The question of democracy vs dictatorship. The Island territories were never granted complete self-governance. The constitution signed in 2007 to self-govern contains the provisions that allow the UK to take over in circumstances of power manipulation, resource exploitation, and bad governance. Although the direct rule is seen as an oppressive act by the people, UK's colonial link ensured to install democracy in the Island. This can be observed in the Turks and Caicos Islands case, where the direct rule was imposed over evidence of corruption in 2009. After a three-year term, the islanders were allowed to rule back and later in 2015, a new parliament was set up. The British Virgin Islands might go through the same process, which will benefit the lifestyle of people in the long term.

## Also, from around the world

By Padmashree Anandhan, Lavanya Ravi, Sruthi Sadhasivam

#### East and Southeast Asia

##### **China: UN representative urge for development in developing countries**

On 27 April, in a General Assembly meeting held on peacebuilding finance, deputy permanent representative of China to the UN, Dai Bing highlighted the need for sustainable development for longer peace and stressed on the development of those countries involved in the peacebuilding process. To increase the attention towards sustainable development, Bing urged for directing of resources in "poverty eradication, infrastructure, education, health, and vocational skills training." Apart from this he asked the contributors to take prime responsibility in boosting developing countries to grow faster.

##### **China: UK Foreign Secretary warns to follow international norms**

On 28 April, UK foreign secretary, Liz Truss, keeping the issue of Taiwan on the front warned China to adhere to the international norms. Recalling the economic hardship faced by Russia post invading Ukraine, she signalled that China would face a similar situation. The UK also sees soft power and strategic alliances as ways to keep China away from Taiwan.



Amongst the developing countries, China is observed to be the rising power in terms of military and economy. On the same Truss said: "They will not continue to rise if they do not play by the rules. China needs trade with the G7. We (the Group of Seven) represent around half of the global economy. And we have choices." In response, Taiwan's Foreign Ministry appreciated the remarks made by Truss and said that Taiwan would continue to expand its cooperation with the UK.

#### China: Senior colonel opposes the sailing of the US warship

On 26 April, the US announced the sailing of its navy guided-missile destroyer into the Taiwan Strait, as a showcase of US's efforts toward free Indo-Pacific. On 27 April, in response, China's senior colonel Shi Yi called the move as "publicly hyped." He remarked that the moves by the US sent "wrong signals" which undermines the security of Taiwan Strait. He added: "We will by no means allow--and strongly oppose--any interference by exterior forces."

#### Hong Kong: Jail term increased for student found violating detention

On 29 April, under the national security law, the Hong Kong court increased the jail term on student Lui Sai-yu by five years who was previously under detention for posting on Telegram calling for independence from China. Lui was charged with "inciting session" in 2021 and has been under detention since September 2020. After finding "extendable police baton, two military knives and protective gear," by the police in recent raids have led to increasing in the jail term from three years and eight months to five years.

#### Hong Kong: Press freedom rank fell by 68 ranks

On 3 May, In the Reporters Without Borders 2022 World Press Freedom Index, the Asian financial center ranked 148, which was down by 68 ranks. The reason behind the fall in rank of Hong Kong's media was due to shutdown of its two independent news outlets, Apple Daily and Stand News. As per the index, since 1997 many media organizations had come under the control of China's government.

#### Malaysia: ASEAN countries asked to associate with Myanmar's NUG

On 4 May, Malaysian foreign minister Saifuddin Abdullah presented a proposal urging the other ASEAN countries to associate with the National Unity Government (NUG) of Myanmar. The minister asked the countries to follow Malaysia's suit and support his request for the bloc to engage with the NUG, especially on matters of humanitarian relief. Myanmar's foreign ministry called this move "irresponsible and reckless" and that this proposal would cause unrest in their country. In response, the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights chairman, Charles Santiago, asked the countries to neglect the junta's opinion on this matter.

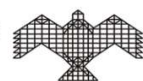
#### Myanmar: Aung San Suu Kyi imprisoned for five years prison sentence

On 27 April, Myanmar court alleged Aung San Suu Kyi for engaging in bribery of USD 600,000 cash and goldbars. Aung San Suu Kyi who has been under house arrest since 2021 was found guilty under corruption. The court gave a verdict imprisoning her for five years, if all the charges are taken into consideration, Suu Kyi will be sentenced for more than 190 years.

#### South Asia

#### Sri Lanka: Alleged corruption stains the construction of Hambantota General Hospital

On 2 May, ABC Media uncovered corruption and illegal dealings in a "personal protective equipment contract" of the Australian medical company during the construction of a hospital in Hambantota. Canberra-based Aspen Medical Company was put under investigation for



alleged money laundering in relation to the construction of Hambantota General Hospital in Sri Lanka. Aspen's first transaction of USD 2.1 million was with Sabre Vision Holding, a British Virgin Island registered company, owned by Nimal Perera of Sri Lanka who is believed to be closely related to the Rajapaksa. Aspen Medical has so far denied any investigative requests from a legal entity so far but is open to any such inquiry.

#### **Sri Lanka: More financial assistance from India to meet the crisis**

On 3 May, the Minister of power put forward a proposal to import fuel from India using a short-term loan worth USD 200 million. Sri Lanka's Cabinet approved the proposal to grant the contract to Indian Oil Corporation. Since 2022, India has provided financial assistance to Sri Lanka in various lines of credit to help mitigate the economic crisis. Recently it also extended a "currency swap" worth USD 400 million from April to July. Apart from this India has also given a credit line worth a billion dollar for essential commodities and has supported in deferring repayment of USD 1 billion from the Asian Clearing Union.

#### **India: Sri Lankan fishermen detained for illegal fishing**

On 2 May, six fishermen from Sri Lanka were held by the Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) for crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). The fishermen were caught with their fishing boat Takeshi on the Indian side of the IMBL by the ICGS Ameya. The ICGS has also found Takeshi in violation of the Maritime Zones of India (Regulation of Fishing by Foreign Vessels) Act, 1981, which forbids fishermen from other countries to fish in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone. For further investigation, the fishermen along with their boat are now under the custody of Nagappattinam Marine Police Station.

#### **India: Violence in Patiala over the anti-Khalistan March**

On 29 April, three people were injured as violence broke out in Patiala during an anti-Khalistan march. Following the clash between two groups, three top police officers were removed by the Punjab government owing to their inability to pacify the situation. Mobile internet and SMS services were also ceased temporarily by the government. Patiala Police have so far registered six FIRs and arrested three people related to the violence.

#### **India: 150th rank in World Press Freedom Index**

On 3 May, India dropped another eight ranks to 150th in the World Press Freedom Index report released by Reporters Sans Frontières (Reporters Without Borders). The report released on World Press Freedom Day showed how the Indian neighbours except for Nepal further degraded in ranking in the tally. In the report Pakistan was placed at 157th position, Sri Lanka at 146th, Bangladesh at 162nd, and Myanmar at the 176th position. Press Club of India responded to the report stating how the journalists in the country were being put in chains through flimsy reasons and draconian laws that threaten their freedom to report the truth.

#### **Central Asia, Middle East and Africa**

##### **Kazakhstan: President approves a bill to cease social media platforms**

On 3 May, the Kazakh president, Qasym-Zhomart Toqaev signed a bill that would enable the government to shut down social media outlets to protect children from cyberbullying. The law mandates the social-media networks and messaging services to register in Kazakhstan and requires them to establish offices to acquire permission to operate in the region. The government authorities have been accused of deliberately using obscure language in the legislation to suppress dissent. The Freedom House, in terms of internet freedom in the world, accorded a 'not free' status to the country. The country witnessed several rallies opposing the legislation.

### Armenia: Normalises ties with Turkey

On 3 May, Armenia and Turkey decided to normalize their relations without conditions. In a statement, Armenia's foreign ministry said: "Possible steps to reach tangible process in that matter were discussed. The sides confirmed their readiness to carry out the process further without preliminary conditions." The ministry believes that the progress in the relationship would foster the reopening of their shared border. Armenian and Turkish envoys, Ruben Rubinian and Serdar Kilic committed to the joint goal of reaching complete supervision of relations between the two countries.

### Armenia: Protests against concessions over Nagorno-Karabakh

On 1 May, thousands rallied in the Armenian capital, Yerevan's central Square of France to caution the government regarding any compromises over Karabakh to Azerbaijan. The parliament vice speaker and opposition leader, Ishkhan Sagatelian, said: "Any political status of Karabakh within Azerbaijan is unacceptable to us. Pashinian has betrayed people's trust and must go." He called all civilians to strike and asked students to not attend their classes. The opposition comes in the wake of Pashinian's public statement accepting the provisions of the draft bilateral peace treaty discussed during the Brussels talks.

### Iraq: Yazidis flee the violence in the Sinjar region

On 3 May, the Yazidi minority group in Northern Iraq was recorded fleeing in mass numbers. The recent violence between the Yazidi Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS) and the Iraqi army in the region of Sinjar has resulted in the deaths of 12 Yazidis and one Iraqi soldier. Till now 710 families or 4083 people have been displaced and have received asylum in the Dohuk province of Kurdistan. Yazidi's minister Mahma Khalilm said: "the presence of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Sinjar was attacking the Iraqi army and the citizens by using them as human shields". The YBS which recently aligned itself to the Kurdish Democratic Party in Iraq's Parliament aims to protect the region from ISIS and the PKK. It demands for an autonomous Kurdish territory in Northern Iraq.

### Iraq: Refinery in Erbil catches fire after a missile attack

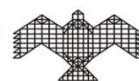
On 2 May, a missile attack targeted the KAR oil refinery in the Erbil region of Iraq. Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) stated "six missiles landed on the outer fence of the refinery and the missiles were fired from the town of Bartella in the neighbouring province of Nineveh". The missiles didn't cause any casualties despite landing in the region's most populated city. A previous attack on the same refinery was witnessed on 6 April. Iraq's prime minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi said it was a "cowardly attack" and the army will pursue the perpetrators.

### Syria: ISIL attack in iftar gathering kills seven

On 25 April, ISIL gunmen fired on an iftar gathering at Deir Az Zor province and killed seven people and wounded four. Among the deceased was the former spokesperson of the Syrian Democratic Forces, Nouri Hamish. The gathering was hosted at his house in the town of Abu Khashab. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights noted ISIL attacks in Syria to have increased with 23 attacks carried out in the last 11 days.

### Qatar: Three workers die while constructing FIFA stadiums

On 2 May, Qatar witnessed the death of three workers in the construction process of football stadiums. At the global conference of Milken Institute in Los Angeles, FIFA president Gianni Infantino was asked if FIFA would make "any sort of commitment" to help the families of workers who in Qatar. Infantino evaded the question and stated: "migrant workers gain pride from hard work; thanks to FIFA, thanks to football, we have been able to address the status of all the 1.5 million workers working in Qatar". The officials of Qatar deny the deaths reported



of migrant workers. Qatar has introduced reforms in its employment laws after becoming the FIFA host.

#### **Somalia: Al-Shabaab attacks African Union troops and kill three**

On 31 April, Al-Shabaab terrorist group attacked the African Union peacekeeping mission in the Shabelle region in central Somalia. Three civilians died and five others were injured in the violence. Witnesses noted that it was a predawn attack and that the group had used two helicopters with gunfire targeting the military base in El Baraf. It took complete control of the base after defeating the peacekeeping forces. So far, the group has been targeting to overthrow the government and impose its interpretation of Islamic Sharia law on the Somali people.

#### **Central African Republic: Wagner group involved in atrocities against civilians**

On 31 April, a report released by Human Rights Watch stated that Russian mercenaries, especially the Wagner Group has been involved in torture and killing of civilians in the Central African Republic over the last three years. Last year, 12 unarmed men were killed at a roadblock by mercenaries. Wagner Group was also implicated in the massacre of 300-500 civilians in central Mali in late March. The role of Russian military contractors in Africa is on an unprecedented rise. Russia is aiming to expand its political influence to gain more revenue from Africa's natural resources by utilizing mercenaries.

#### **Senegal: UN secretary-general warns of triple crisis in Africa**

On 1 May, UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres visited Senegal. In a meeting with Senegal's president Macky Sall, he discussed the impact of the Ukraine war on Africa. The Ukraine war has been driving up food prices all over the world and it could push the people of Africa into extreme hunger leading to political instability and violence. The Ukraine war adds another dimension to the already existing crises of climate change, covid-19 pandemic and ethnic conflicts in Africa, especially the Sahel region. Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance (GCRG) has termed this phenomenon a 'cascading crisis.' The UN estimates a quarter of a billion people could be pushed into extreme poverty this year because of the Ukraine war.

#### Europe and the Americas

##### **Spain: Pegasus spyware detected in the prime minister's phone**

On 2 May, Reuters reported that the mobile phones of Spanish prime minister Pedro Sanchez and defence minister Margarita Robles were infected with the Pegasus spyware. According to the government minister for the presidency Felix Bolanos said, the spyware was detected in May 2022 and at least one data leak had occurred. It is suspected to be the work of external non-official bodies. The High court has taken charge of the case. This issue may have a link with the members of the Catalan separatist movement, who were also the targets of Pegasus. The EU has called for a ban on Pegasus as there were allegations of it being abused to spy on rights activists, journalists and politicians.

##### **Ukraine: Attacks on and evacuations from Mariupol**

On 30 April, president spoke about how around 100 people have been evacuated from the region safely. This has been possible because there were two days of ceasefire in the region. The evacuees will be brought to Zaporizhzhia. This news has been confirmed by the UN and the Red Cross who are also helping in coordinating the evacuation efforts. On 01 April, Ukraine said that another round of evacuation might be possible under the given circumstances. They advised the people seeking evacuation to gather at the meeting point at 1600 hrs. A Reuters photographer reported that 14 more people from Mariupol arrived at a temporary accommodation centre, after leaving the Azovstal steel plant region.



### Russia: Defence Ministry reports to have hit fuel depots in Ukraine

On 30 April, Russia's defence ministry said that four of their missiles have hit ammunition and fuel depots in Ukraine. They also mentioned that their artillery units had hit 389 Ukrainian targets overnight, which included 35 control points, 15 arms and ammunition depots, and several concentrations of Ukraine's troops and equipment. In an online post, the ministry also said that an air force strike has killed 200 of Ukraine's troops and destroyed 23 armoured vehicles. On 01 May, Russia's defence ministry provided an update about successfully striking a depot stocked with weapons supplied to Ukraine by the United States and European countries.

### Serbia: Showcases its Chinese and Russian imported weaponry

On 30 April, Serbia displayed the weapons at the Batajnica military airfield near Belgrade. Serbia imported defence systems from Russia, China, the US and France. It showed off its defence to the media and the public. Even though Serbia wants to join NATO, they also have a long relationship with Russia. Most of the defence system that Serbia uses now is that of ex-Soviet technology. Most of the European nations especially Germany warned Serbia to align its interests with the EU if Serbia wants to become its member. Serbia is seen showing signs of distancing itself from Russia and China by buying weaponry from the UK and France.

### France and Germany: May Day demonstrations held across Europe turns violent

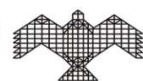
On 1 May, traditional May Day demonstrations were held across Europe, while France and Germany witnessed political and violent protests. On the eve of the peaceful March in France, a small group of people dressed in black, called "black bloc" anarchists, shattered windows of businesses and attacked cash dispensers while lighting dumpsters on fire. Simultaneously, a feminist march, known as Walpurgisnacht, started their rallies in Berlin, with a group of 2,500 marching to "take back the night." According to the organizers, the rally's purpose was to reclaim the night for women, lesbians, intersex, and transgender people. Thousands more took to the streets around the country to protest various issues, including the conflict in Ukraine, the rising cost of living, workers' rights, rental regulations, and plans to increase military spending substantially.

### Poland: 240 soviet model tanks to Ukraine

On 29 April, Poland sent 240 soviet styled tanks to Ukraine which will help last for two tank brigades. Apart from this T-72 tanks were provided along with self-propelled howitzers, grad rocket launchers and other weaponry from Poland. The continued supply heavy equipment by Poland shows the increase in pace to help out Ukraine. Other European countries, Czech Republic, Germany, and US has also sent its T-72 tanks, 50 Flakpanzer Gepard anti-aircraft cannon tanks and USD 33 billion as a military aid.

### Europe: EU's border agency accused of illegal pushbacks of asylum seekers

On 28 April, a new investigation revealed that the EU's border and coast guard agency- Frontex, was involved in the illegal pushback of 957 asylum seekers in the Aegean Sea. The investigation was jointly led by Lighthouse Reports, Der Spiegel, SRF, Republik, and Le Monde. The agency's internal incident report database, Jora, revealed to have logged observations of asylum seeker pushbacks in the Aegean Sea between March 2020 and September 2021. Authorities classified these incidents as "prevention of departure." This is defined in the Frontex standards as an occurrence in which migrants from non-European countries are intercepted in its territorial seas and are returned to their point of origin.



### Russia: Ukraine prepare to impose war crime charges on military personnel

On 26 April, Ukraine's prosecutor general's office said that they were preparing to bring war crimes charges against at least seven Russian military personnel. Among them are also three pilots suspected of bombing civilian settlements in the Sumy and Kharkiv regions. They said that the two of the other individuals include two rocket launcher operators, who allegedly shelled settlements in the Kharkiv region and two army servicemen who are suspected of murdering a Kharkiv resident and raping his wife. The prosecutor's office also said that these individuals have been notified of the investigations and some were being held as captive, while for others charges were being prepared in absentia.

### Moldova: Security Council meet to look into recent blasts

On 26 April, Moldova's president, Maia Sandu held a meeting with the Supreme Security Council to discuss on the blasts that occurred in Transnistria. Two explosions were observed to have attacked with "rocket-propelled grenades." Post the fall of the Soviet, Transnistria has remained independent but has not gained any international recognition. As reported in RIA, Transnistria had found three infiltrators from Ukraine on the recent grenade attack in security headquarters. It named the act as "terrorist act," and observed it as a way to instigate the country to launch war in the Ukraine conflict. On the same, Sandu said: "internal differences between various groups in Transnistria that have an interest in destabilizing the situation."

### The US: LinkedIn agrees to settle on wage discrimination charges

On 3 May, the career networking service LinkedIn agreed to pay USD 1.8 million in back wages to settle a gender discrimination lawsuit brought by US labour investigators. The company was accused of systemic pay discrimination in comparable jobs that affected nearly 700 women from 2015 to 2017. The case was brought to light through a routine evaluation by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, however, LinkedIn denied the alleged discrimination. In a statement, it said: "while we have agreed to settle this matter, we do not agree with the government's claims; LinkedIn pays and has paid its employees fairly and equitably when comparing similar work."

### The US: Military reports fatal helicopter crash last year caused by mechanical failure

On 3 May, a command investigation last month reported a new development in last year's deadly naval helicopter crash off the coast of Southern California. The aircraft belonged to the Navy's Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron Eight. The military report claimed the crash that killed five crew members was caused by mechanical failure and not pilot error as suggested by initial investigations. A damper hose failed on the MH-60S Seahawk during flight, which caused the aircraft to crash on an aircraft carrier and fall into the sea. In effect, five sailors on the US Abraham Lincoln were injured.

### The US: Uproar caused due to Supreme Court ruling of overturning abortion law

On 3 May, a leaked document labelled "First Draft" written by Justice Samuel Alito called the historic 1973 Roe v Wade ruling that legalized abortion across the US, inherently wrong. The leak has stirred public anticipation suggesting 36 million US women losing their legal rights to abortion if the ruling is struck down. The ruling was brought to light as Mississippi had filed to overturn the ruling with the final decision expected in late June or July. Subsequently, this incident has renewed the debate between pro and anti-abortion activists, with several states already passing trigger laws that would ban abortion if the ruling is struck down. President Biden and Vice President Harris have called out the discriminatory move as an attack on the rights of the individual with broader implications, if the decision of the court stays.

### Latin America: Joint report states high Covid-19 mortality rates triggered by inequality

On 27 April, a report by Amnesty International and the Centre for Economic and Social Rights found that the high levels of mortality rate in Latin America and the Caribbean during the pandemic were a consequence of the rampant inequality in the region. Since 2020 up to February this year, more than 1.6 million people have died due to covid related causes, accounting to one-third of global cases. The report suggested low levels of public health expenditure, social security and taxes as the core reasons for the disproportionate numbers. Prosperous countries like Chile were urged to increase public spending to reform the dismal conditions.

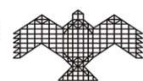
### Latin America: Lower economic growth expected due to the Ukrainian war

On 29 April, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) predicted low levels of economic growth for the region as a result of the war in Ukraine. The UN-ECLAC is a regional commission to encourages economic cooperation. The report stated a 1.8 per cent growth for this year against the initial January forecast of 2.1 per cent which was adjusted due to factors such as heightened inflation, increasing financial volatility and costs. High rates of inflation and higher unemployment rates are anticipated for the rest of the year.

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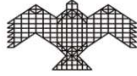
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### About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

The International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI), initiated in 2018 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), is a part of the Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme at the School of Conflict and Security Studies.

IPRI undertakes research on various issues relating to peace with special emphasis on radicalisation, sustainable peace, gender roles in peacebuilding and global protest movements. IPRI research are published as briefs, reports and commentary.



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### About Conflict Weekly

The Conflict Weekly an academic endeavour to bring every Wednesday/Thursday a weekly analysis of the conflict and peace processes in the world; aiming to look at the larger peace picture. It is published by the NIAS-IPRI in collaboration with the KAS India Office.



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