

CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 30)

REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, SEPTEMBER 2014

Welcome to the September issue of the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project's (ACLED) *Conflict Trends* report. Each month, ACLED researchers gather, analyse and publish data on political violence in Africa in realtime. Monthly updates to realtime conflict event data are published through our research partners at [Climate Change and African Political Stability \(CCAPS\)](#) and also on the [ACLED website](#).

In this issue, we profile a de-escalation of violence in **Burundi** and the potential for future violence in the run-up to elections in 2015. Meanwhile, ongoing instability continues to affect **Egypt, Nigeria, Sudan** and **Zambia**, each experiencing a series of overlapping and discrete political crises. Also in North Africa, **Libya** has seen the most dramatic escalation in conflict this month, with international attention focused on instability there. The contribution in this issue explores dynamics of different actors in the restive country.

Elsewhere on the continent, violence levels were consistently high in **South Sudan, Somalia, DR-Congo** and **Central African Republic**, while both **Kenya** and **Somalia** experienced a slight reduction in violence.



Conflict Trajectory, August 2014

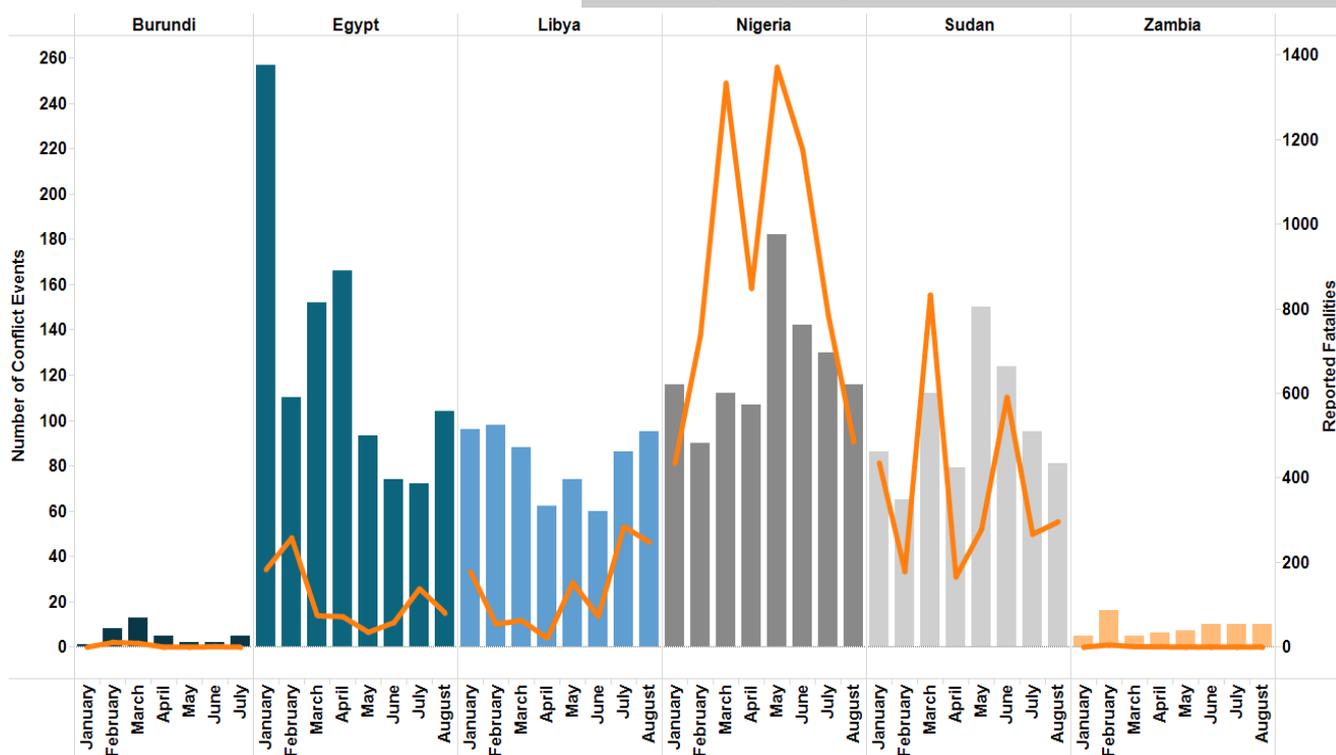


Figure 1: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, Select Countries, January - August 2014.

Burundi

Burundi had no recorded violence events in August, a dramatic drop after a spike in the number of conflict events in early 2014 (see Figure 2). The escalation earlier this year affected all types of conflict with battles, riots/protests and violence against civilians all increasing sharply in February and March, in particular.

The spike seems to stem from the political tensions that have been simmering since the 2010 elections, which were widely boycotted by numerous opposition parties and saw the re-election of incumbent Pierre Nkurunziza and the National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD). Early 2014 saw Burundi enter a political crisis stemming from Nkurunziza’s intention to run for an unconstitutional third term and the dismissal of Vice-President Busokoza (*Africa Confidential*, 21 February 2014). Busokoza is also leader of the Union for National Progress (UPRONA), one of the few parties not to boycott the 2010 election and recognise the legitimacy of the CNDD-FDD.

This crisis coincided with a noticeable increase in violence against civilians. A large share of this violence has been attributed to the CNDD-FDD’s youth wing, the Imbonerakure (see Figure 3). The Imbonerakure has been implicated in numerous instances of violence against opposi-

tion political figures. Though the group seems to have reduced its activity in recent months, there are reports that the Imbonerakure has been undergoing military training in the DR-Congo. The UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) reported in February that 500 police and army uniforms had disappeared along with an unspecified number of assault weapons, leading to fears that the Imbonerakure could be militarising their campaign against the political opposition.

Another trend has been the increase in battles on previous years. The majority of non-state participants in these battles are political party affiliates such as youth supporters of the Movement for Solidarity and Democracy, Front for Democracy in Burundi or the CNDD-FDD’s Imbonerakure, suggesting that politics is becoming increasingly militarised.

While violence against civilians and riots or protests have generally not involved lethal violence, battles between state forces and opposition factions have resulted in fatalities. February and March saw the highest number of battles and the highest number of fatalities. These battles were fought between the Burundian military and a splinter faction of the National Forces of Liberation (FNL). The FNL has been targeted extensively by the CNDD-FDD

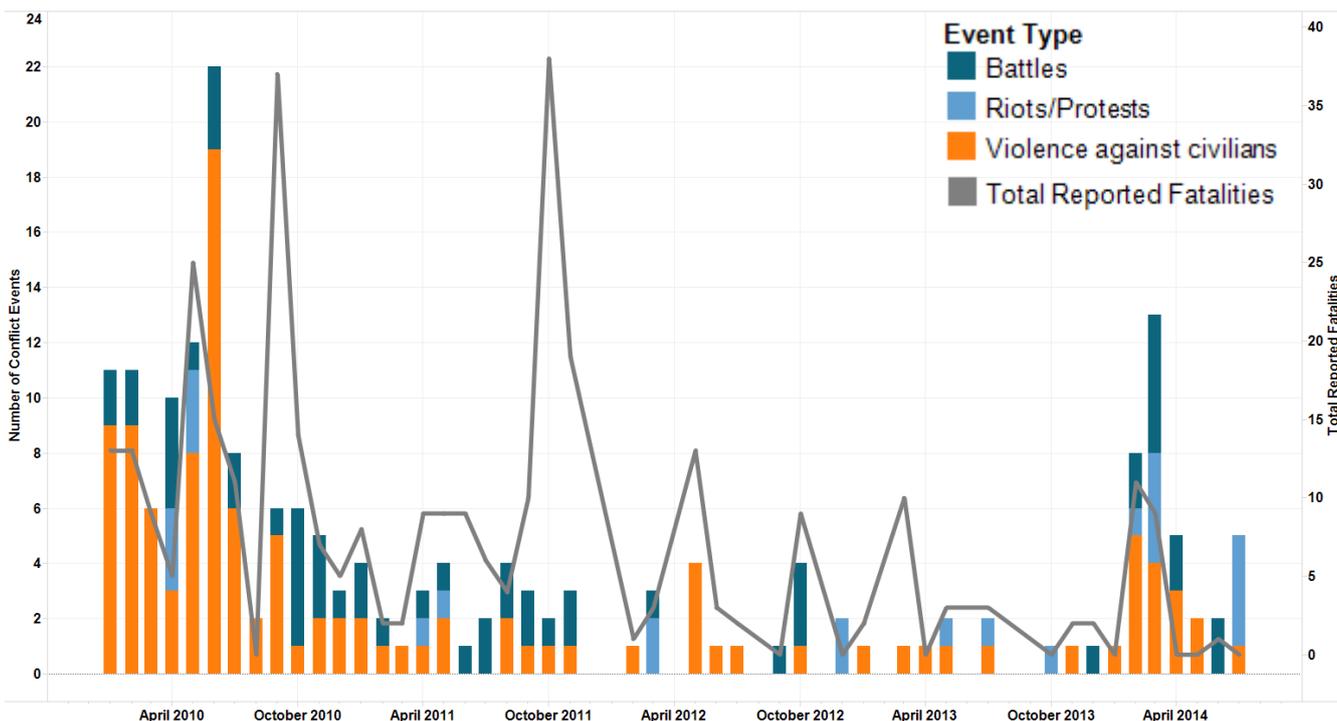


Figure 2: Conflict Events by Type, and Reported Fatalities, Burundi, January 2010 - August 2014.

Burundi

regime’s campaign of repression against political rivals ([HRW, 14 August 2014](#)). The FNL were the last of the rebel groups to officially lay down their weapons in 2009 and armed FNL fighters remain active in Eastern Congo, giving them a base from which to conduct retaliatory cross-border raids ([HRW, 14 August 2014](#)). The increase in FNL military activity coincides with the spike in violence against civilians by the Imbonerakure.

Abuses by the regime have been highlighted by the UN

and African Union, and so the CNDD-FDD may have reined in the Imbonerakure in response to international pressure ([Amnesty International, 2014](#)). There have been reports of police intervening and preventing the Imbonerakure from committing violence. Similarly opposition groups, having learnt from 2010 that absenteeism will not facilitate political change, may be refraining from violence in order to increase their chances of participating in the June 2015 elections.

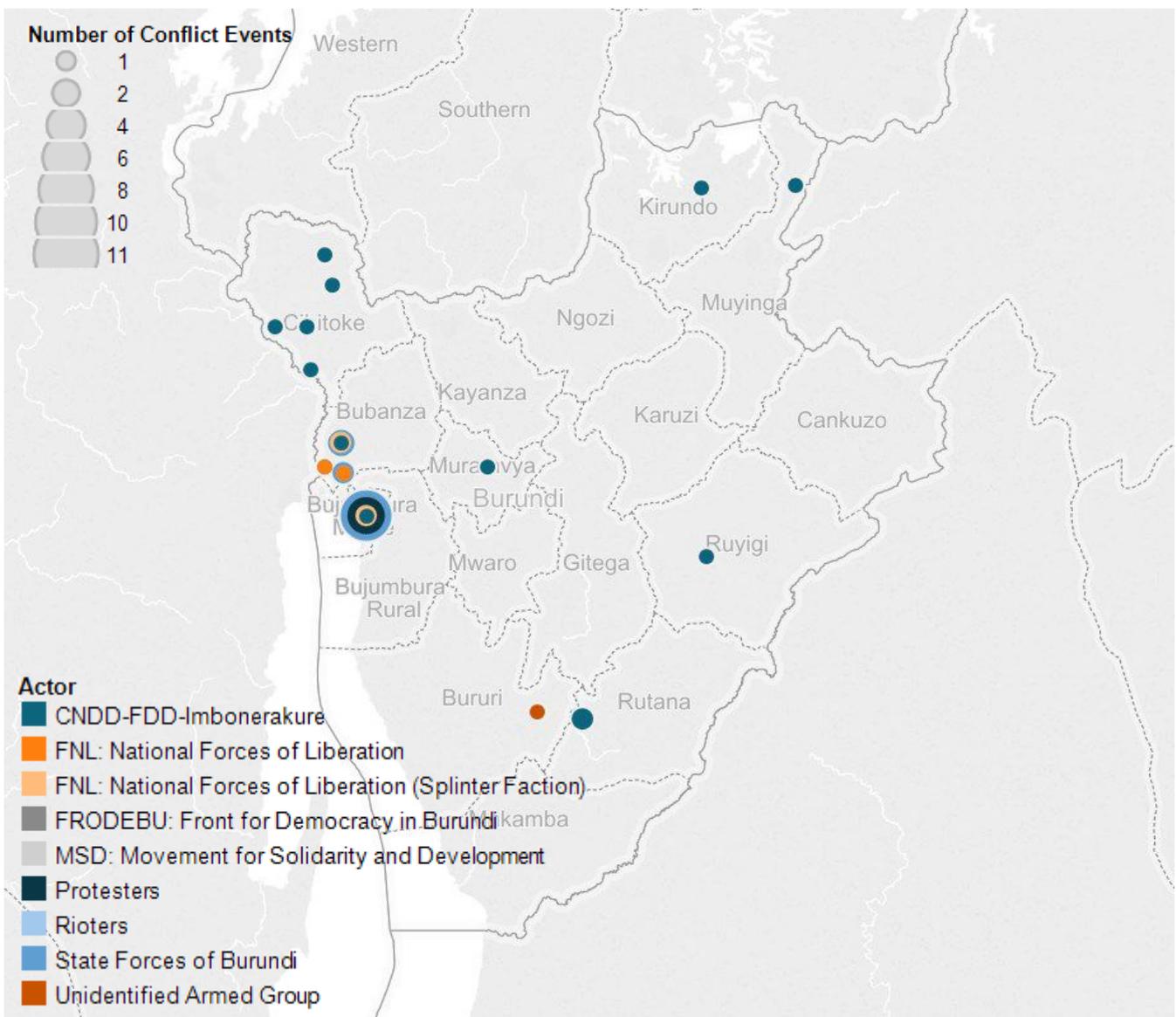


Figure 3: Conflict Events by Actor and Location, Burundi, January - August 2014.

Egypt

Egypt witnessed a small increase in conflict in August from the previous three months, but violence levels were significantly lower than in January 2014 (see Figure 4). This incremental increase is due to a rise in the number of riots and protests recorded this month as dissatisfaction was voiced over the Egyptian detention system. Support grew for hunger-striking activists who protested against unfair detention without charges in prisons across Egypt. Participants spanned a wide range of socio-political groups, including political activists, lawyers and journalists, all acting in solidarity with each other.

Over the course of 2014, riots and protests have subsided, perhaps largely owing to stricter conditions imposed by the Egyptian government on the organisation of demonstrations. This has led to large numbers of Muslim Brotherhood members being arbitrarily arrested.

Another pattern over the course of 2014 has been a shift in conflict events to the Sinai Peninsula, which was the site of 25.6% of conflict events between July and August. This represents an almost two-fold increase on the previ-

ous three months; and an almost three-fold increase from January, when the Sinai Peninsula witnessed less than 10% of all violent events. Whilst there have been concerns that violent political groups might change tactics and focus on urban areas (Saleh, 16 April 2014) thus threatening the safety of unarmed civilians, Figure 5 demonstrates that focus areas of conflict involving violence against civilians actually moved from Cairo to North Sinai from over the course of 2014.

This has coincided with increased activity by the violent Islamist group Ansar Beit-al Maqdis, who were first recorded in the ACLED data in the Sinai Peninsula in November 2013 and have had an increased role in violent activity from 2013-2014. Their tactics have often involved targeting military and security units in Sheikh Zuweiyid, Rafah and Al Arish where large scale operations frequently take place to eliminate militant threats and illegal tunnels. These events have incurred high fatality rates with military forces of Egypt being involved in the majority of conflict events and fatalities in North Sinai in 2014.

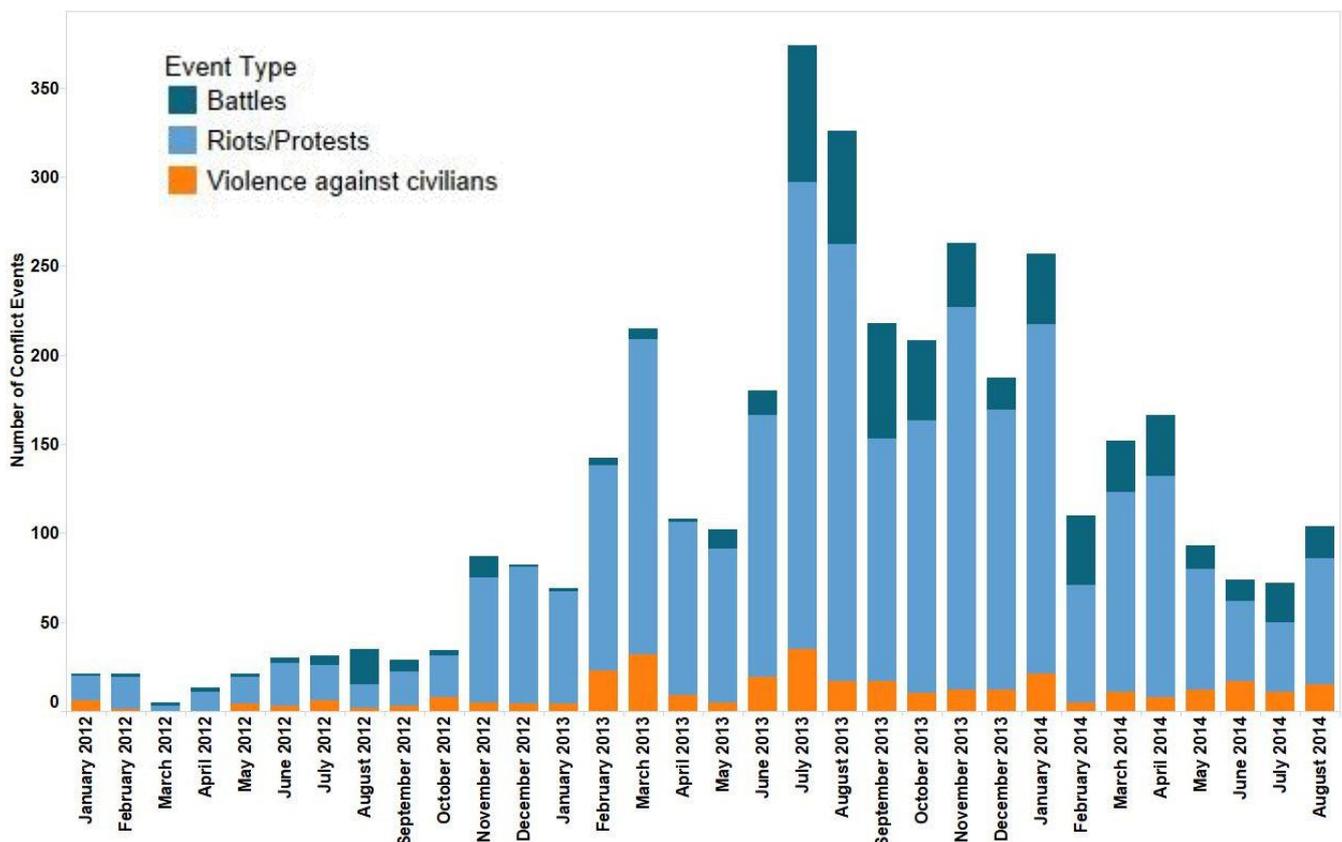


Figure 4: Conflict Events by Type, Egypt, January 2012-August 2014

CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 30)

REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, SEPTEMBER 2014

Egypt

At the end of August, the group specifically targeted unarmed locals in an attack that echoed the strategies of the Islamic State (ISIS), leaving civilians decapitated ([Kingsley, 28 August 2014](#)). Whilst a dramatic shift towards urban centres such as Cairo is not apparent from the dataset,

continued suppression of organised protests and sustained pressure on armed groups in North Sinai, may give rise to a more significant change in strategy that targets government institutions and more densely populated localities in the future.

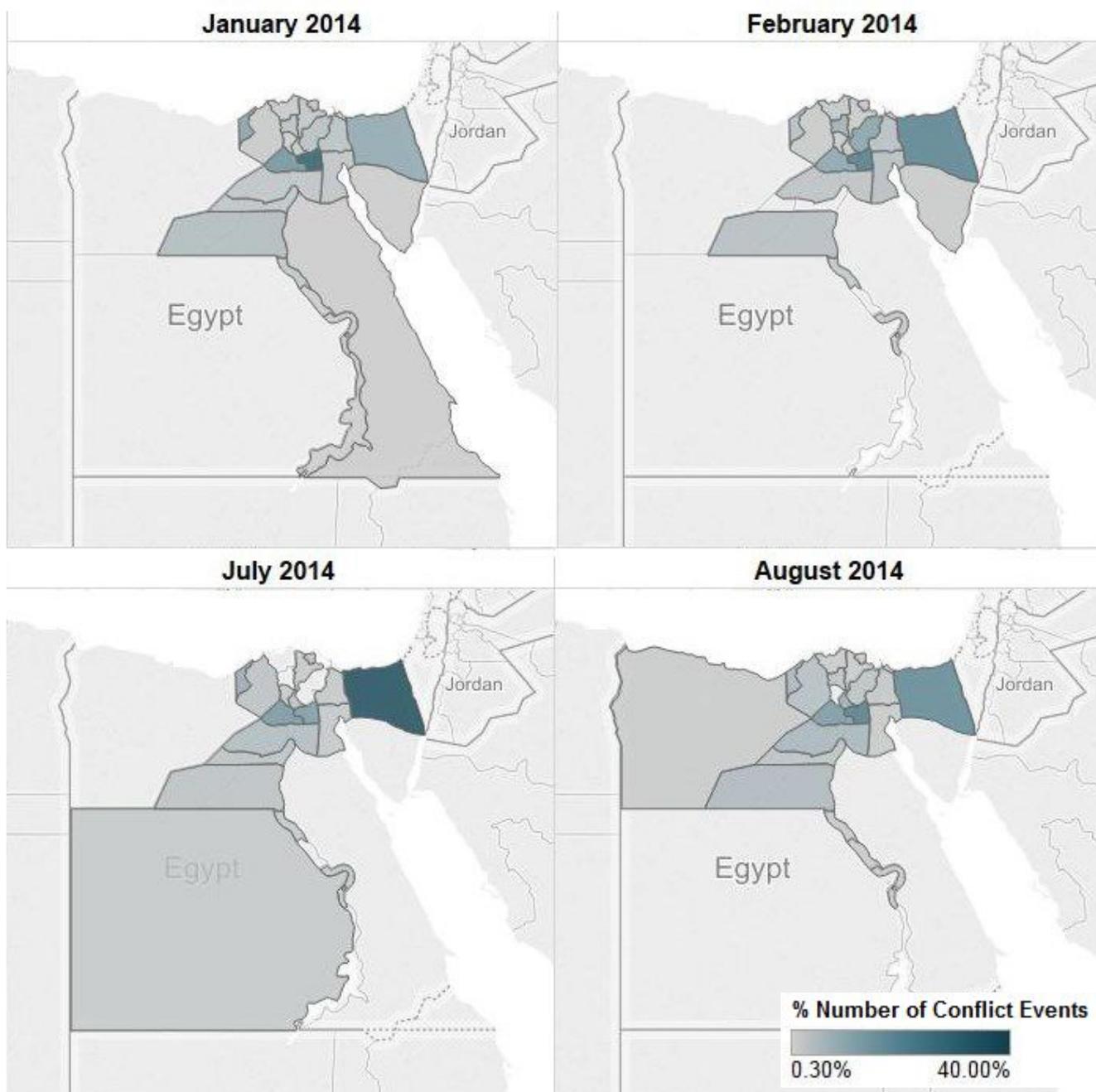


Figure 5: Percentage of Total Conflict Events by Location, Egypt, January, February, July and August 2014.

Libya

Reaching crisis point in August, conflict events continued to escalate across Libya for the fifth consecutive month this year (see Figure 6). Conflict events throughout 2014 have mostly involved political militias targeting unarmed civilians. This is due largely to the reactionary targeting of off-duty military and security personnel, who are attacked in their civilian capacity. The conflict landscape of August reflects the growing cleavages of a polarised society punctuated by riots and protest movements. These protests have advocated political reform catalysed by the eruption of communal militia interactions.

With conflict events having steadily risen since February 2013, the chaotic state of Libya's administration would suggest that this trend of increasing political violence will continue as political divides continue to deepen. However, on August 28th, shortly after the announcement of the reinstatement of the Islamist-dominated General National Congress (GNC) in Tripoli which threatened to undermine the legitimacy of parliament, the interim government headed by Al-Thani resigned.

Since May 2014, violence has raged across the cities of Tripoli and Benghazi, culminating in the Misratan militia, who are aligned with Libya Dawn forces, overtaking Tripoli airport forcing the rival Zintan militia out. The balance of power continues to rest on a knife edge as rival militia groupings have competed for control since May 2014. Most of the fighting has been between distinct rebel groupings in the East and West of the country. Complex

militia structures formed in the wake of the Gaddafi-regime have evolved with alliances emerging between the Misratan communal militia supported by important military units such as the Libya Shield Forces. The Shield Forces were formed as a paramilitary group to help the Libyan government establish control over unorganised militias. But frictions between the National Army, and internal divides between Islamist and federalist intentions, demonstrates the complicated situation on the ground in Libya (TRAC, 2014).

The Misratan militia has clashed with the Al-Zintan forces, the latter was one of the most powerful militias in Tripoli (Finucci, 2013), until their control of Tripoli airport was usurped by the former on 23 August. The Misratan militia followed by the targeting of Zintan communities. Whilst the majority of conflict events in Tripoli involved these two brigades, splinter group fighting in the Misratan militia has erupted over control for Camp 27 near Janzur.

The instability and volatile security situation in Libya can be seen to be a direct consequence of Qaddafi's attempt to hold a firm grip over the entire region. His "divide and rule" policy (Cristiani, 19 January 2012) to maintain favour with various tribes and factions has had damaging repercussions for stability – with almost complete paralysis of a formal military institution, and ideological friction between rebel groups widening the gulf between the various ethnic, political and social divisions that exist.

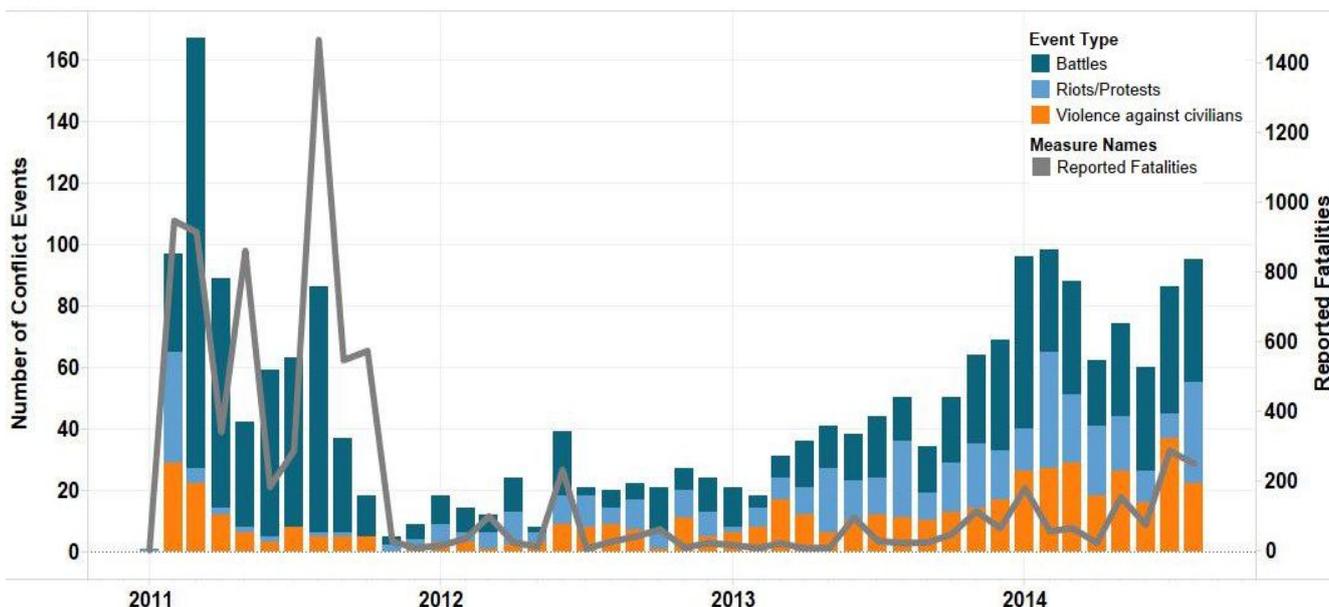


Figure 6: Conflict Events by Type, and Reported Fatalities, Libya, January 2011 - August 2014.

Nigeria

August was the fourth consecutive month in which violence levels and associated reported fatalities fell in Nigeria, down from their peak in May of this year. While not the only source of unrest in the country, violence by Boko Haram has been the focus of international attention and the driver of much of the violent conflict in Nigeria. In spite of its sustained high profile, violent events attributed to Boko Haram also fell in August, as did associated reported fatalities. However, this relative drop masks two important dynamics: the first is that August violence levels in Nigeria remained well above the average over the past few years, with September 2013 marking a distinct escalation in violence compared to previous months. This fact is a reminder that even in the context of apparent security improvements in Nigeria after many months of sustained crisis, the level of violence, and the accompanying vulnerability of civilian populations, re-

mains extremely high, both by national and historical standards.

The second important dynamic that is masked by this relative fall in violence is the nature of events in which Boko Haram is engaging: while the overall level of activity of the group may be falling, it has, since July, actively seized territory from the Nigerian government and declared the establishment of a caliphate in the north-east of Nigeria ([BBC News, 21 July 2014](#); [Al Jazeera, 25 August 2014](#)). In addition to the seizure of Damboa, and several locations within Dambisa Forest, at the time of writing, there was additional reports that the Borno town of Bama, less than 100km from Maiduguri, has also fallen to the militant group ([BBC News, 2 September 2014](#)).

The seizure of territory is significant for a number of reasons. It marks a clear development in the evolution of Boko Haram, whose violent activity began with highly tar-

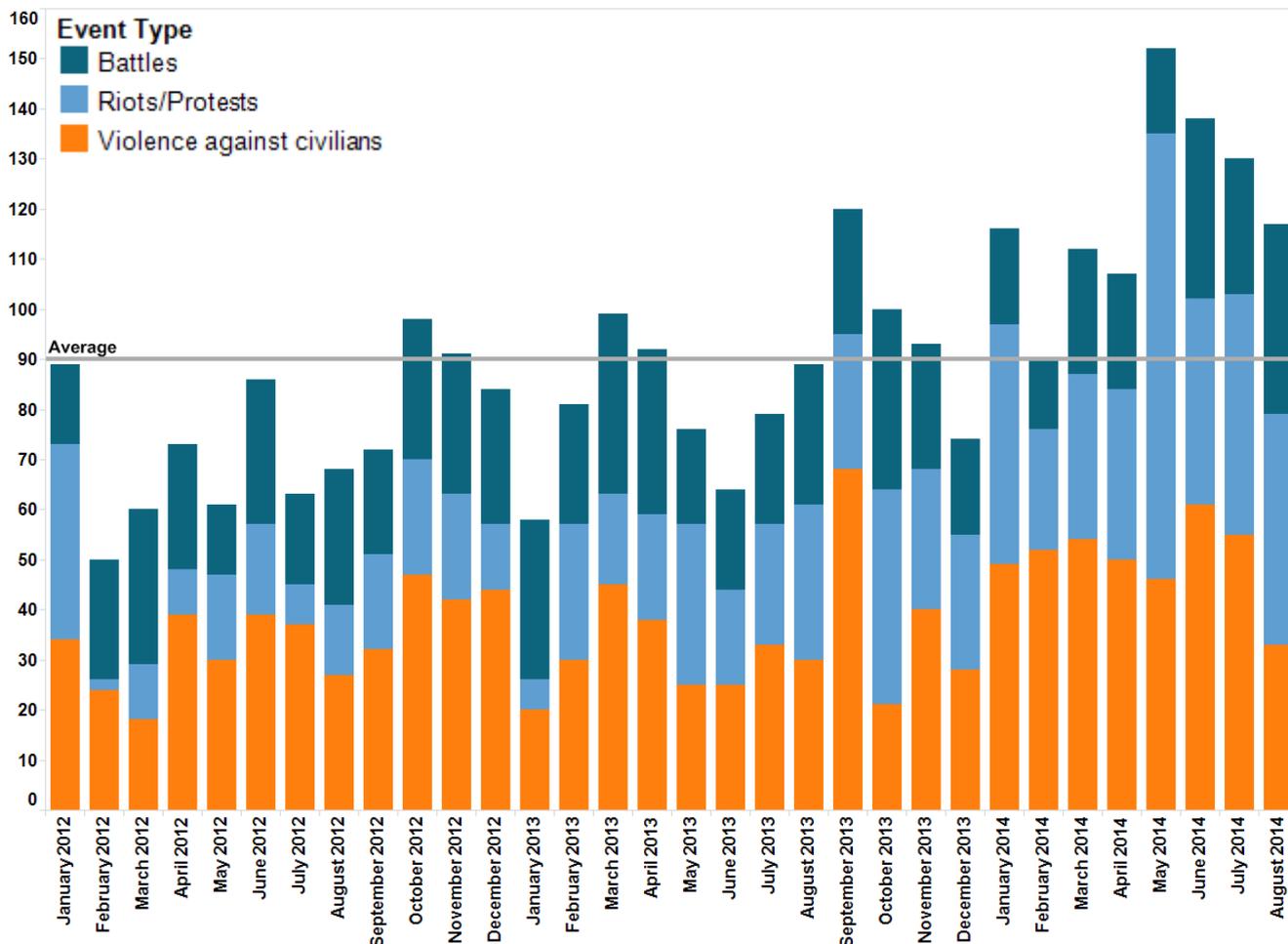


Figure 7: Conflict Events by Type, Nigeria, January 2012 - August 2014.

Nigeria

geted assassinations and drive-by shootings of police and political officials in 2010. Its tactics have evolved over time to incorporate an expanding definition of who constitutes an enemy and legitimate target, with mass attacks on and abductions of civilian populations among the most extreme examples of this recent reinterpretation. Figure 8 maps the increasing concentration of these attacks in the north-east of the country.

From a tactical perspective, the number of attacks in which the group is involved may well fall over time once they have seized territory: reports that over 400 Nigerian soldiers fled heavy fighting with Boko Haram across the border to Cameroon in August ([BBC News, 25 August 2014](#)) and continuing reports of mutiny and indiscipline among serving soldiers ([The Sun, 1 September 2014](#)), give some indication of the up-hill battle the government will face if it has designs on reseizing territory and making substantial gains in the battle against Boko Haram. While the number of battles and clashes with Nigerian security forces may well fall in the coming weeks if the government cannot mount an effective campaign against the group, we may well see a rise in violence against civilians in the towns under militant rule.

It is also significant is that the seizure of territory provides the group with an alternative source of revenue: news

reports indicate that checkpoints were established in areas of Boko Haram control and fees were levied for vehicles to pass, providing the group with an opportunity to source income from the town's population itself ([Campbell, 22 July 2014](#)).

To date, there are no reports that the group has taken over direct governing functions in the territory it has seized, although the group's origins in the early 2000s involved the provision of various social services to communities. With this latest move, however, Boko Haram has taken a clear and decisive step towards presenting itself not only as a destabilising force in Nigerian politics (a role it has filled for half a decade), but also - increasingly - a clear challenger to the authority of the Nigerian federal state and an alternative to its rule in the north-east.

While there is no doubting the brutality of Boko Haram's treatment of civilian populations, the situation is complicated by the deep suspicions of some northern communities of the central government, suspicions which have been reinforced in recent months by government troops abandoning their posts in advance of Boko Haram attacks. This deeply rooted crisis of legitimacy in northern Nigeria makes the outcome of Boko Haram's latest campaign even more uncertain, and even more likely to devastate local civilian populations.

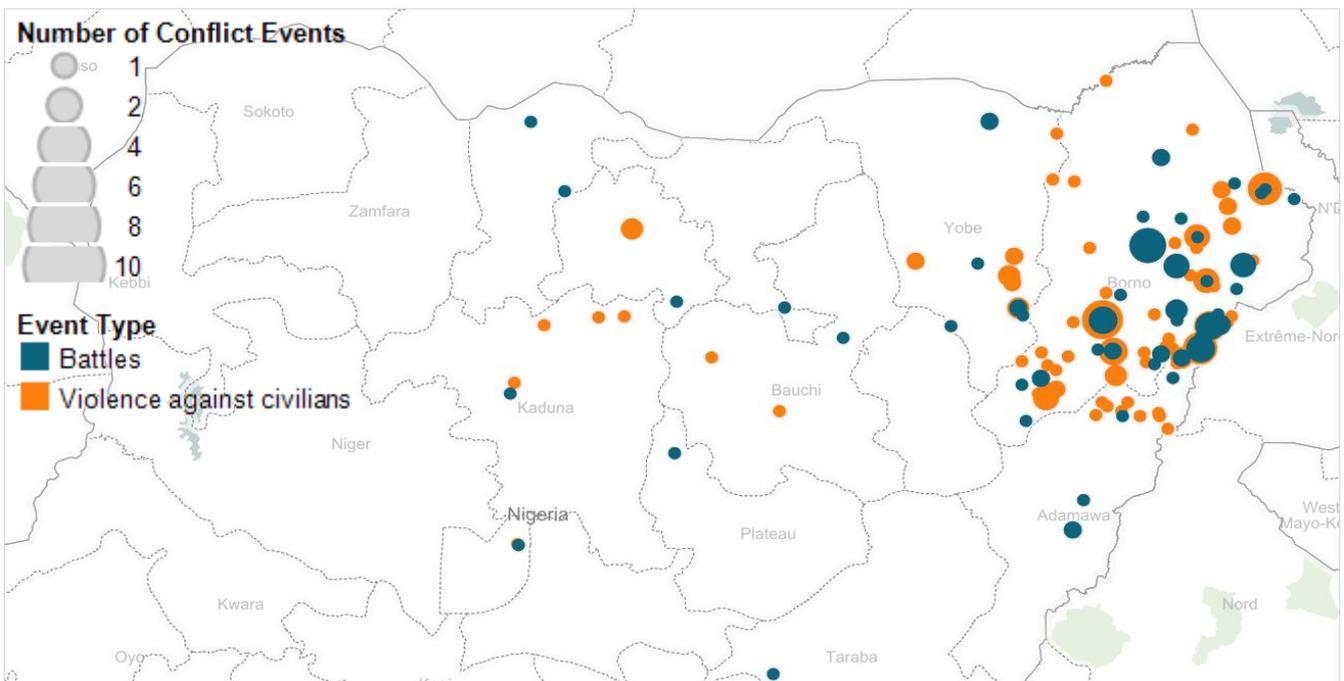


Figure 8: Boko Haram Events by Type and Location, Northern Nigeria, January - August 2014.

Sudan

Mainstream international media appears to have paid little attention to ongoing violence in Sudan, despite an upward trend in conflict since mid-2012, and relatively high fatalities since early 2013 (see Figure 9). In spite of a gradual decline in recent months, conflict levels remain well above average for the time period. Furthermore, this conflict has hugely affected civilians: since January 2014, violence against civilians has accounted for 61% of conflict events.

Much of this violence targets internally displaced populations in Darfur, with attacks, shootings, and rapes carried out by government forces, paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and pro-government militia. There have been calls for a review of United Nations Mission in Darfur actions following allegations of failure to protect civilians and mismanagement of investigations ([UN News Centre, 2 July 2014](#)). This violence, perpetrated or enabled by those meant to protect civilians, is particularly troubling. It is also worrying given the scale of population displacement: 2 million displaced persons in Darfur in 2013 and nearly 400,000 displaced this year ([UNOCHA, August 2014](#)).

The large majority of battle events occur between govern-

ment and rebel forces and between ethnic or communal militias, respectively accounting for 45% and 24% of battles in 2014. These point to two dominant conflict dynamics in Sudan. First is that activity by rebel groups show the greatest volatility over the course of the past two years (see Figure 10).

In 2014, most government-rebel clashes involved the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), the Darfur Joint Resistance Forces, and the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF). This conflict is situated in a complex political context. A national dialogue process launched in early 2014 was rejected by opposition groups including the Sudanese Congress Party (SCP), the National Umma Party (NUP), and the SRF, which includes SPLM-N, Sudan Liberation Movement/Army Wahid faction, and Justice and Equality Movement.

Parties agreed to a "roadmap" for national dialogue in late July. However, the absence of civil society and traditional leaders, SCP, NUP, and SRF boycotts, and the formation of various opposition-rebel alliances, may hinder progress. Most recently, the NUP and SRF signed the "Paris Declaration", calling for democratic transformation and cessation of hostilities. It is unclear if this declaration (which has

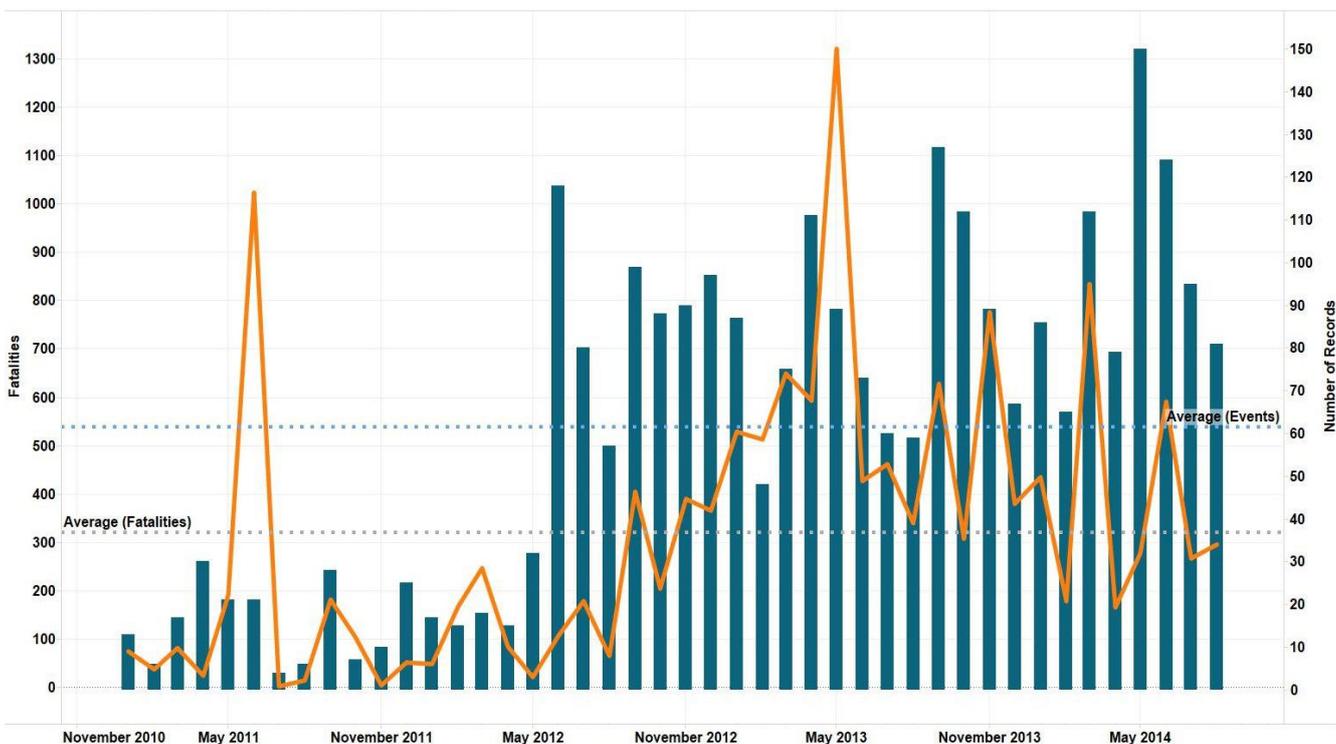


Figure 9: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, Sudan, January 2011-August 2014

CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 30)

REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, SEPTEMBER 2014

Sudan

been rejected by the government) and other recent alliances will lead to greater cohesion among opposition groups.

Arrests of opposition members and repeated newspaper confiscations also raise questions about government commitment to open dialogue. NUP leader Sadiq al Mahdi and SCP leader Ibrahim al Sheikh were arrested in May and June, respectively, after criticizing RSF actions. Security forces have repeatedly detained SCP members, and deputy NUP leader Mariam al Mahdi was arrested in August.

The second dominant dynamic, is the role of communal and ethnic militias. In total, communal militias were engaged in almost half of all battles in August 2014 (see Fig-

ure 10). Inter-ethnic violence has been increasing steadily since early 2014, often linked to conflict over land and cattle. Clashes have involved Rizaygat, Maaliya, Hamar, Misseriya, Abala, Bani Hussein, and other groups in Darfur and West Kordofan. At least 200 people were killed during recent Rizaygat-Maaliya clashes in August. Reconciliation efforts have targeted specific groups, although intersecting ethnic and tribal dynamics may impede their effectiveness.

Current conflict dynamics in Sudan are incredibly complex, involving mass displacement, civilian targeting, ethnic and land-based tensions, and higher-level political negotiation. Closer attention ought to be paid to these overlapping dimensions, to inform more effective responses.

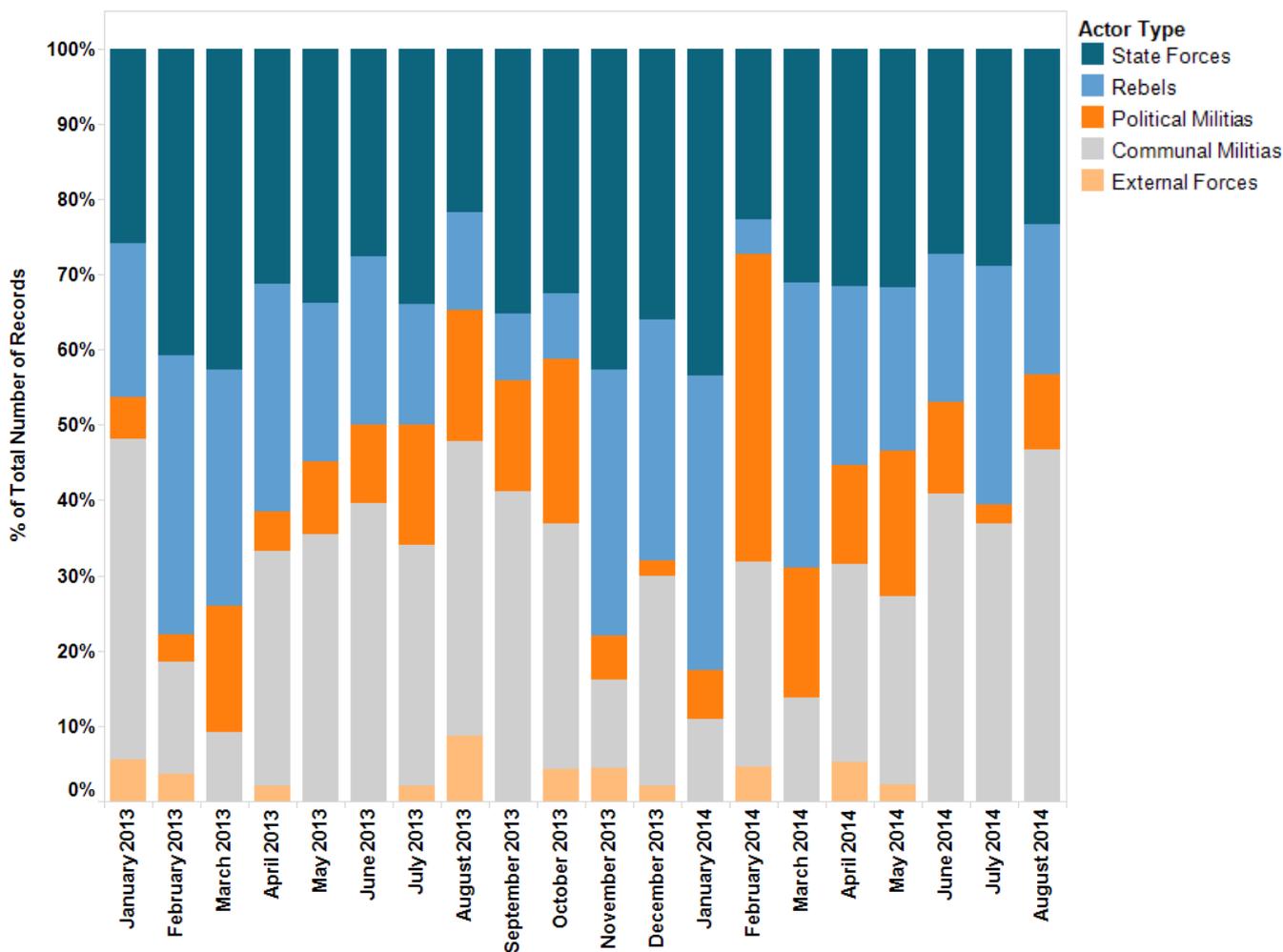


Figure 10: Battle Events by Actor Type, January 2013-August 2014.

Zambia

Levels of conflict remained stable in Zambia in August for the third month in a row, although there was a noticeable shift in the type of violent events taking place and the actors involved (see Figure 11).

August 2014 witnessed the highest number of battles fought in the past two years. These battles mainly took place in Mangango in Zambia’s Western Province, which this month held a by-election in which pitched candidates from the ruling Patriotic Front (PF) against the opposition the United Party for National Development (UPND). The by-election was marred by numerous reports of violent battles between the PF and the UNPD.

The UNPD was also the most active conflict actor this month, a departure from previous months in which the organisation has been implicated in very few, if any, conflict events (see Figure 12 for the locations of violence by actor). The UPND has historically had a strong presence in the south and western parts of Zambia (Lindemann, 2011). The upsurge in violence could be due to the reluctance of a regional party to cede its base. Alternatively, the increase in battles could stem from an increase in militarism by opposition supporters in response to the per-

ceived use of political violence by the PF, which has been repeatedly criticised by civil society organisations and foreign governments for its use of cadres to intimidate political opposition ([Udoh, 25 April 2014](#)).

Another potentially destabilising event has been the ousting of Wynter Kabimba, former Justice Minister and General Secretary of the PF. Much has been made of President Sata’s ill-health and the possibility of the president being unable to complete his term. Kabimba led one of two factions, the other led by Geoffrey Bwalya Mwamba and Alexander Chikwanda, vying for succession within the PF ([BBC News, 28 August 2014](#)). In 2013, Kabimba’s supporters had violently clashed with cadres aligned with Mwamba in a skirmish that resulted in 10 fatalities ([Udoh, 7 November 2013](#)).

What remains to be seen is if Kabimba’s dismissal will affect intra-PF violence. There have yet to be any instances of Kabimba supporters purposefully engaging in violence or protest in order to contest Kabimba’s ousting. Instead, there have been reports of PF cadres celebrating the downfall of Kabimba and confronting former individual Kabimba supporters leading to violent standoffs.

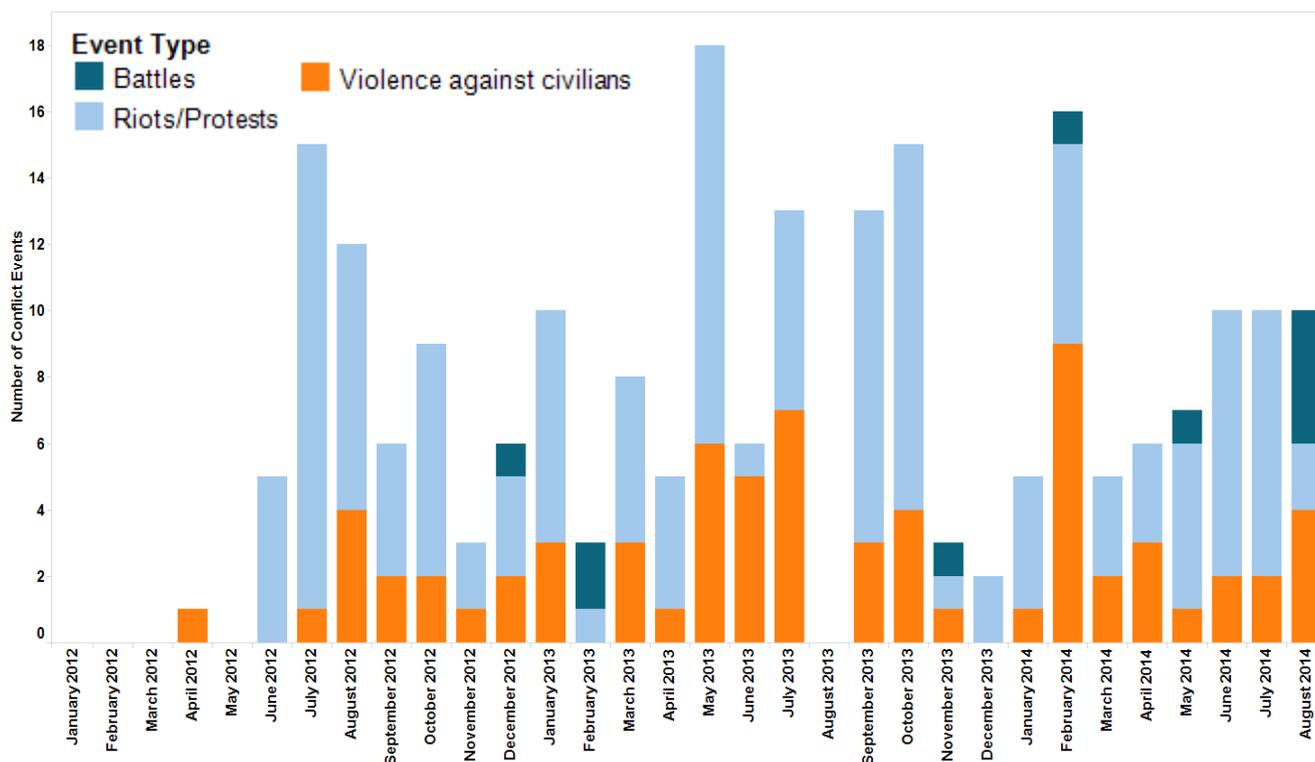


Figure 11: Conflict Events by Type, Zambia, January 2012-August 2014.

Zambia

Whether this trend will continue as former Kabimba supporters distance themselves from the former politician remains to be seen.

More generally, during the past month, there has been an increase in reports of armed politicians. During the by-election in Mangango and the aftermath of Kabimba's dismissal in Lusaka, there were instances of politicians or

political allies dispersing opposition crowds and cadres with gunfire. None of these occasions resulted in any casualties as the gunman often fired into the air. However, the fact that politicians are now arming themselves during campaigns suggests a tense political atmosphere in which politicians feel vulnerable to targeting by opposition supporters.

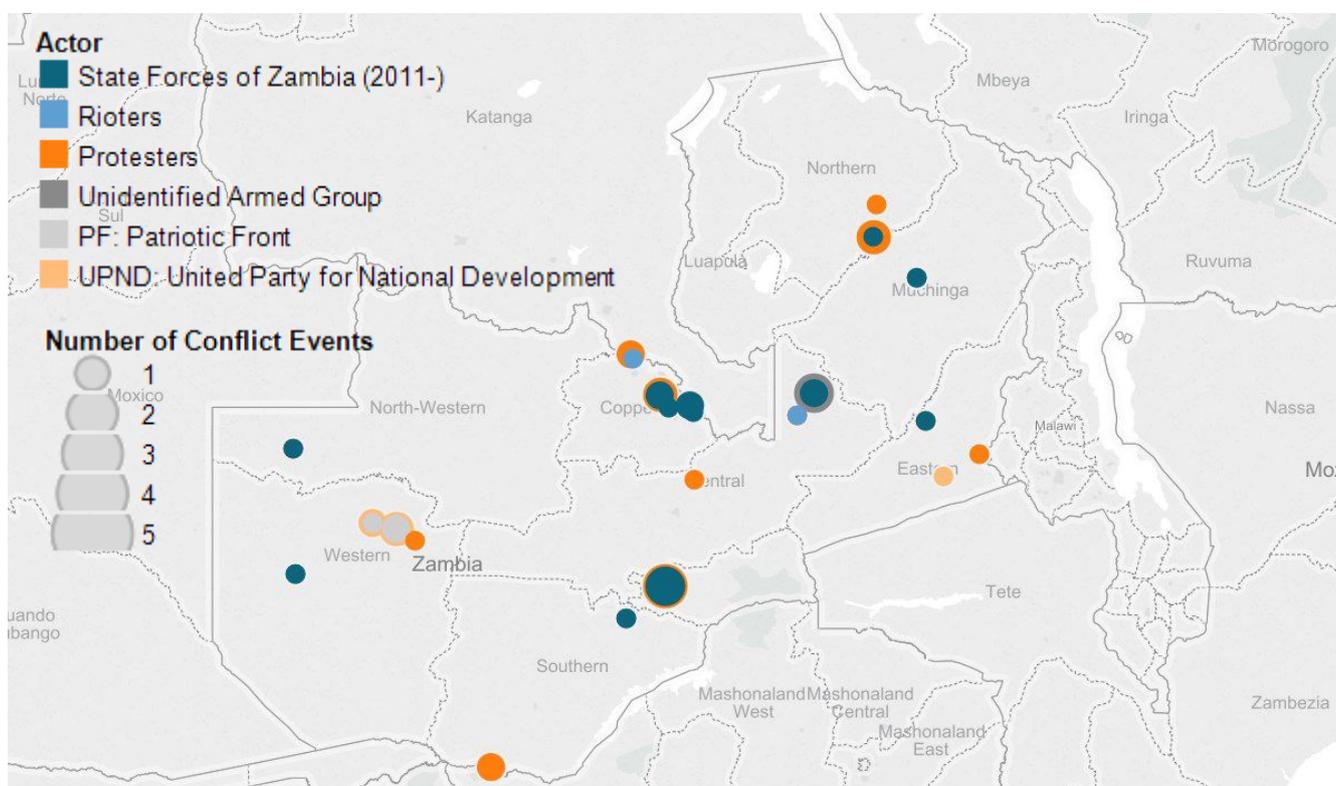


Figure 12: Conflict Events by Actor, Zambia, January-August 2014.

Weekly Data Updates

In August, ACLED launched weekly data updates for all African states, including North African countries previously available as monthly updates only. Conflict data is circulated and published online each week to provide our most comprehensive and realtime information on African political violence to date. A full list of the countries which will be covered each week is available online at <http://www.acleddata.com/data/realtime-data-2014/> Check online for weekly data updates, or sign up for email alerts via our website to receive files directly.

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Sources

Conflict Trends reports are compiled from ACLED data and draw on news sources, civil society reports, and academic and policy analyses. Full details of sources and coding processes are available online at acleddata.com.