

CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 54) REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE,
DECEMBER 2016

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Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (2016)

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Welcome to the December 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. Weekly updates to realtime conflict event data are published on the [ACLED website](#), and are also available through our research partners at [Climate Change and African Political Stability \(CCAPS\)](#).

This month's issue focuses on increasing intra-militia violence in **Central African Republic**, the continuation of political violence dynamics in **Democratic Republic of Congo** and the emergence of the Kamwina Nsapu militia in 2016, the poorly developed protest landscape in **Egypt** under an increasingly repressive el-Sisi regime, endemic student and election riots and protests across **South Africa**, and the geographic escalation of remote violence activity in clashes between rebels and the government in **Sudan**.

Elsewhere on the continent, in **Ethiopia**, riots and protests decreased as battles surged to levels 200% higher than in October and simmering militia tensions erupted in Tripoli as armed groups competed for political advantage in **Libya**.

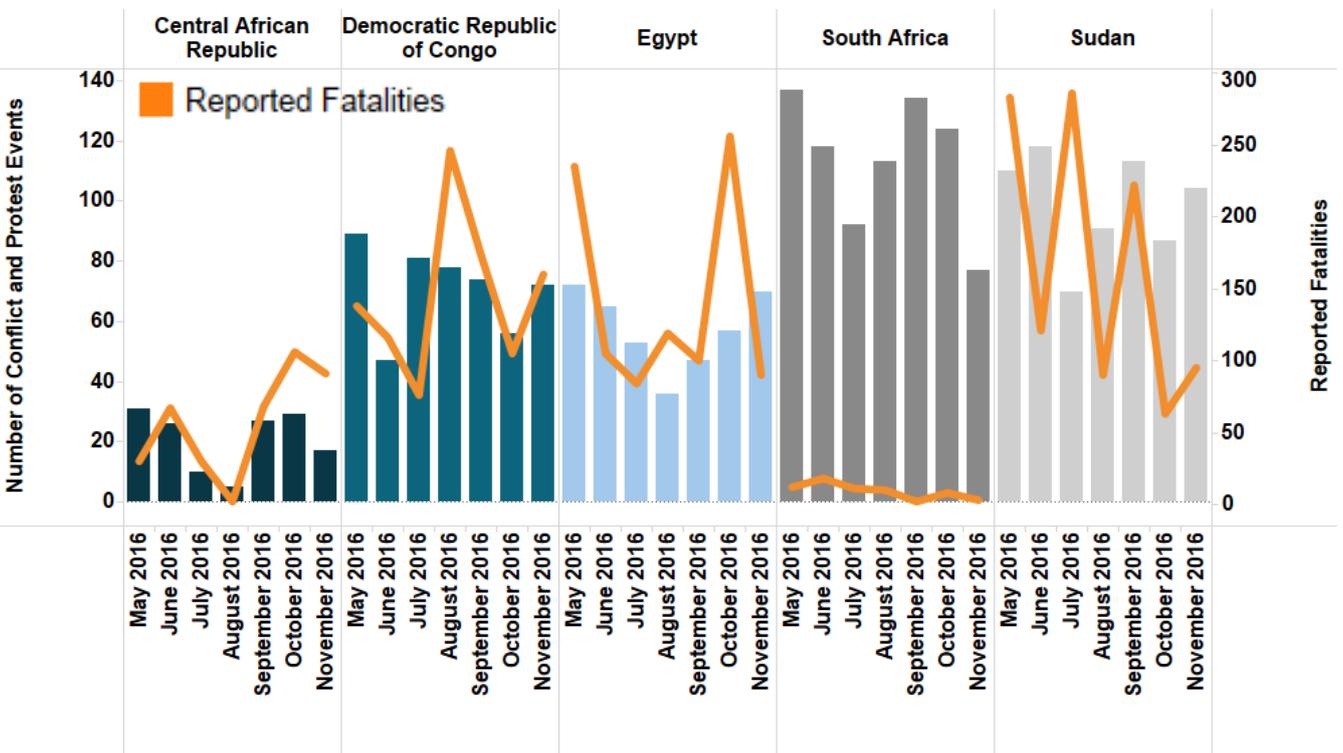
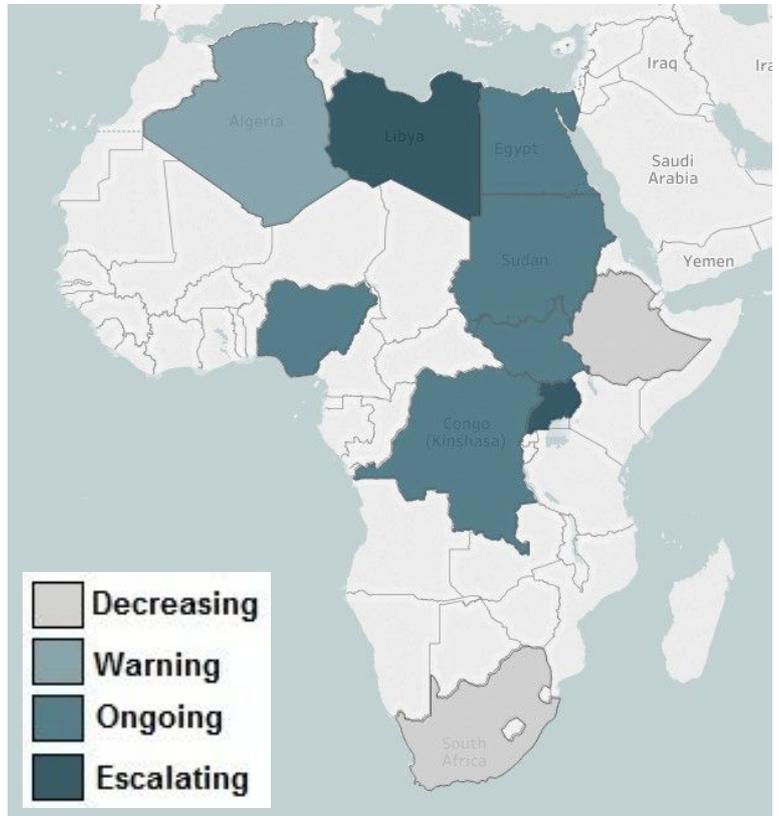


Figure 1: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities by Country, May - November 2016.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic witnessed an encouraging overall decrease in lethal political violence during the first half of 2016. However, this was followed by a dramatic jump in violence from September to November which stems from the failure of the new regime in Bangui to forge a political settlement that appeals to the increasingly fractured Seleka coalition and other militia groups (see Figure 2).

The electoral period, spanning from late December 2015 to March 2016, saw a general decrease in the number of violent events, albeit with spikes. There was a high incidence of political violence during the lead up to the second round of elections in January, largely due to police repression and protest within Bangui and activity by the Lord's Resistance Army and communal militias on the periphery of the country. The main belligerents of CAR's political crisis-- the Seleka coalition and the Anti-Balaka militia-- remained comparatively inactive ([Africa Confidential, 22 January 2016](#)). The election itself, though marred by irregularities concerning ballot boxes and the absence of a reliable register, was accepted internationally and Faustin-Archange Touadera was announced as the winner (*ibid.*).

Touadera, a former premier during the Bozize years, constructed a government composed of former ministers and colleagues from the Bozize era unknown outside of Bangui ([Africa Confidential, 10 June 2016](#)). More importantly, the cabinet did not include any senior representatives from either Anti-Balaka or the various Seleka factions, who expected a power-sharing agreement and positions within the cabinet as a reward for keeping the peace dur-

ing the polls (*ibid.*).

In the aftermath of the announcement of the cabinet in May, violence involving Anti-Balaka and Seleka actors dramatically increased as militia commanders became aware that they would not secure their livelihoods within the new government in Bangui. As a result, groups within Seleka such as the FDPC (Democratic Front for the People of the Central African Republic) and UPC (Union for Peace in the Central African Republic) began to settle into provinces to assert their control over the local people and resources.

In spite of the surge in violence in June, July and August were the most peaceful months of 2016. This may be due to DDR (disarmament, demobilisation and social reintegration) talks between the government and the armed factions ongoing during the summer ([Agence France Presse, 1 August 2016](#)). Though the armed groups had failed to gain representation in the government, the DDR process represented an opportunity for fighters to gain a livelihood within a new integrated national army. The DDR process reached a stalemate after the government opposed Seleka's desire to join the army. Unable to find a compromise, hardline ex-Seleka factions chose not to take part in the latest DDR discussions ([International Crisis Group, 16 November 2016](#)). Similarly, jobs in the army and police promised to Anti-Balaka were cancelled due to pressure from international partners ([Africa Confidential, 21 October 2016](#)).

With the Seleka factions unable to find any place for themselves in the new government, violence increased

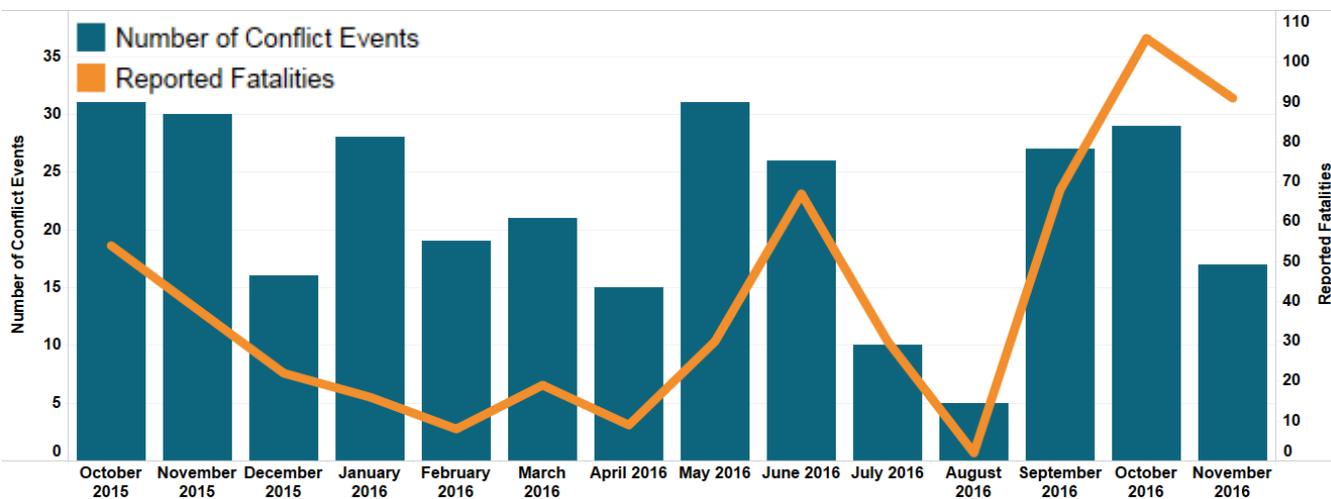


Figure 2: Number of Conflict and Protest Events and Reported Fatalities in Central African Republic, from October 2015 - November 2016.

Central African Republic

during the latter third of the year with October, September and November represented the three most lethal months of the year so far. Unable to secure resources through central government patronage, militias resorted to establishing control of local resources and extorting the local population. Seleka groups also banned all government administration from areas they control ([International Crisis Group, 16 November 2016](#)). Exactions against the population by Seleka led to retaliatory attacks by Anti-Balaka. In the resulting cycles of retaliation civilians bore the brunt of the violence (see Figure 3).

By November a new dynamic emerged in which different groups that constitute the Seleka coalition fought over territory and control of local human and mineral resources. The most violent of these clashes is the ongoing battle between the UPC and the Popular Front for the

Renaissance of Central Africa (FPRC) in Bria. The two groups are currently fighting control over the taxes levied on nomadic Fulani herdsmen during the seasonal cattle migration and diamond mines ([Human Rights Watch, 5 December 2016](#)). Similar clashes, although fewer in number and smaller in magnitude, occurred between groups of Anti-Balaka over the ownership of cattle.

The localisation of these conflicts means that the rise in violence in the latter third of the year is confined to the hinterlands far from Bangui. This geographic distribution of conflict has the ability of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the severely limited government security forces to control the violence. Clashes between the militias and state or external forces have remained low even as violence against civilians and between militia groups has risen (see Figure 3).

MINUSCA itself is facing a legitimacy crisis in the aftermath of numerous findings of extra-judicial killings and sexual assaults against the population. Distrust of the main peacekeeping forces resulted in violence in October when civil society groups in the capital protested against MINUSCA's presence in the country. In the resulting violence, four people died ([International Crisis Group, 16 November 2016](#)).

Meanwhile, Touadera's focus seems to be on eliminating potential political threats in Bangui. Jean-Francois Bozize, son of former leader Francoise Bozize, is currently in Bangui and attempting to resurrect his father's political party Kwa Na Kwa (KNK) ([Africa Confidential, 2 December 2016](#)). Francoise Bozize supported Touadera's rival during the elections, current opposition figure Anicet-Georges Dologuele, and many KNK voters who supported Touadera feel that they have not been rewarded by the president (*ibid.*). Compounding Touadera's focus on Bangui is the persistent insecurity within the restless PK5 neighbourhood which was the scene of clashes between local militias and also the assassination of the head of security for former Interim President Catherine Samba-Panza ([Africa Confidential, 21 October 2016](#)).

The dramatic increase in conflict during the latter part of the year and the concentration of violence in the hinterlands, far from the reach of an administration focussed on establishing security in the capital, represents an ominous trend after a hopeful start to the year.

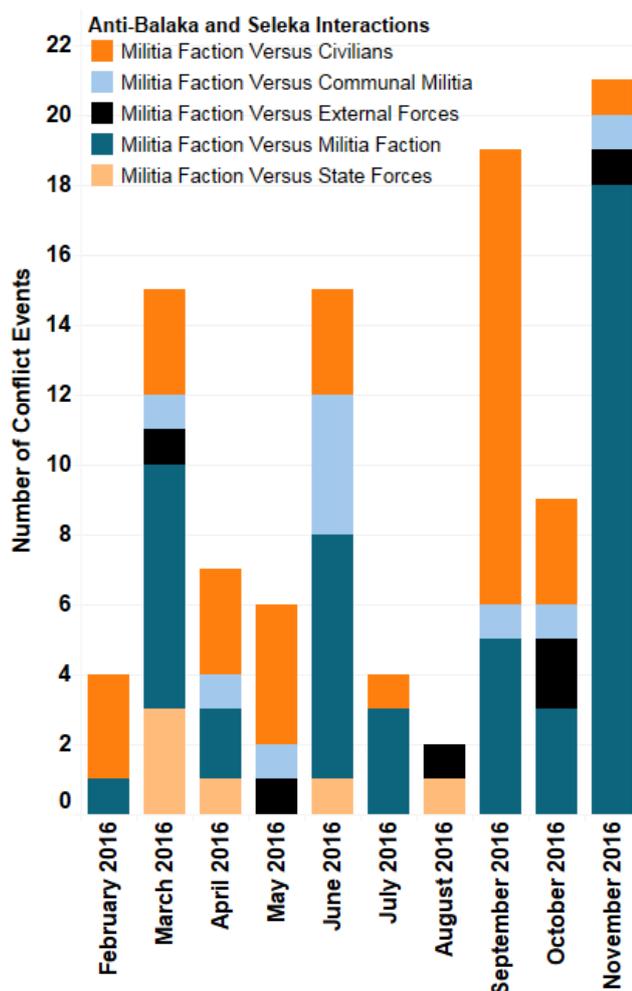


Figure 3: Anti-Balaka and Seleka Violence by Interaction in Central African Republic, from January - November 2016.

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REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, DECEMBER 2016

Democratic Republic of Congo

Over the course of 2016, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR-Congo) saw a rise in intensity of political violence, and the emergence of new trends. First, violence involving the ADF, FDLR and Mayi Mayi militias clustered in the Kivu and Orientale province and ethnic conflict between Bantus and Batwas, as well as Hutus and Nandes, continued from previous years. Second, politically motivated riots and protests resulted in almost twice as many fatalities in 2016 (101) as 2015 (52). Finally, the rise of the Kamwina Nsapu militia in the Kasai-Central represents a concerning new dynamic.

August was the most violent month in terms of fatalities, with 246 fatalities recorded, whilst May saw the highest number of discrete political events with 107 recorded (see Figure 4). The high fatalities in August are primarily attributed to an ongoing offensive against the ADF, with

events involving the group responsible for more than half of all fatalities that month. Riots and protests over expected election delays and insecurity in the East, alongside military offensives against Mayi Mayi militias and clashes with the ADF and FDLR account for the significant number of events in May. August also marked the beginning of the government's conflict with the Kamwina Nsapu militia.

In terms of actors, excluding non-violent events and riots and protests, the groups most represented in the data outside of government forces, unidentified actors, and civilians were Mayi Mayi militias (as an aggregated group), followed by the ADF, ethnic militias (as an aggregated group), and the FDLR. While this shows that the FDLR and ADF remain highly active in the country despite repeated offensives against them, the multitude of Mayi Mayi mili-

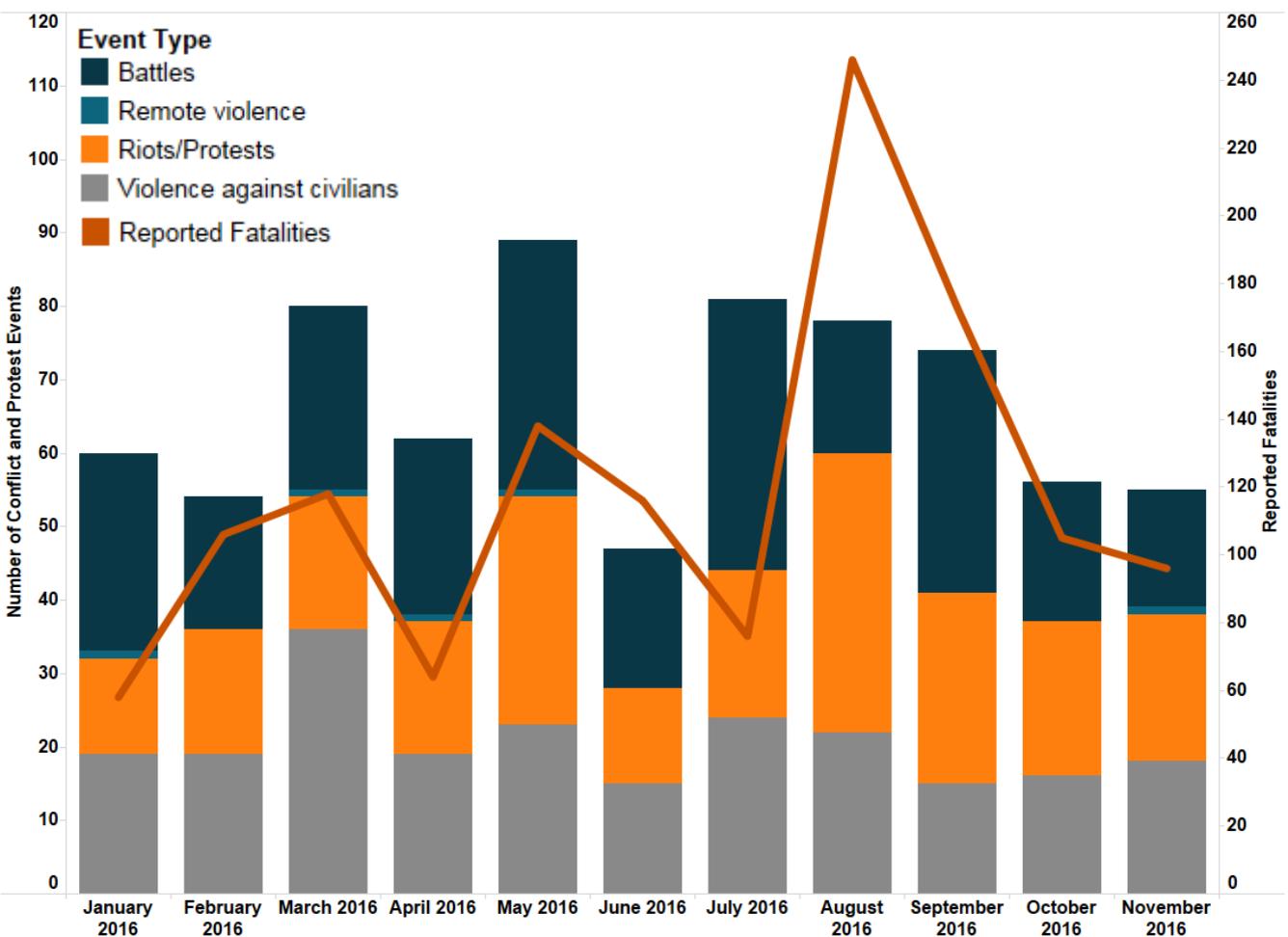


Figure 4: Number of Conflict and Protest Events and Reported Fatalities by Type in DR-Congo, from January - November 2016.

Democratic Republic of Congo

tias also remain an important destabilizing force. The difficulty in dealing with these groups was evident during 2016 as Congolese forces pushed individual militias out of villages before later moving on, at which time the militias would re-occupy the territory they had lost, sometimes evicting police which had been deployed to the area, and continue to prey on the civilian populations. This lack of capacity to hold captured territory is one of the main reasons DR-Congo’s dozens of active Mayi Mayi militias remain such an entrenched part of the country’s conflict landscape.

The bouts of ethnic violence witnessed in 2016, in particular between Bantu and Batwas (often referred to as pygmies by the media) in Katanga province and between Hutu and Nande, primarily in the Lubero area of South Kivu (see Figure 5), also represented a notable trend. This is because these types of conflict tend to escalate rapidly

through cycles of reprisals which threaten to quickly spiral out of control. Reprisal in 2016 often targeted civilians, either through attacks on villages or assassinations of group leaders, and arguably strayed into active ethnic cleansing as hundreds or thousands were displaced following the reprisals. However, in the past both governmental and civil society groups have attempted to intervene rapidly in these conflicts, aware that this potential for quick escalation exists, as they did in 2015 in relation to the Bantu-Batwa conflict in the Manono area of Katanga province ([UNICEF, 31 May 2016](#)).

As of the end of November, both the Bantus/Batwas and Hutu/Nande ethnic dyads are engaged in another round of reprisal-based violence which is currently in the process of escalating. Recent notable examples of violence of this type includes an attack by Batwa killed 30 Bantu in the Muswaki area on 20 November ([World Bulletin, 25 No-](#)

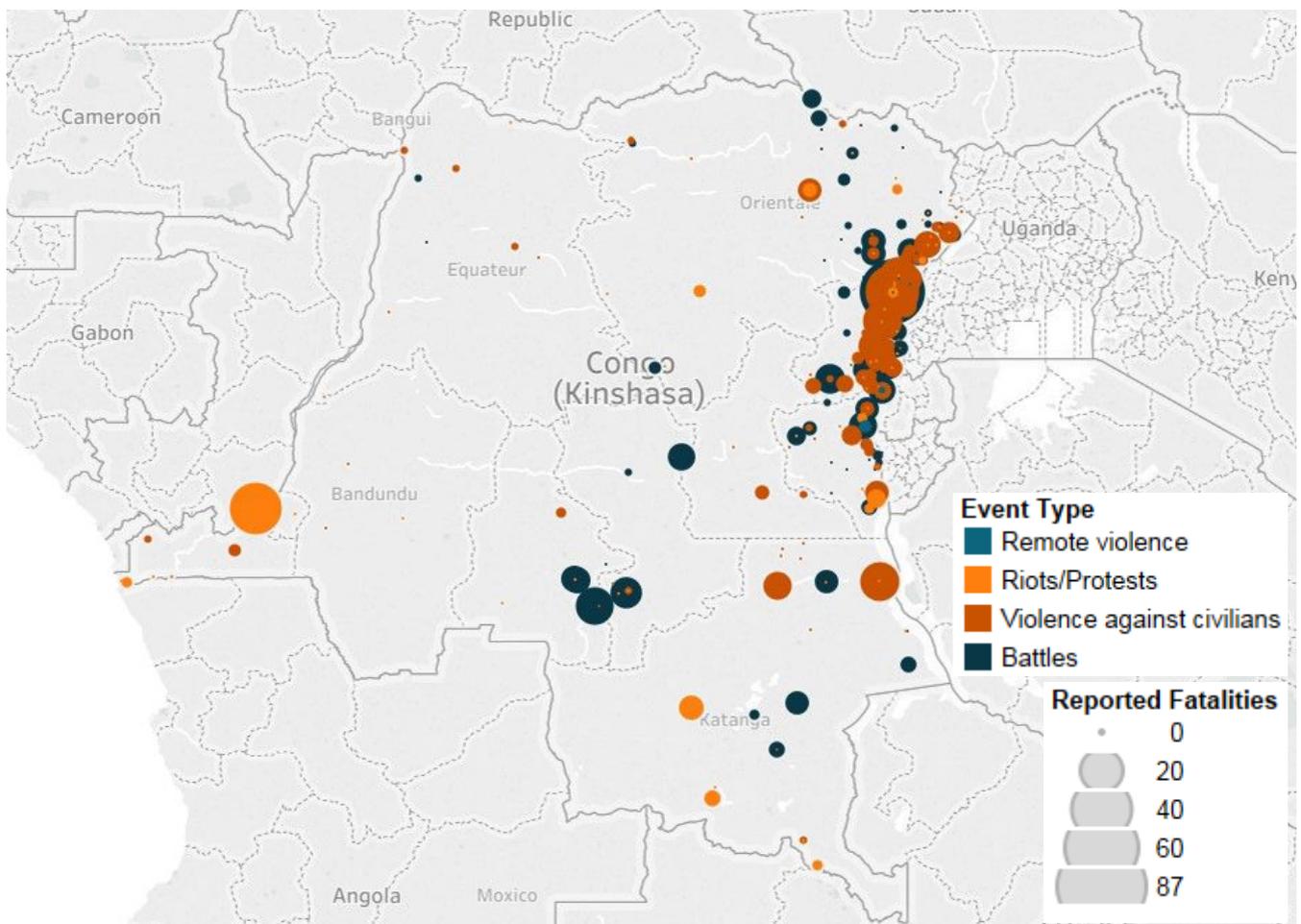


Figure 5: Number of Reported Fatalities by Event Type and Location in DR-Congo, from January - November 2016.

Democratic Republic of Congo

ember 2016) and an attack by a Nande ethnic militia, the Mazembe Mayi Mayi group, on an IDP camp in Luhanga which killed as many as 34 people, primarily ethnic Hutus, on 27 November ([World Bulletin, 27 November 2016](#)).

In terms of riots and protests, two main trends can be identified in 2016 for the DR-Congo: escalating election-related protests and concerns over insecurity in the East ([ACLED Crisis Blog, 7 October 2016](#)). An unprecedented number of fatalities were recorded in riots and protests in 2016, more than any year since ACLED started recording, with the majority of these concentrated in Kinshasa between 19-20 January. These events resulted in as many as forty-nine civilians and six police officers killed, numerous incidents of vandalism and looting, and many political HQs of both the opposition and ruling coalitions burned down (see Figure 5). Other notable riot and protest events resulting in fatalities in 2016 included clashes between police and demobilized fighters (14 fatalities in 3 events) and police engagements with protesters denouncing insecurity, primarily taking place in cities in the Eastern DR-Congo (6 fatalities in 3 events).

A unique trend in the data in 2016 for DR-Congo was the rise of the Kamwina Nsapu (KN) militia, which was formed in August 2016 and based in the province of Kasai-Central (formed in 2015 from parts of Kasai-Oriental and Kasai-Occidental; see Figure 6). The group has continued to engage in attacks since its formation, with its most recent activity involving clashes with security forces in Tshikapa ([Radio Okapi, 4 December 2016](#)). These clashes came shortly after the beheading of two police officers accused of rape by suspected KN militiamen in Kabeya-Lumbu, and a subsequent ambush of government reinforcements sent to the area that resulted in at least 10 security personnel killed in an ambush around 30 November ([Gulf News, 3 December 2016](#)).

The KN militia was formed by Kamwina Nsapu, a traditional chief opposed to the central government ([IBT, September 24, 2016](#)) that announced his intention to “rid Kasai-Central of all law enforcement agents” whom he claimed were engaged in harassment of the population. The group’s activities seem to support this objective as KN militiamen have solely been recorded as engaging in clashes against security forces, with no attacks specifically targeting civilians recorded by ACLED as of the end of November 2016 (although collateral fatalities among civilians have been recorded, as well as vandalism and looting of public buildings). The first recorded instance of KN militia

activity involved clashes between KN militiamen and police in the Tshimbulu area, first on 8 August resulting in nine fatalities, and then again on 12 August, resulting in eleven police and eight militiamen killed including chief Kamwina Nsapu himself. Following these events, the provincial governor labelled the chief and his militia as “terrorists” ([Radio Okapi, 13 August 2016](#)). The next month, KN militiamen staged a major attack between 22-23 September on the provincial capital of Kananga, and specifically its airport, which left at least fourteen dead. The militiamen were allegedly seeking to avenge their dead leader ([BBC News, 24 September 2016](#)).

Further activity by the KN militiamen - involving the temporary, non-violent occupation of Dimbelenge in late September and clashes with security forces in the Kena Nkuna area in mid-October - was followed by a lull that was punctuated by the violence mentioned previously around the end of November. However, although these events have brought a new degree of instability to Kasai-Central, which has not seen violence on this scale since the Second Congo War, it is not yet clear what lasting impact this militia will have. Notwithstanding, the average fatality count of the fourteen battles ACLED has recorded KN militiamen participating in is 6.5 for a total of 91 fatalities (this number represents casualties on both sides, as well as collateral deaths; see Figure 6). This relatively high average, with around 47 of those killed being militiamen and 35 security personnel, gives some idea of the threat-level posed by this militia. When combined with their willingness to attack a city as large as Kananga, they have the potential to cause serious danger to the stability of central DR-Congo.

Notwithstanding the trends examined above, the DR-Congo is projected to witness a drop in total annual fatalities in 2016 compared to 2015. However, based on the many and varied sources of instability within the DR-Congo, from ethnic conflicts and disputes with the central government to anger over elections and insecurity, the country remains in a vulnerable position. Should these distinct conflicts escalate, it would likely exacerbate the country’s conflict landscape and present a challenge to the country’s conflict management capacities. This is a very real concern considering that the UN peacekeeping mission MONUSCO already supports the Congolese military in its responses to the relatively traditional threats posed by eastern rebel groups such as the ADF and FDLR. Further deterioration of the security situation, as well as the escalation of potentially overlapping ethnic conflicts

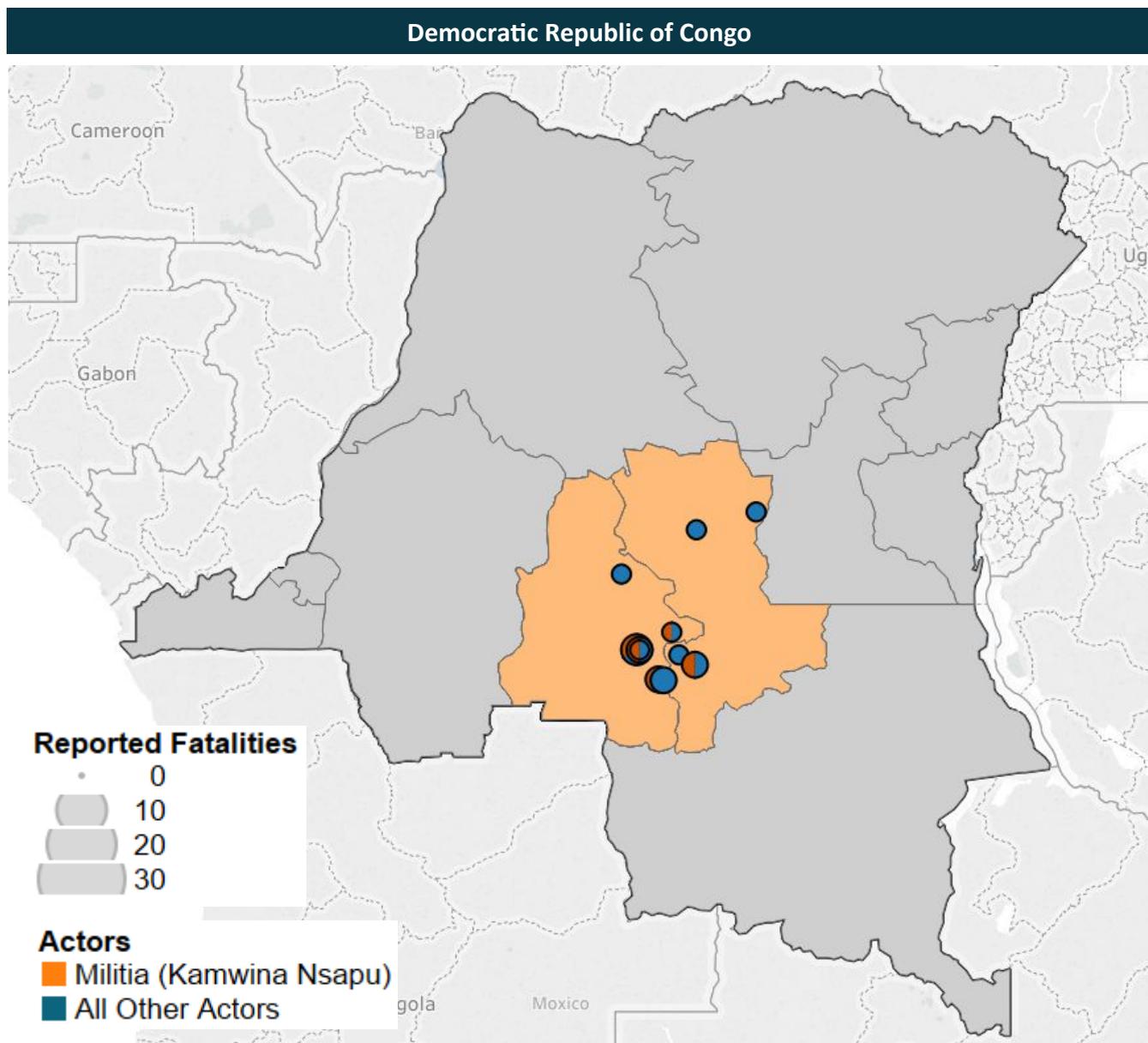


Figure 6: Number of Reported Fatalities by Actor in Kasai-Central Area in DR-Congo, from January - November 2016.

coupled with the new threat represented by the KN militia, would seriously challenge the capacity of the already overstretched Congolese forces to maintain the existing level of relative security.

On top of these largely disconnected dynamics there is also growing concern over the potential for renewed protests and possible escalating violence as Congolese President Joseph Kabila attempts to extend his term limit ([The Guardian, 10 November 2016](#)). This situation remains volatile as elections scheduled for November 2016 have been postponed until at least 2018 ([Brookings, 22 Novem-](#)

[ber 2016](#)) and it remains to be seen how the opposition will respond to this. Although currently unlikely, if armed resistance does result from President Kabila's bid to extend his time in office as opposition leaders have warned ([The Guardian, 10 November 2016](#)), this would have considerable negative ramifications for stability and security throughout the country and would thus presents the biggest threat to the DR-Congo as the country looks towards 2017.

Egypt

An overview of Egypt from January – December 2016 indicates a stable and consistent level of political violence and protest over the course of the year (see Figure 7). Overall conflict and political violence levels decreased, with battles witnessing the most significant drop of nearly 41% from 2015 to 2016. Whilst on the surface the conflict dynamics indicate a reduction in violence from the previous year, 2016 was characterised by multiple, and as of yet discrete, political contentions across Egypt. Notwithstanding the resistance trends reviewed below, the continued consolidation of political authority by the el-Sisi regime coupled with a reserved approach to non-violent resistance suggests that 2017 will see a continuation of low-level protest activity that remains undeveloped.

In 2016, the el-Sisi regime largely contained mass outbreaks of riots and protests across Egypt. Small-scale riots and protests simmered throughout 2016 as a diverse range of localised interests, grievances and movements cautiously took to the streets. Towards the latter half of 2016 economically-driven protests appeared to gain more traction as President Sisi’s promises of an economic turna-

round continually failed to materialise and Egyptians were faced with rising electricity prices, high inflation, tax increases and staple food shortages ([Reuters, 23 October 2016](#)). However, the continued targeting and detention of journalists, lawyers and protest organisers has impaired any attempts to organise on a largescale even against the backdrop of deteriorating economic conditions and living standards for many Egyptians.

Two notable surges in protest activity occurred in April and again in November. In April, protests erupted against the transfer of two Red Sea islands, Tiran and Sanafir, to Saudi Arabia. This move by Sisi was widely criticised as unconstitutional, ceding control of the islands in exchange for political backing from Saudi Arabia and financial investment ([BBC, 21 June 2016](#)). The nationwide protests covered 18 governorates, predominantly concentrating in Cairo, Giza and Alexandria (see Figure 8). This contrasts with an average of 8 governorates per month experiencing protest activity. A court ruling in June eventually annulled the decision to transfer the islands and the events, in conjunction with geopolitical tensions, are widely cited as setting in motion a souring of Egypt-Saudi relations ([Middle East Eye, 17 October 2016](#)). The second stirring of political disquiet emerged on 11 November as protesters objected to crippling price hikes. The group behind this call to protest remained obscure though the Muslim Brotherhood ‘Anti-Coup Alliance’ certainly had an organisational presence. Whilst these protests failed to produce any sustained momentum - largely owing to the fear of reprisal attacks for aligning with a group who the Egyptian regime would not hesitate to violently repress - demonstrations were recorded in 13 governorates indicating a substantially higher dispersion than the monthly average for 2016. Despite critical media coverage of the failings of the 11 November poverty protests, these two flashpoints demonstrate the residual capacity that Egypt retains to coordinate a non-violent campaign.

2016 saw a shift away from protests organised by religious groups – namely the Muslim Brotherhood - as organised labour and trade unions became a more prevalent force in the protest landscape ([ACLED Conflict Trends Report November 2016](#)). This coincided with the state's attempt to consolidate the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) under the government-sanctioned Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF), restricting its independence and space to freely operate and openly dissent.

Reported Fatalities

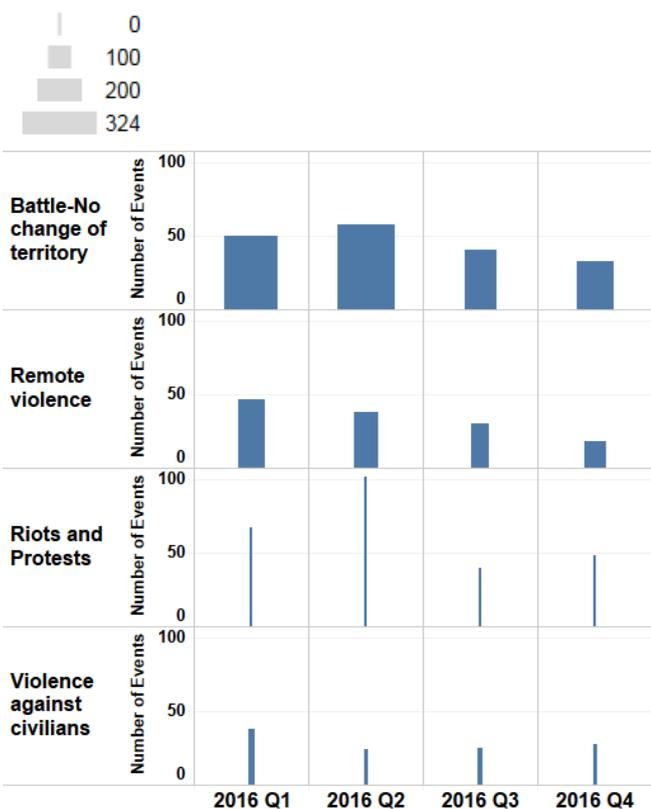


Figure 7: Number of Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities by Type in Egypt, from January - November 2016.

Egypt

“If the protests organized by the youth, the Islamists, and the Egyptian civil society have been eliminated by the current state repression of oppositional movements, strikes and labor protests are still a matter of concern for the Egyptian authorities” ([The Cairo Review, 22 September 2016](#)). Whether the increased role of labour strikes and demonstrations is a response to the tightening state grip that threatens to stunt the development of an organised opposition or whether the state responded to a growing organisational capacity of non-government institutions is unclear but President el-Sisi’s refocusing demonstrates the potential for longstanding societal groups to reactivate and challenge the status quo.

Elsewhere in Egypt, violence against civilians predominantly perpetrated by police forces involved protesters, civilians, activists, and civil society members subjected to extrajudicial violence and claims of torture. Egypt’s security apparatus accounted for 45% of all reported violence against civilians; only the Islamic State affiliate group ‘State of Sinai’ were responsible for a larger share of civilian fatalities (38% compared to 30% by police forces). However, another important domestic trend prevalent during 2016 was the proliferation of sectarian clashes in Upper Egypt between Muslim and Coptic Christian residents. Rioting mobs have clashed over the controversial building of churches prompting commentators to ask whether Upper Egypt is becoming “the epicentre for sec-

tarian violence?” ([Al Arabiya, 29 July 2016](#)). In a bid to defuse tensions, the Egyptian parliament issued a law that regulates the construction of churches thus upholding the rights of Coptic Christians. In reality, the law continues to discriminate against the minority population by imposing strict requirements on where churches can be built and many argue that it fails to tackle the systemic problem of perceived impunity for the perpetrators of religious violence ([Human Rights Watch, 15 September 2016](#)).

Looking forward to 2017, commentators are speculating over the prospects of a movement reminiscent of the 1977 bread riots ([The Cairo Review of Global Affairs, 17 November 2016](#)). Whilst the mechanisms through which the Egyptian economy is (mis)managed certainly provide the framing for large scale protests to return once again, observers should monitor the development of trade union and labour activity to gauge the likelihood of widespread, destabilising protests. Should workers and unions continue to engage in disruptive action they are likely to fall more clearly into the crosshairs of state repression. But their predisposition to remain as an autonomous movement with a narrow focus on immediate gains for workers such as salaries, working conditions and job security will likely impede large scale nonviolent coordination. As such, Egypt’s protest landscape is likely to be characterised by pockets of spontaneous rioting over deteriorating economic conditions ([The Economist, 12 November 2016](#)).

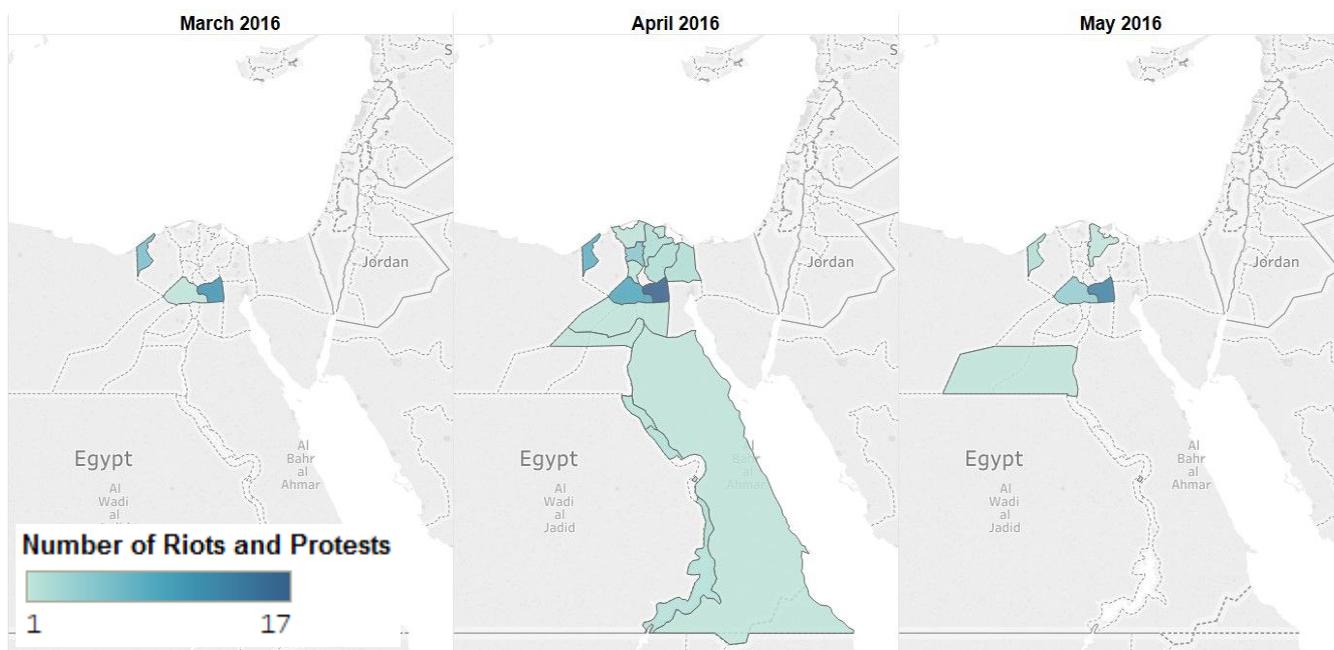


Figure 8: Number of Riots and Protests by Location in Egypt, from March - May 2016.

South Africa

2016 represents the second most active year in the ACLED dataset for South Africa. Although conflict and protest event levels have decreased overall since 2015, 2016 has borne witness to several crucial events and trends which have had serious ramifications on the fabric of South African society. As Figure 9 demonstrates, protests and riots continued to make up the bulk of events in South Africa over 2016. Violent protest action preceding the local elections and the continuation of nationwide student protests have dominated conflict trends over 2016.

In August 2016, South Africa held key local government elections. These elections took place amidst growing dissatisfaction with increasing government corruption, the slow pace of development and the government’s inability to deliver on its promises after 20 years of democracy. Violent protests were particularly prominent in the area of Vuwani in March and June – more than 20 schools were destroyed – and Pretoria in which violent protests engulfed outlying townships ([Election Bureau, 28 July 2016](#)). National dissatisfaction was expressed not only through widespread pre-election protest action, but through substantial electoral losses for the ruling African National Congress (ANC). The ANC lost around 8% of the overall vote in 2016 compared to the 2011 election and further lost control of the important municipalities of Nelson

Mandela Bay, Johannesburg, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni ([News24, N/D](#)).

Under the auspices of the #FeesMustFall campaign, student protests on campuses throughout South Africa have continued to be a prominent feature of 2016 ([Conflict Trend Report, October 2016](#); [Conflict Trend Report, May 2016](#)). Although these protests have occurred sporadically throughout much of the year, they spiked in September and October with the Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande’s announcement of an 8% fee increase for 2017. While these fee increases do not apply to families with an income of R600,000 or less, many in the protest movement see such policy as merely a stop-gap, with the bigger issue of the eradication of tuition fees being left unresolved ([Time Live, 23 November 2016](#)). As such, it is highly likely that student protests will continue in the New Year when universities reopen. While student protest action has been more peaceful than not over 2016 ([Conflict Trend Report, October 2016](#)), state and private security forces have nevertheless dealt with said protests with a heavy hand – more than 800 students have been arrested in 2016 ([African News Agency, 28 October 2016](#)). As such, it is probable that students may in future resort to more violent forms of protests given the increased securitization of campuses and heavy-handedness of security forces.

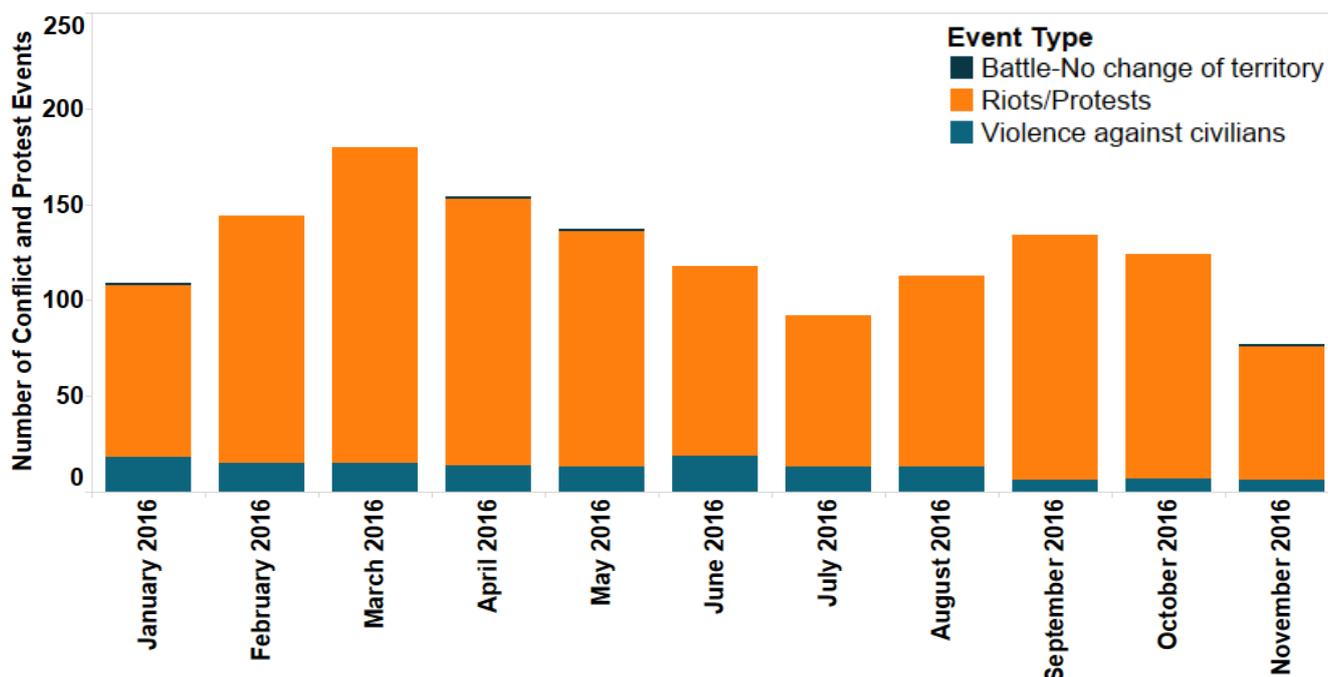


Figure 9: Number of Conflict and Protest Events by Type in South Africa, from January - November 2016.

Sudan

With political violence levels at their second highest point since 1997 as per the ACLED dataset, Sudan placed itself as the fourth most active conflict country in Africa in 2016. Despite a slight decrease in the level of reported battles and violence against civilians compared to 2013 and 2014 respectively, the country saw a significant rise in remote warfare (reaching its highest level since 1997 with 275 records) and maintained sustained levels of fatalities (nearly 3,490 as of early December) and repression of protest movements (see Figure 10). Darfur continued to capture most of Sudan’s political violence activity, with nearly 62% of events recorded in the state. However, political violence in Darfur has been declining since 2014, and gaining grounds eastwards in the states of Kordofan, Blue Nile and Khartoum (see Figure 11). This piece focuses on the main trends in government/opposition warfare in these states in 2016, as well as on the state response to the latest wave of protests in Khartoum.

Warfare

Conflict spiked in Sudan in the first half of the year, primarily driven by battles opposing government and rebel forces, which reached their highest levels since 1997. These were mainly opposing government and Sudan Liberation Movement/Army forces aligned with Abdul Wahud al-Nur (SLM/A-Nur) in Darfur’s Jebel Marra over January-February, but clashes also escalated between the government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N) in South Kordofan and Blue Nile over March-May (ACLED, June 2016; Figure 11). Battles and

remote violence reduced in the second part of the year, due to the onset of the rainy season when mobility is restricted, and preparations for the November renewed fighting season.

Several trends have emerged:

1) Remote violence, corresponding mainly to aerial attacks perpetrated by government forces against alleged rebel strongholds, escalated in all three states in the context of these clashes, and continued throughout the rainy season. Remote violence events in Darfur almost doubled from 87 to 149 events between 2015 and 2016. In South Kordofan, they concurrently rose from 66 in 2015 to 100 in 2016, reaching levels unseen since the end of 2012, when a similar government aerial campaign targeted the SPLM-N in the Nuba Mountains (HRW, 12 December 2012). The ability of the government to regain territory from rebels through these campaigns is unclear. However, their effects on civilian populations, through the alleged use of indiscriminate, unguided and chemical weapons and the damaging of plantations and harvests, have been largely denounced (Amnesty International, 29 September 2016; Amnesty International, 4 October 2016; HRW, 8 September 2016).

2) In South Kordofan, offensives targeted areas previously unaffected by conflict but on which many populations rely for food production (Karkaria, Al Azraq and Al Maradis for instance) (Amnesty International, 29 September 2016). Government forces set up bases in these areas and stayed throughout the rainy season, building up their capacity

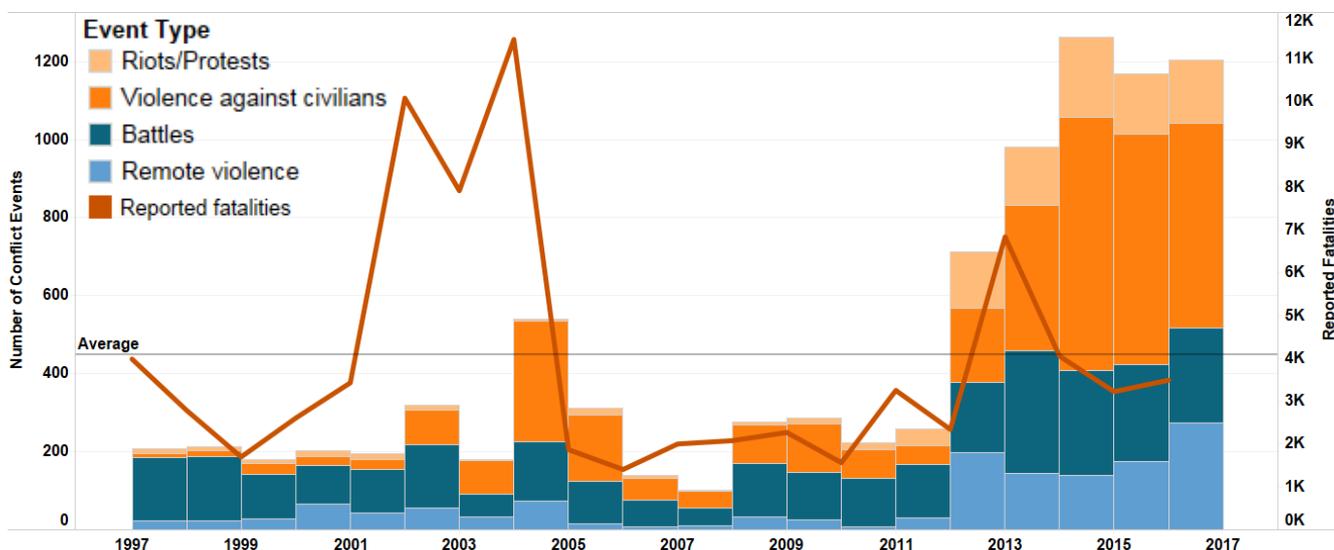


Figure 10: Number of Conflict and Protest Events by Type and Fatalities in Sudan, from 1997 - November 2016.

Sudan

ahead of the resumption of conflict in November, but also preventing civilians from returning to their homes and farming their crops. This was perceived as a strategy designed to push civilians out of rebel-held areas ([Nuba Reports, 29 November 2016](#); [Nuba Reports, 9 August 2016](#)).

3) Pro-government militias, including the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Janjaweed, supported ground offensives by government forces in the three states, a strategy so far predominant in Darfur ([Amnesty International, 29 September 2016](#); [HRW, 9 September 2015](#)). RSF engaged in violence in Blue Nile for the first time since their creation in 2014 and have continued to operate in Kordofan, while Janjaweed activities in Darfur significantly increased from June onwards. Pro-government militias are mostly involved in violence against civilians and civilian property, including unlawful killings, abductions, rapes, lootings and burnings of properties ([Amnesty International, 29 September 2016](#)). Along with regular government forces, they are responsible for nearly half of the overall violence against civilians in the country (see Figure 12).

Clashes between government and opposition forces in 2016 have occurred against a backdrop of limited advances on the political stage; ceasefires proving difficult to hold as a result. SLM-AW has continued to reject direct negotiations with the government ([UNSC, 28 October 2016](#)), and while an opposition coalition signed the AU-brokered peace roadmap on 8 August, negotiations collapsed soon after over traditional points of discord such as humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas ([Nuba Reports, 16 August 2016](#)). SPLM-N suspended part of the negotiations with the government in the last part of the year, reacting to allegations of chemical weapons use and popular discontent over fuel subsidy cuts ([Radio Dabanga, 23 October 2016](#); [Radio Dabanga, 4 December 2016](#)). With no agreement signed and no agreed date to renew negotiations, conflicts in Darfur, Kordofan and Blue Nile seem set to continue ([Nuba reports, 16 August 2016](#)).

Protests/Riots

Sudan was further destabilized in 2016 by sustained protests mainly in Khartoum (see Figure 10), and their violent repression by authorities. The latest and most significant

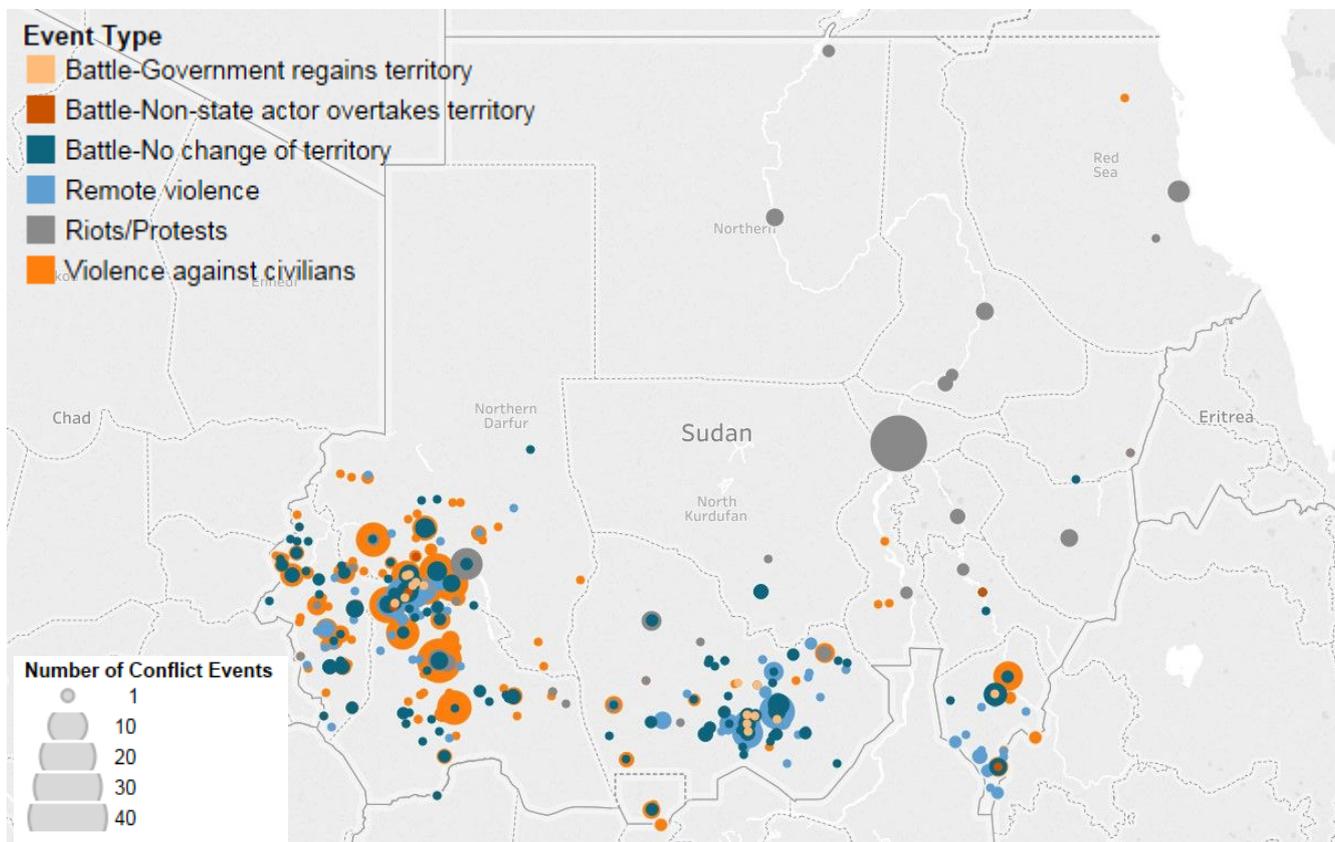


Figure 11: Number of Conflict and Protest Events by Type and Location in Sudan, from January - November 2016.

Sudan

wave of protests started in November, after authorities introduced austerity measures by cutting fuel subsidies, resulting in increased consumer goods' prices. Economists and opposition leaders have criticized the abrupt timing of the measure and its un-alleviated impact on poorest populations – a concern sustained by president al-Bashir mentioning that the money saved would be used to support military efforts ([Nuba Reports, 18 November 2016](#)). Police dispersed a number of protests with tear gas, including by students, teachers, doctors and pharmacists, and detained dozens of protesters and critics among opposition parties. As of 29 November for instance, up to 27 members of the Sudanese Congress Party remained detained

and incommunicado, and dozens of newspapers had been suspended over allegedly covering the protests ([Radio Dabanga, 29 November 2016](#); [Sudan Tribune, 2 December 2016](#)). This pattern of economic protests and political arrests has been described as endangering the small gains made in 2016 by Khartoum in its negotiations with rebel forces and in bringing in the international community's support for peace processes in the country ([ICG, 30 November 2016](#)).

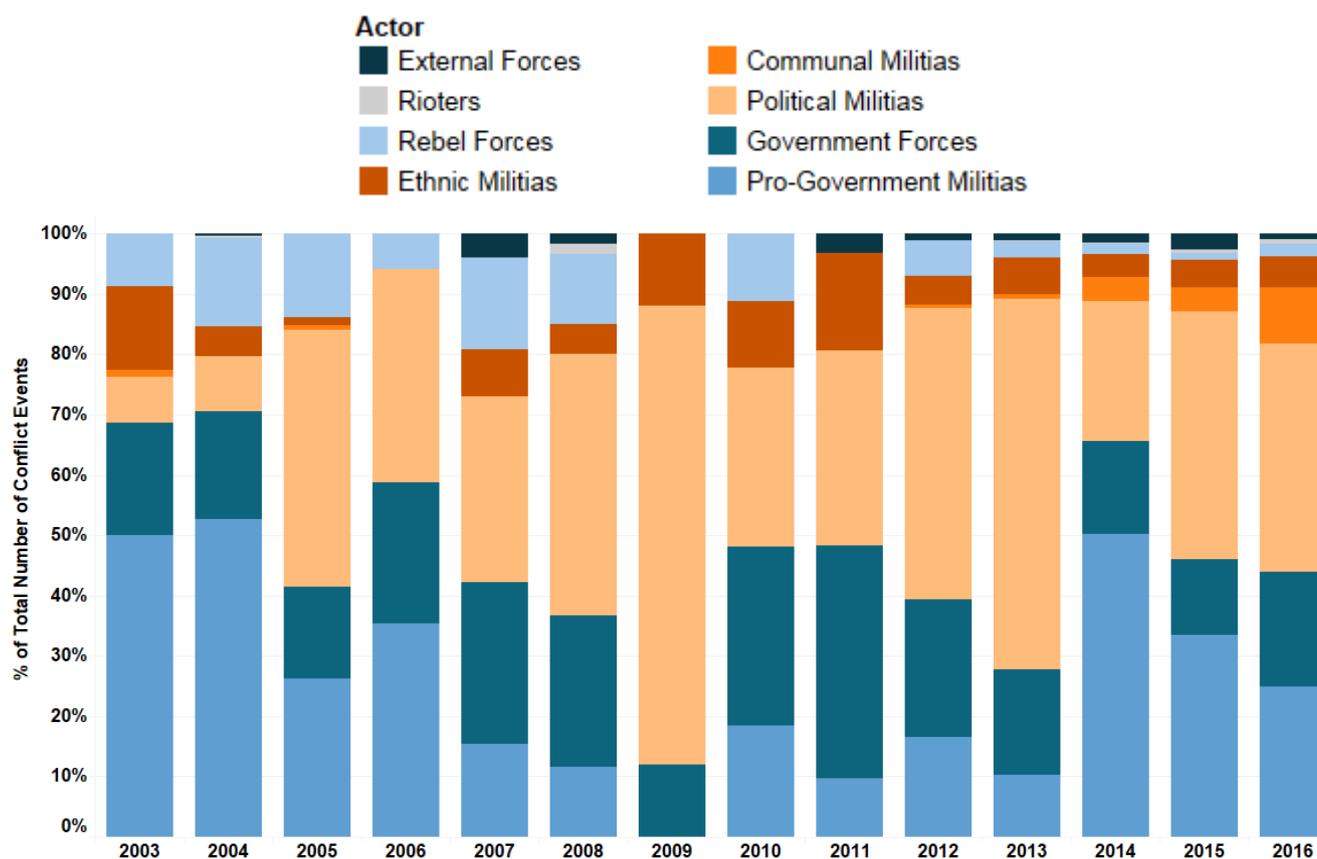


Figure 12: Share of Actors' Engagement in Violence Against Civilians by Actor Type in Sudan, from 2003 - 2016.

Support

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is supported by European Commission Grant no. 283755.

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 on the [ACLED website](#).