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Peoples under Threat 2021

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In many parts of the world, wide-ranging atrocities and other human rights abuses continue to occur, threatening especially those who are considered political opponents, members of minority groups and indigenous peoples. The rise of authoritarianism across the globe in recent years has direct impacts in contexts where genocide, mass killing or systematic violent repression have occurred or there is a risk of such actions taking place. The countries at the top and ascending the 2021 *Peoples under Threat* index illustrate how, in various ways and to different degrees, authoritarian politics is playing a detrimental role in societies struggling with division, conflict and violence.

Nowhere has this been more apparent than Syria, yet again atop the *Peoples under Threat* table, where the authoritarian regime under Bashar al-Assad has inflicted a decade of war, refusing to cede power while causing untold suffering, death and devastation. The conflict – not confined only to Syria – has sent shockwaves throughout the world, with reverberations that could be felt for decades to come. Increasingly repressive national security practices elsewhere, in the name of fighting terrorism and managing the migration of people across borders, can be linked back to the conflict in Syria and are evident not only in countries such as Russia and Turkey, where authoritarian rule was already well established. In recent years, a similar trend has been evident across Europe, with a number of formerly liberal democratic states having drifted towards a more draconian and nationalist political agenda. Syria has also been the crucible from which the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) has emerged, metamorphosed and gone global, inflaming deadly conflicts from the Sahel to Southeast Asia. While instrumentalized by xenophobic politicians sowing fear and societal division, the migration of millions of Syrians abroad has led to thousands of tragic deaths in the Mediterranean and other routes.

An accelerant to deepening authoritarianism has been the Covid-19 pandemic. As discussed in more detail in last year's *Peoples under Threat* report, pandemic management has given states new opportunities and justifications for advancing repressive measures to entrench power and suppress dissent. From Venezuela to Sudan to China, combating the coronavirus has continued to ease the efforts of numerous governments to amass emergency powers, restrict minority rights, weaken civil society, co-opt state institutions and silence dissent. With the spread of Covid-19 have come limits on freedom of movement

and assembly, heightened surveillance and violent enforcement of such measures by state and state-linked actors. In the Philippines, authoritarian President Rodrigo Duterte has overseen a harsh lockdown including arrests of critics of the government's pandemic response. In Cambodia under Hun Sen, one of the world's longest-serving dictators, numerous people have faced similar treatment. Through postponing elections and arranging constitutional amendments, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who has been accused of war crimes, has been able to expand his authority.

In several states profiled below, signs of positive change have been suddenly stalled or there has been a relapse into political violence and authoritarianism. On an unsteady path of democratization since 2015 but seemingly beginning to recover from decades of military rule, Myanmar suffered a coup in February 2021 at the hands of its generals, who have suppressed mass pro-democracy protests with deadly force. Sudan's transition to democracy after decades of dictatorship has similarly been waylaid by a coup instigated by the country's armed forces, which have met popular resistance with gratuitous violence. In Ethiopia, expanded rights and freedoms and an opening of civil society in the early days of the Abiy Ahmed administration have been overshadowed by more recent jailing of opposition figures, limiting of media freedoms and scapegoating of minorities in the context of an escalating war. In Afghanistan, meanwhile, whatever hopes may have existed for the development of a more inclusive politics have been dashed with the overthrow of the government by the Taliban in August 2021. Even in Armenia, a new entrant to the *Peoples under Threat* index, a recent conflict with authoritarian neighbour Azerbaijan has put pressure on a fragile democratization process.

An increasingly salient feature of violent authoritarianisms is that they are mutually legitimating and reinforcing. Conditions that render peoples under threat are, more and more, not just localized, but transnational. Having conducted fraudulent elections in August 2020, the Lukashenko regime in Belarus was under immense strain. A tide-turning rescue package from Russia – involving economic gifts, security personnel training and a media manipulation operation – drew on Russia's experience in Syria years earlier. While retaining more popular support domestically than Lukashenko, Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro too is buoyed by loans and oil investments from Russia and

Peoples most under threat – highest-rated countries 2021

Rank	Country	Groups	Total
1	Syria	Political targets, Sunnis, Shi'a/Alawites, Yezidis, Christians, Druze, Kurds, Palestinians	29.435
2	Somalia	Minorities incl. Bantu, Benadiri and 'caste' groups (Gabooye etc.); clan members at risk in fighting incl. Hawiye, Darod, etc.	23.010
3	South Sudan	Murle, Nuer, Dinka, Anuak, Jie, Kachipo	21.728
4	Afghanistan	Hazara, Pashtun, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Baluchis, Kuchis	20.741
5	Yemen	Zaydi Shi'a, Sunni tribes, al-Muhamasheen, Southerners	20.234
6	Iraq	Shi'a, Sunnis, Kurds, Turkmen, Christians, Mandaeans, Yezidis, Shabak, Faily Kurds, Bahá'ís, Palestinians	20.109
7	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	Hema and Lendu, Hutu, Luba, Lunda, Tutsi/Banyamulenge, Batwa/Bambutu, other groups	19.557
8	Sudan	Fur, Zaghawa, Massalit and others in Darfur; Ngok Dinka, Nuba, Beja	19.039
9	Central African Republic	Muslims, Christians; Kaba (Sara), Mboum, Mbororo, Gula, Aka	18.437
10	Myanmar	Kachin, Karenni, Karen, Mons, Rakhine, Rohingyas, Shan, Chin (Zomis), Wa	18.368
11	Pakistan	Shi'a (incl. Hazara), Ahmadis, Hindus, Christians and other religious minorities; Baluchis, Mohhajirs, Pashtun, Sindhis	17.781
12	Ethiopia	Amhara, Anuak, Afars, Oromo, Somalis, Tigrayans, smaller minorities	17.523

China. Censorship and surveillance of targeted populations, often enabling an array of rights abuses, have been facilitated by the global dispersion of China's technologies and tactics, with at least 24 countries using Chinese surveillance technologies honed through repression in Tibet, Xinjiang and Hong Kong.

While difficult to quantify, a convergence of authoritarian interests and methods undoubtedly strengthens illiberal norms and values globally, paving the way for discrimination and violence. Russia and China impede the possibility of the United Nations (UN) Security Council referring atrocities in Syria to

the International Criminal Court (ICC) while Russia continues to bomb civilian targets in Syria. With expectations of impunity, China continues to commit crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, subjecting the Muslim Uyghur population to mass surveillance, restrictions on movement and expression, and confinement in re-education camps, where detainees have been subjected to cultural and political indoctrination, forced labour and torture. China's norm-altering behaviour has been promoted through a global propaganda push and disinformation campaign through engagement in international institutions such

as the UN, other diplomatic initiatives and online outreach via extensive social media campaigns.

Aspiring authoritarian leaders around the world were arguably enabled by the actions in recent years of the administration of former President Donald Trump in the United States (US). Trump's refusal to admit electoral defeat, instead inciting an insurrectionist mob to storm the Capitol building on 6 January 2021, provided a source of legitimisation for others eager to dismiss unfavourable electoral outcomes as fraudulent, from Keiko Fujimori, daughter of Peru's former autocratic leader, to Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu. In response to nationwide protests calling for an end to systemic racism, Trump painted demonstrators as political opponents and an existential threat to the nation, encouraging heavy-handed violence by the police as well as far-right militia groups.

This script is readily transposed to other countries such as India, putatively the world's most populous democracy but an exemplar of creeping authoritarianism, with enormous consequences. Turning to draconian counterterrorism and sedition laws, the Hindu supremacist government of Narendra Modi has steadily eroded political rights and civil liberties since it came to power in 2014, escalating a crackdown on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), journalists, academics and a huge range of protestors. The government of India has also claimed the mantle of world leader in internet shutdowns, continuously used in Indian-occupied Kashmir, a repressive tactic that has caught on from Uganda to Iran as a means of restricting information flows and silencing dissent. The notion that India is a nation-state of and for Hindus above all – and particularly above Muslims – has underwritten a spate of deadly attacks on minorities. Recently, most notable was a state-abetted pogrom in February 2020 in which Hindu nationalist mobs and police murdered more than 30 Muslims in the streets of northeast Delhi, which Trump failed to condemn while on a state visit only kilometres away.

The inauguration of a new administration under President Joe Biden in January 2021 boosted hopes of renewed US leadership in promoting liberal democratic values globally. Yet authoritarianism exists on a spectrum, not as one side of a dichotomy, and US promotion of democracy and human rights has always been selective and self-serving. Western countries continue to support authoritarianism in material ways, knowingly contributing to deadly violence perpetrated against vulnerable populations. American and French

companies have developed and sold technology to abusive governments in Belarus and Libya, and Israeli NSO Group's Pegasus spyware has been a tool in the hands of authoritarian governments worldwide, from Azerbaijan to Rwanda. For decades the US has funneled billions of dollars of military aid annually to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Israel, all of which are responsible for inflicting deadly violence on populations under their control on a regular basis. At the same time, booming global arms transfers are facilitated by trade missions between liberal democratic state officials and businesspeople and their counterparts with more authoritarian credentials.

The violent impacts of rising authoritarianism are rooted in complex histories and contemporary contingencies, the outcome of political, social, cultural and economic processes unfolding within and across nation-states. *Peoples under Threat* identifies those country situations around the world where communities face the greatest risk of genocide, mass killing or systematic violent repression. Based on current indicators from authoritative sources (see box on page 17), *Peoples under Threat* has been compiled every year since 2005 to provide early warning of potential future mass atrocities. This edition of *Peoples under Threat* highlights 21 situations with pressing risks – states either at the top of the index or those swiftly rising. It is estimated that these will account for the vast majority of civilians who are likely to be killed over the coming year.

Peoples at greatest risk

More than a decade after popular uprisings gave way to civil war, **Syria** again tops the *Peoples under Threat* index – the seventh time in a row. Farcical presidential elections in May 2021 occurred in the two-thirds of the country under government control and against the backdrop of tens of thousands of perceived political opponents having been arrested, tortured or disappeared since the conflict began in 2011. More than half the pre-war population has been displaced, either as internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Syria or as refugees outside the country, and an estimated 500,000 people have been killed in the conflict – the large majority by the government, assisted by Iran, various militias and crucial Russian military assistance. Large-scale fighting has gradually declined, with Islamist rebels formerly affiliated with al-Qaeda confined to Idlib province, ISIS resorting mainly to hit-and-run attacks, Turkish and Turkey-backed Syrian

opposition forces positioned across northern Syria, and Kurdish-led fighters controlling the northeast. In this patchwork of hostilities, civilians remain extremely vulnerable to ongoing armed confrontations.

Patterns of instability and conflict long affecting **Somalia** continue, with the war against al-Shabaab militants now spanning over 15 years. Government forces backed by US drone strikes and special forces, African Union (AU) personnel and other regional allies have been largely unsuccessful in preventing deadly al-Shabaab attacks on civilians, security forces and government officials in Mogadishu and across south-central Somalia, where the group assumes many state functions. While international fatigue and frustration mount, some 3 million civilians are internally displaced as a result of the conflict and interlocking crises of drought, food insecurity and inadequate healthcare. Political tensions surrounding postponed elections further complicate the situation, with a descent into more intractable violence only narrowly averted when armed forces supporting President Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmajo' exchanged gunfire with opposition loyalists in April 2021. This and other disputes are perpetuated by a political system that awards significant power to rivalrous clan-based elites.

In **South Sudan** little progress has been made in forging a sustainable peace since the formation in early 2020 of a national unity government between factions loyal to President Salva Kiir and longtime adversary Riek Machar, who fought a brutal six-year civil war. Major provisions of the peace deal await implementation, with unification of former rebels into the army stalled by mismanagement and inadequate resources, leaving many armed young men frustrated. Political tensions have simmered between the two sides, and the situation is made more precarious by an insurgency in the southernmost Equatoria region, led by a general calling for greater provincial autonomy. Government soldiers as well as rebel fighters remain responsible for an array of depredations against civilians including unlawful killings, abductions, sexual violence and recruitment of child soldiers. Inter-ethnic violence between Dinka, Nuer and Muerle pastoralists, centred around disputes over livestock and land, has escalated through 2020–21.

After stalled peace talks with the US, the Taliban escalated its attacks on security forces and civilians in **Afghanistan**, resulting in a record number of civilian casualties in the first half of 2021 and the fall of the national government in August. Since taking power, the

Taliban – despite initial promises of moderation and a more inclusive approach to governance – has cracked down violently on dissent and targeted journalists, activists, former officials and other perceived opponents of the new regime. In addition to the repression of the rights and freedoms of Afghan women, another grave concern is the situation facing Afghanistan's ethnic and religious minorities, particularly the Shi'a Hazara community who, fearing heightening persecution, have fled the country in increasing numbers. Hazaras, for years targeted by Taliban insurgents in deadly attacks, now face an even greater threat from IS-Khorasan Province militants, who in recent months have been responsible for brutal mass killings in a girls' school, a hospital maternity ward and a mosque.

The war in **Yemen** emerged in the wake of a failed political process aiming to stabilize the country after longtime authoritarian President Ali Abdullah Saleh was ousted in a 2011 popular uprising. Since then, the conflict has developed into the world's worst humanitarian disaster, with a death toll now exceeding 230,000. A major fear for civilians is air strikes and missile attacks by all parties to the conflict, including the Iran-backed Houthi rebels and the internationally recognized government, assisted by a Saudi-led coalition of Arab and Western states. Through 2020–21 the Houthis made significant territorial gains, raising the prospect of a forthcoming shift in the conflict: with a weakened government, international mediators would have less influence and the secessionist Southern Transitional Council would play a bigger role. While its operational capacity has been diminished in recent years and the group's identity and agenda have become more diffuse, Yemen's al-Qaeda affiliate continues to clash with rival ISIS fighters as well as Houthi and government forces.

Iraq has been unable to outgrow a legacy of authoritarian rule and the sectarian tensions it nurtured for decades prior to their intensification following the US-led invasion of 2003. Calling for fundamental reforms to the post-2003 political system, the emergence of mass anti-government protests in 2019 led to early elections in October 2021. Yet it remains doubtful whether a nationally unifying sense of legitimate political authority can be ushered in. Assassinations, threats and bribery characterized the lead-up to the elections. Various Shi'a political groups, many with ties to Iran, have retained their influence over Iraqi politics. In diverse regions such as Ninewa – exceptionally hard-hit by

ISIS and the joint campaign by the Iraqi military, a US-led coalition and Kurdish forces to dislodge the group – feelings of neglect and mistrust toward the state and other communities persist. Having regrouped in recent years and seeking to recruit disillusioned Sunni Arabs, ISIS has since 2020 escalated attacks, frequently on civilians and particularly in the provinces of Kirkuk, Salahaddin and Diyala.

The **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** continues to be afflicted by political instability as well as ongoing armed conflict in its eastern provinces, with well over 100 armed groups regularly attacking one another, government forces supported by UN troops, and civilians. Ituri and North Kivu have been the worst affected as of late, and while rebels have been responsible for the majority of civilian deaths, including several brutal massacres by the Allied Democratic Forces, an ISIS-linked group, government soldiers have also committed widespread abuses. In May 2021, the central government imposed martial law in Ituri and North Kivu, where the number of displaced people in both provinces has now reached more than 3.5 million people, but attacks on civilians have not declined. Critics warn that martial law has been used to drastically narrow basic freedoms of expression and association, adding to the broader repressive measures President Félix Tshisekedi has taken to consolidate power over rivals since 2020.

Since the overthrow of dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019, **Sudan's** transition to democratic governance has hung in the balance. More than two years later, to protect its political and economic interests established over several decades, the military launched a coup in October 2021. While the civilian prime minister was nominally reinstated thereafter, this intervention ultimately appears to reflect a reassertion of military control over the country's politics. Sudanese involved in mass demonstrations continue to risk brutalization and death at the hands of paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, following an established pattern. While several armed groups in Darfur signed a peace agreement with the government, others have refused and violence has continued, with close to five times more people displaced in the first four months of 2021 alone than during the entirety of 2020. A rollback of joint UN–AU peacekeepers has removed a deterrent to abuses of civilians, including in West Darfur, where ethnic conflict between Massalit and Arab communities has ignited.

Rising threats

The **Central African Republic (CAR)** remains riven by evolving conflict dynamics since the collapse of a 2019 peace agreement between the government and numerous rebel groups, whose ranks largely derive from the country's long-marginalized Muslim minority. Amid fraught presidential elections last December, a loose coalition of rebel groups launched an offensive against the government, capturing numerous population centres and nearly two thirds of the country outside the capital. Supported mainly by Rwandan soldiers and Russian mercenaries, government forces reversed much of the rebels' territorial gains, but minimal state capacity and fragmented political authority do little to improve conditions of endemic insecurity across much of CAR. Grave human rights violations including summary killings, sexual violence and abductions have been committed by rebel fighters as well as government forces and their foreign allies. UN peacekeepers, for their part, have been widely criticized for their ineffectual efforts to bring about sustainable peace.

After taking steps toward democratization over the past decade, power in **Myanmar** has been decisively reconsolidated in the authoritarian hands of the country's military. In February 2021, the newly elected, hugely popular government of Aung San Suu Kyi was overthrown by the army, leading to pro-democracy protests that brought millions of people into the streets over several months. Escalating violence and repressive measures by the military, resulting in more than 1,300 deaths and thousands of arrests, have forced the resistance movement underground. This has provoked the formation of civilian self-defence militias whose presence further complicates the country's volatile conflict dynamics. Prior to the coup, more than 20 'ethnic armed organizations' were already in various kinds of armed struggle with the government and/or one another, namely in Shan, Kachin, Chin, and Rakhine states – the latter the epicentre of the military's genocidal campaign against the mostly Muslim Rohingya community since 2017, for which no perpetrators have yet faced meaningful justice.

Pakistan remains wracked by insecurity. Through 2020–21, militant attacks on state security personnel and civilians have steadily risen in number, mainly in Khyber Paktunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces at the hands of the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) and Baluch separatists, who have also targeted Chinese infrastructure projects. The results of a recent ceasefire

Major risers 2021

Rank	Rise in rank	Country	Groups	Total
9	4	Central African Republic	Muslims, Christians; Kaba (Sara), Mboum, Mbororo, Gula, Aka	18.437
10	2	Myanmar	Kachin, Karenni, Karen, Mons, Rakhine, Rohingyas, Shan, Chin (Zomis), Wa	18.368
12	3	Ethiopia	Amhara, Anuak, Afars, Oromo, Somalis, Tigrayans, smaller minorities	17.523
20	5	Venezuela	Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, political/social targets	14.603
22	13	Mozambique	Northerners	13.988
25	19	Azerbaijan	Armenians	13.625
38	7	Burkina Faso	Mossi, Foulse, Fulani	11.726
46	12	Cote d'Ivoire	Northern Mande (Dioula), Senoufo, Bete, newly-settled groups	10.786
57	5	Haiti	Political/social targets	9.893
63	15	Belarus	Poles, political/social targets	9.395
68	19	Morocco	Berbers, Saharawis	9.170
71	28	Armenia	Armenians, Yezidis, Russians, Assyrians, Kurds, Ukrainians, Greeks	8.973

agreement between the government and TTP remain to be seen. Counter-insurgency operations have also resulted in abuses of civilians, and criticisms of these and other state practices have led to an intensified crackdown on dissent in the media, civil society and political opposition, who have been subjected to draconian counterterrorism and sedition laws. Hostile societal attitudes toward religious minorities remain commonplace, with Christians, Hindus, Shi'a and Ahmadis frequently facing violence and discrimination, and in some cases murder. Cross-border fighting between Pakistan and India escalated through 2020 and slowed with a ceasefire agreement in early 2021, but the situation remains volatile, creating a precarious situation for civilians on both sides of the 'Line of Control'.

A devastating civil war and humanitarian crisis in **Ethiopia** has now raged for more than a year with no end in sight. Large-scale armed conflict between the federal government and the armed forces of the Tigray People's Liberation Front broke out in November 2020 and have since led Tigrayan forces beyond their northern stronghold to the outskirts of the capital, Addis Ababa, potentially threatening the stability and coherence of Ethiopia itself as a political entity. The war has caused tens of thousands of deaths and mass displacement in Amhara and Afar regions, in addition to more than 2 million people uprooted in Tigray alone. Widespread abuses including torture, sexual violence and in some cases mass killings have been committed by federal forces, their Eritrean allies,

Tigrayan fighters and other armed groups swept into the conflict. Overshadowed by the war, inter-ethnic violence has deepened elsewhere in the country, particularly the Benishangul-Gumuz region where minorities have been massacred.

Venezuela remains afflicted by interlocking political, economic and humanitarian crises. Yet after a failed coup in April 2019 by opposition leader Juan Guaidó with the backing of the US and other allied countries, facing threats of US military intervention and pummelled by international sanctions that disproportionately harm ordinary Venezuelans, President Nicolás Maduro's government has since only consolidated its grip on power. Legislative elections in December 2020 and regional elections in November 2021 resulted in major losses for opposition parties, while civil liberties continue to be restricted, dissent quashed and thousands of political opponents have been subjected to extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances and torture, constituting crimes against humanity. More than 5.9 million people have now fled the country, amounting to one of the world's largest mass displacements, in order to escape shortages of basic goods and services while violence and insecurity persist.

Mozambique continues to rise in the *Peoples under Threat* table as the Islamist insurgency in northern Cabo Delgado province has grown significantly more deadly through 2020–21 and drawn international military training and assistance from several Western and African countries. Yet overstating the connections of Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamma'a with ISIS – as has been done with a US terrorist list designation – portends further militarization and worsening cycles of resentment and violence. Securitization alone will not address the essentially local grievances fueling the conflict, rooted in state incapacity, corruption and extreme economic deprivation in an area where Africa's three largest natural gas deposits enrich only Mozambican elites and multinational corporations. Militants and state security personnel continue to perpetrate an array of rights abuses against civilians, and while more than 800,000 people remain displaced in the north, in central Mozambique a splinter group of the opposition RENAMO has rejected a peace deal with the government while periodically attacking civilians in recent years.

Azerbaijan has rocketed up the *Peoples under Threat* index primarily owing to events surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh war with Armenia from September to November 2020, which halted with a Russia-backed ceasefire. Situated within and now partly controlled by

Azerbaijan, the breakaway territory of Nagorno-Karabakh is populated by mainly ethnic Armenians, nearly 100,000 of whom were recently displaced by fighting. More than 6,500 people, the vast majority soldiers, died in the conflict as Azerbaijan gained control of additional territory previously held by Armenia. Still, attacks by both sides, using indiscriminate weapons systems, were carried out repeatedly on civilian areas far from any discernible military targets. Civilians in conflict-affected areas remain at huge risk, particularly due to the growing number of unexploded landmines and cluster munitions which, following an earlier war decades ago, both sides have used in contravention to international law. Tensions have since flared, especially following border clashes in May and November 2021, which could incite further outbreaks of violence.

Embroiled in the wider conflict affecting the tri-state border area with Mali and Niger for more than five years, **Burkina Faso** has recently seen a southward extension of attacks by Islamist militants affiliated with the Sahelian branches of al-Qaeda and ISIS. Alarming, June 2021 saw the most deadly attack to date when more than 160 people were massacred in Solhan village, while November saw unprecedented losses among security forces in a single attack. Civilians have also faced killings and rights abuses without redress at the hands of Burkinabé armed forces, who have been supported in their counter-insurgency activities by France and a regional counterterrorism coalition, the G5 Sahel Joint Force. Already Burkina Faso has the world's fastest growing displacement crisis, with more than 1.4 million people uprooted. Yet an apparent increased fracturing of jihadist groups puts civilians at greater risk as insurgencies further intertwine with localized violence, primarily between Mosse and Foulse 'self-defence' militias and ethnic Fulani, who have been accused of aligning with jihadists.

Spiraling conflict in Burkina Faso has swept into neighbouring **Côte d'Ivoire**, with a significant upsurge in cross-border attacks by al-Qaeda-linked fighters since March 2021. With attacks striking military personnel and civilians mainly in the Ivoirien districts of Savanes and Zanzan, a worrying sign is the increasing deployment of improvised explosive devices (IEDs): while previously unseen in Côte d'Ivoire, in both Burkina Faso and Niger these have been a prelude to attacks growing in scope and scale. Though still geographically contained to some extent, this crisis compounds pre-existing political tensions in the country, a decade on from a brief but

bloody post-election civil war which worsened divisions along ethno-religious lines between the predominantly Muslim north and Christian south. While former President Laurent Gbagbo has since been acquitted of war crimes by the ICC and in October 2021 officially returned to the political arena, the peace process launched by his successor and rival Alassane Ouattara remains fragile, as evidenced by an October 2020 election which precipitated deadly clashes between opposition and government supporters as well as armed militias.

The ongoing political and humanitarian crisis in **Haiti** is multifaceted but rooted in a long-standing confluence of interests between the country's largely corrupt ruling classes, on the one hand, and on the other, more powerful international partner states, financial institutions and aid organizations. Supported by the US, Jovenel Moïse came to power in a 2016 election wracked by irregularities and thereafter adopted an increasingly authoritarian stance, refusing to step down when his term ended in February 2021, and ruling by decree in defiance of judicial and constitutional authorities as well as widespread public opinion. Moïse was assassinated in July, igniting a power struggle among political elites, many of whom have long sponsored armed gangs. Gang kidnappings, sexual violence and killings have surged in 2020-21 amidst prevailing structural inequalities in Haitian society, weak state institutions and the erosion of legitimate public authority. Against the backdrop of a recent major earthquake and flash floods, mounting violence, poverty and hunger look set to continue.

Belarus enters the *Peoples under Threat* table for the first time following the presidential election on 9 August 2020, which was widely condemned as rigged by the Belarusian opposition, many governments and international human rights organizations. Alexander Lukashenko, in power since 1994, claimed victory and a sixth presidential term. When months-long protests brought hundreds of thousands of Belarusians into the streets, Lukashenko's government cracked down harshly, causing several deaths while violently dispersing demonstrators, arresting around 35,000 people and subjecting many to torture, according to the human rights group Viasna. Activists, journalists and media members have since faced politically motivated charges and closed-door trials for acts of 'terrorism' and 'extremism', and leading opposition figures have fled the country. In response to European Union (EU) sanctions, since summer 2021, Lukashenko has facilitated migration from global south countries

towards neighbouring Poland, subjecting desperate people to rights abuses on both sides of the border. Further mass unrest and state violence could arise with a constitutional referendum planned for February 2022 and a potential upcoming economic recession.

Morocco also makes its first appearance in the *Peoples under Threat* table due largely to events surrounding the outbreak of armed conflict since November 2020 between Moroccan armed forces and the Polisario Front independence movement in Western Sahara. Since 1975, Morocco has militarily occupied much of the territory and violently repressed Sahrawi activists, journalists and rights organizations. It was emboldened by a December 2020 statement from then US President Donald Trump recognizing its sovereignty over Western Sahara. Now even more distant is the prospect of a referendum on Sahrawi independence, called for by the UN-brokered ceasefire that has held since 1991. The UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) remains the only post-Cold War peacekeeping mission without a human rights monitoring mandate, limiting its scope. The ineffectual reaction by the international community to the ongoing plight of Sahrawis risks calling to arms frustrated pro-Polisario youth, many of whom are among the 173,000 Sahrawis driven into refugee camps in recent decades.

Armenia enters the *Peoples under Threat* table for the first time after a disastrous war with neighbouring Azerbaijan which lasted six weeks and ended in November 2020, killing thousands and displacing many more. The conflict led to the assertion of Azerbaijani control over several disputed areas that Armenia had occupied since 1994, at the end of a previous war between the two sides over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. While facing mass protests and held responsible for Armenia's humiliating military defeat and abandonment of the ethnic Armenian majority in Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan won re-election in June 2021, appealing to many voters' greater aversion to the opposition leader, associated with corruption and rights abuses in Armenia's recent past. Despite a ceasefire agreement, bouts of fighting with Azerbaijani forces have continued along the shared border and within Armenian sovereign territory itself – a threat to statehood which could spur further armed conflict.

Derek Verbakel

With additional support from Alice Tofts

Country	Groups	Conflict indicators			Indicators of population flight/group division			Democracy/governance indicators				Total
		A. Self-determination conflicts	B. Major armed conflict	C. Prior genocide/politicide	D. Flight of refugees and IDPs	E. Legacy of vengeance – group grievance	F. Rise of factionalized elites	G. Voice and accountability	H. Political stability	I. Rule of law	J. OECD country risk classification	
Syria	Political targets, Sunnis, Shi'a/Alawites, Yezidis, Christians, Druze, Kurds, Palestinians	5	2	1	0.8056	9.7	9.9	-1.934	-2.731	-2.072	7	29.435
Somalia	Minorities incl. Bantu, Benadiri and 'caste' groups (Gabooye etc.); clan members at risk in fighting incl. Hawiye, Darod, etc.	4	2	1	0.2469	8.3	10.0	-1.797	-2.519	-2.300	7	23.010
South Sudan	Murle, Nuer, Dinka, Anuak, Jie, Kachipo	0	2	1	0.3930	8.8	9.2	-1.830	-2.168	-1.925	7	21.728
Afghanistan	Hazara, Pashtun, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Baluchis, Kuchis	4	2	1	0.1612	7.2	8.6	-1.083	-2.730	-1.808	7	20.741
Yemen	Zaydi Shi'a, Sunni tribes, al-Muhamasheen, Southerners	5	2	0	0.1410	9.4	10.0	-1.767	-2.672	-1.777	7	20.234
Iraq	Shi'a, Sunnis, Kurds, Turkmen, Christians, Mandaeans, Yezidis, Shabak, Faili Kurds, Bahá'is, Palestinians	5	2	1	0.0475	8.2	9.6	-1.010	-2.528	-1.754	7	20.109
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	Hema and Lendu, Hutu, Luba, Lunda, Tutsi/Banyamulenge, Batwa/Bambutu, other groups	4	2	1	0.0751	9.4	9.5	-1.282	-1.708	-1.791	7	19.557
Sudan	Fur, Zaghawa, Massalit and others in Darfur; Ngok Dinka, Nuba, Beja	4	2	1	0.0801	9.5	9.1	-1.433	-1.763	-1.067	7	19.039
Central African Republic	Muslims, Christians; Kaba (Sara), Mboum, Mbororo, Gula, Aka	0	2	0	0.3432	8.1	9.7	-1.273	-2.178	-1.712	7	18.437
Myanmar	Kachin, Karenni, Karen, Mons, Rakhine, Rohingya, Shan, Chin (Zomis), Wa	5	2	1	0.0324	9.9	8.3	-0.944	-1.513	-1.179	7	18.368
Pakistan	Shi'a (incl. Hazara), Ahmadis, Hindus, Christians and other religious minorities; Baluchis, Mohhajirs, Pashtun, Sindhis	5	2	1	0.0014	8.8	9.0	-0.880	-1.853	-0.692	7	17.781
Ethiopia	Amhara, Anuak, Afars, Oromo, Somalis, Tigrayans, smaller minorities	4	2	1	0.0378	9.5	9.2	-1.017	-1.738	-0.398	7	17.523
Nigeria	Ibo, Ijaw, Ogoni, Yoruba, Hausa (Muslims) and Christians in the North	5	2	1	0.0160	8.8	9.6	-0.585	-1.859	-0.812	6	17.233
Iran	Arabs, Azeris, Bahá'is, Baluchis, Kurds, Turkomen	4	1	1	0.0026	9.3	9.6	-1.481	-1.668	-0.867	7	16.817
Libya	Black Libyans, Sub-Saharan migrants, Tebu, Berbers; religious targets	4	1	0	0.0446	7.5	9.4	-1.383	-2.477	-1.970	7	16.718
Cameroon	Anglophones, Bakassi	5	2	0	0.0440	8.7	9.3	-1.215	-1.527	-1.146	6	16.078
Mali	Tuareg, Arabs, Maure, and others in the north	4	2	0	0.0297	8.1	6.2	-0.731	-2.147	-0.923	7	15.356
Eritrea	Afars, Saho, Tigre, religious minorities	4	0	0	0.1652	8.3	8.4	-2.077	-0.984	-1.472	7	15.343
Burundi	Hutu, Tutsi, Batwa	0	1	1	0.0396	7.3	8.2	-1.538	-1.411	-1.316	7	14.869
Venezuela	Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, political/social targets	0	0	0	0.2140	7.0	9.3	-1.507	-1.518	-2.346	7	14.603
State of Palestine	Gazans, Bedouin (<i>note: the State of Palestine is currently under Israeli occupation</i>)	5	1	0	0.0225	5.0	8.9	-0.826	-2.048	-0.461	7	14.002
Mozambique	Northerners	4	2	0	0.0262	5.8	6.6	-0.601	-1.161	-1.022	7	13.988
Chad	'Black African' groups, Arabs, Southerners	2	1	0	0.0330	8.0	9.5	-1.420	-1.264	-1.305	7	13.861
Niger	Djerema-songhai, Hausa, Tuaregs	2	2	0	0.0162	7.5	9.3	-0.517	-1.743	-0.547	7	13.644
Azerbaijan	Armenians	4	2	0	0.0705	6.1	7.9	-1.546	-0.725	-0.691	5	13.625
Russian Federation	Chechens, Ingush and others in North Caucasus; indigenous northern peoples, Roma, Jews, Central Asians, migrants	5	1	1	0.0007	8.0	8.4	-1.077	-0.731	-0.760	4	13.558
Zimbabwe	Ndebele, Europeans, political/social targets	2	0	1	0.0016	6.1	10.0	-1.121	-1.080	-1.275	7	13.550
Uganda	Acholi, Karamojong, Bakonzo, Bamba, Basongora, Batwa	2	1	1	0.0571	7.8	8.9	-0.716	-0.780	-0.329	6	13.179
Philippines	Indigenous peoples, Moros (Muslims), Chinese	5	2	1	0.0036	7.3	8.0	-0.104	-0.794	-0.552	3	12.911
Egypt	Copts, Shi'a, Bahá'is; Nubians, Bedouin	5	1	0	0.0005	8.3	9.1	-1.489	-1.207	-0.360	5	12.836
Lebanon	Druze, Maronite Christians, Palestinians, Shi'a, Sunnis	2	1	0	0.0028	7.9	9.6	-0.558	-1.646	-0.904	7	12.678
Equatorial Guinea	Bubi, Annobon Islanders	1	0	1	0.0003	6.9	8.2	-1.832	-0.192	-1.254	7	12.673
Angola	Bakongo, Cabindans, Ovimbundu, Pastoralists, San and Kwisi	4	0	1	0.0013	8.1	7.2	-0.811	-0.521	-0.963	6	12.608
Algeria	Berbers, Saharawi	2	1	1	0.0003	7.2	7.5	-1.102	-0.860	-0.780	5	12.570
Turkey	Kurds, Alevis, Roma, Armenians and other Christians	5	1	0	0.0017	9.7	8.8	-0.862	-1.188	-0.359	5	12.384

Country	Groups	Conflict indicators			Indicators of population flight/group division			Democracy/governance indicators				Total
		A. Self-determination conflicts	B. Major armed conflict	C. Prior genocide/politicide	D. Flight of refugees and IDPs	E. Legacy of vengeance – group grievance	F. Rise of factionalized elites	G. Voice and accountability	H. Political stability	I. Rule of law	J. OECD country risk classification	
Ukraine	Tatars, Krymchak and Karaites in Crimea; Russians, Hungarians, Moldovans and other national minorities	5	1	0	0.0547	5.7	8.0	0.088	-1.164	-0.670	6	12.076
Nicaragua	Indigenous peoples, Creoles	2	1	0	0.0185	5.9	7.1	-1.097	-0.650	-1.218	7	11.942
Burkina Faso	Mossi, Foulse, Fulani	0	2	0	0.0660	4.5	7.8	-0.171	-1.552	-0.418	7	11.726
Sri Lanka	Tamils, Muslims	4	0	1	0.0085	8.6	9.1	-0.052	-0.047	-0.045	7	11.554
Colombia	Political/social targets, Afro-descendants, indigenous peoples	2	2	0	0.1915	7.5	7.6	0.149	-0.674	-0.491	4	11.448
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Croats, Bosniac Muslims, Serbs, Roma	2	0	1	0.0342	6.6	8.7	-0.324	-0.515	-0.306	7	11.412
China	Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongols, Hui, religious minorities	5	1	1	0.0002	7.1	7.2	-1.648	-0.291	-0.060	2	11.384
Congo (Rep.)	Lari, M’Boshi, Aka	1	0	0	0.0298	8.4	6.7	-1.290	-0.896	-1.160	7	11.036
Tajikistan	Uzbeks, Pamiris, Russians	1	0	0	0.0005	6.7	8.4	-1.784	-0.518	-1.218	7	10.917
North Korea	Political/social targets, religious minorities	0	0	0	0.0000	5.2	8.8	-2.159	-0.398	-1.603	7	10.868
Cote d’Ivoire	Northern Mande (Dioula), Senoufo, Bete, newly-settled groups	3	1	0	0.0036	7.3	9.6	-0.483	-0.976	-0.599	5	10.786
Cambodia	Cham, Vietnamese, indigenous hill tribes (Khmer Leou)	0	0	1	0.0008	6.1	8.3	-1.358	-0.236	-0.946	6	10.698
Guinea	Fulani (Peul), Malinke	0	0	0	0.0045	9.3	9.9	-0.992	-0.637	-1.264	7	10.513
Turkmenistan	Uzbeks, Russians, Kazakhs, religious minorities	0	0	0	0.0002	5.6	7.8	-2.033	-0.289	-1.407	7	10.339
Indonesia	Acehnese, Chinese, Dayaks, Madurese, Papuans, religious minorities	4	1	1	0.0001	7.1	7.1	0.100	-0.500	-0.339	3	10.232
India	Assamese, Bodos, Nagas, Tripuras, other Adivasis; Kashmiris, Sikhs, Muslims, Dalits	5	2	0	0.0001	8.2	7.3	0.150	-0.862	-0.018	3	10.189
Kenya	Borana, Kalenjin, Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo, Somalis, Turkana, Endorois, Masai, Ogiek, other indigenous groups, Muslims	1	1	0	0.0012	8.0	8.6	-0.340	-1.004	-0.558	6	10.181
Kyrgyzstan	Uzbeks, Russians	2	0	0	0.0009	8.1	8.3	-0.594	-0.428	-0.927	7	10.066
Laos	Hmong, other highland peoples	2	0	0	0.0010	7.2	8.3	-1.796	0.678	-0.850	7	9.936
El Salvador	Political/social targets	0	1	1	0.0455	5.5	4.8	0.036	-0.024	-0.761	6	9.921
Bangladesh	Ahmadis, Hindus, other religious minorities; Chittagong Hill Tribes	3	0	0	0.0034	8.6	9.3	-0.769	-0.917	-0.573	5	9.901
Haiti	Political/social targets	0	0	0	0.0113	5.3	9.6	-0.843	-1.043	-1.036	7	9.893
Rwanda	Hutu, Tutsi, Batwa	0	0	1	0.0227	9.6	8.0	-1.104	0.033	0.107	6	9.874
Djibouti	Afars	1	0	0	0.0050	5.3	7.3	-1.420	-0.318	-1.012	7	9.775
Thailand	Chinese, Malay-Muslims, Northern Hill Tribes	5	1	0	0.0001	7.3	9.7	-0.810	-0.625	0.121	3	9.773
Moldova	Trans-Dniester Slavs	4	0	0	0.0019	6.4	8.3	-0.047	-0.417	-0.411	7	9.719
Kosovo	Serbs, Roma/Ashkali/Egyptians, Bosniaks, Turks, Gorani	4	0	0	0.0282	7.1	8.3	-0.164	-0.308	-0.386	6	9.457
Belarus	Poles, political/social targets	0	0	0	0.0010	5.9	8.8	-1.459	-0.730	-0.996	6	9.395
Georgia	Adzhars, Abkhazians, South Ossetians	4	0	0	0.0777	7.3	9.1	0.055	-0.431	0.286	6	9.350
Mauritania	Haratins (‘Black Moors’), Kewri	0	0	0	0.0103	7.3	8.8	-0.840	-0.751	-0.587	7	9.339
Guatemala	Indigenous peoples, Garifuna	0	0	1	0.0121	9.4	7.1	-0.387	-0.429	-1.053	4	9.240
Papua New Guinea	Bougainvilleans, tribal peoples	4	0	0	0.0017	5.1	7.1	0.029	-0.739	-0.720	6	9.230
Morocco	Berbers, Saharawis	5	1	0	0.0004	8.5	6.6	-0.609	-0.327	-0.088	3	9.170
Guinea Bissau	Balanta, Fula (Fulani), Manjaco, Mandinga, Papel, Ejamat (Felupe), Jola (Diola), Susu, Cape Verdeans	0	0	0	0.0022	4.3	9.6	-0.471	-0.598	-1.365	7	9.148
Uzbekistan	Tajiks, Islamic political groups, religious minorities, Karakalpaks, Russians	1	0	0	0.0003	6.0	8.8	-1.538	-0.437	-1.063	5	9.133
Armenia	Armenians, Yezidis, Russians, Assyrians, Kurds, Ukrainians, Greeks	0	2	0	0.0064	5.3	7.0	0.045	-0.571	-0.083	6	8.973

Country	Groups	Conflict indicators		
		A. Self-determination conflicts	B. Major armed conflict	C. Prior genocide/politicide
Mexico	Mayans, Indigenous peoples, Zapotecs	2	2	0
Honduras	Miskitos, Garifuna	2	0	0
Bolivia	Indigenous Highland, Indigenous Lowland, Afro-Bolivians	2	0	0
Serbia	Bosniaks, Ethnic Albanians, Croats, Roma	2	0	1
Vietnam	Montagnards (Degar), other highland peoples, religious minorities	1	0	1
Nepal	Madheshis (Terai), Dalits, Janajati, linguistic minorities	2	0	0
Zambia	Bemebe, Lozi, Tonga	2	0	0
Togo	Ewe, Kabre	0	0	0
Tanzania	Zanzibaris	2	0	0
Cuba	Political/social targets, Afro-Cubans	2	0	0
Bahrain	Shi's	0	0	0
Kazakhstan	Russians	1	0	0
Liberia	Dan, Krahn, Ma, other groups	0	0	0
Ecuador	Afro-descendants, Indigenous peoples	2	0	0
Madagascar	Côtier, Merina, Indians/Pakistanis	0	0	0
Sierra Leone	All groups incl. Krio, Limba, Mende, Temne	0	0	0
Tunisia	Berbers, Jews, Baha'i	0	1	0
Saudi Arabia	Shi'a	0	1	0
Argentina	Indigenous peoples, Jews	0	0	1
Gabon	Fang, non-Gabonese Africans and Baka	0	0	0
eSwatini	–	0	0	0
Senegal	Casamancais (Diola)	4	0	0
Malawi	Chewa, Nyanja, Lomwe, Yao, Tumbuka and Nyakyusa/Ngonde, southerners, northerners	0	0	0
North Macedonia	Albanians, Roma, Serbs	3	0	0
Maldives	Maldivan (people of mixed Indo-Aryan, Dravidian and Arab descent)	0	0	0
Timor Leste	'Westerners', 'Easterners', Muslims, Chinese	0	0	0
Jordan	Palestinians	0	0	0
Benin	Bariba (Baatonu), Fulani (Peul), Ditammari ('Somba'), Dendi	0	0	0
Gambia, The	–	0	0	0
Peru	Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants	2	0	0
Guyana	Afro-Guyanese, East Indians	0	0	0
Suriname	East Indians, Creoles, Javanese, Maroons, indigenous (Arawaks and Caribs), ethnic Chinese and Europeans	0	0	0
Paraguay	Indigenous peoples	0	0	0
Bhutan	Lhotshampa, Nepalese	1	0	0
Comoros	Melano-Polynesians, Comorians	2	0	0
Albania	Greeks	0	0	0
Israel	Palestinian citizens of Israel, Bedouin	4	1	0

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Indicators of population flight/group division			Democracy/governance indicators				Total
D. Flight of refugees and IDPs	E. Legacy of vengeance – group grievance	F. Rise of factionalized elites	G. Voice and accountability	H. Political stability	I. Rule of law	J. OECD country risk classification	
0.0011	6.3	5.4	-0.036	-0.850	-0.670	3	8.892
0.0578	5.0	7.0	-0.603	-0.545	-0.958	5	8.809
0.0002	5.6	8.5	-0.071	-0.468	-1.152	6	8.793
0.0282	7.1	8.3	-0.118	-0.093	-0.185	4	8.745
0.0034	5.2	6.9	-1.380	-0.073	-0.134	4	8.638
0.0007	9.4	8.8	-0.089	-0.197	-0.491	6	8.567
0.0000	5.3	5.9	-0.431	-0.128	-0.623	7	8.424
0.0013	6.0	7.6	-0.747	-0.925	-0.661	6	8.363
0.0000	4.9	6.2	-0.714	-0.410	-0.603	6	8.327
0.0070	2.8	7.0	-1.420	0.596	-0.278	7	8.180
0.0004	9.6	7.6	-1.457	-0.591	0.491	6	8.178
0.0005	8.0	7.6	-1.188	-0.260	-0.396	5	8.074
0.0017	4.6	8.6	-0.076	-0.370	-1.026	7	8.064
0.0021	6.1	8.2	0.017	-0.365	-0.548	6	8.050
0.0000	3.3	7.8	-0.275	-0.455	-0.883	7	7.838
0.0018	5.6	7.8	-0.091	-0.244	-0.756	7	7.717
0.0005	7.1	7.5	0.273	-0.634	0.138	6	7.661
0.0001	9.0	8.5	-1.611	-0.661	0.241	2	7.449
0.0000	3.8	2.8	0.594	0.036	-0.469	7	7.314
0.0007	2.6	8.0	-0.994	-0.077	-0.665	6	7.260
0.0002	2.2	6.8	-1.328	-0.119	-0.531	6	7.230
0.0019	5.2	7.0	0.245	-0.021	-0.276	5	7.229
0.0001	4.7	8.4	-0.035	-0.237	-0.267	7	7.098
0.0013	6.0	7.3	0.056	0.098	-0.065	5	6.766
0.0002	4.0	8.1	-0.330	0.412	-0.333	7	6.645
0.0003	5.3	8.3	0.372	0.177	-1.173	6	6.644
0.0009	8.6	6.9	-0.751	-0.322	0.212	5	6.578
0.0002	2.6	6.7	-0.077	-0.440	-0.728	6	6.547
0.0073	2.6	7.7	-0.201	0.245	-0.366	7	6.487
0.0158	8.6	7.4	0.219	-0.287	-0.343	3	6.111
0.0014	6.5	5.1	0.215	-0.146	-0.425	6	6.053
0.0002	6.4	5.8	0.418	0.416	-0.108	7	5.684
0.0002	4.6	7.8	0.066	0.015	-0.415	5	5.528
0.0094	9.1	7.5	0.152	1.022	0.594	6	5.343
0.0039	4.2	8.0	-0.764	-0.292	-1.199	–	5.327
0.0117	4.1	6.2	0.087	0.084	-0.358	5	5.146
0.0001	6.7	7.9	0.655	-0.828	0.997	–	4.860

Notes to Table

Sources of the indicators are as follows:

- *Conflict indicators*: The base data used was from the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (Conflict Barometer 2020, Heidelberg, HIIK, 2021), Minority Rights Group International, and the Center for Systemic Peace ('Major Episodes of Political Violence 1946-2019' (Center for Systemic Peace, 2020). Self-determination/autonomy conflicts in 2020 were ranked on a scale of 0-5 as follows: 5 = ongoing armed conflict; 4 = contained armed conflict; 3 = settled armed conflict; 2 = militant politics; 1 = conventional politics. Major armed conflicts were classified as 2 = ongoing in late 2020; 1 = emerging from conflict since 2016 or ongoing conflict with deaths under 1,000.
- *Prior genocide or politicide*: Harff, US Political Instability Task Force (formerly State Failure Task Force). 1 = one or more episodes since 1945, updated using MRG data.
- *Indicators of Flight and Group Division*: Data for the flight of refugees and IDPs comes from UN High Commissioner for Refugees, total population of concern by country of origin, Mid-Year Trends 2021, as a proportion of total country population (population figures from UN DESA, 2019 revision). Group division indicators are from the Fragile States Index, Fund for Peace and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2021.
- *Democracy/Governance Indicators*: Annual Governance Indicators, World Bank, 2020.
- *OECD country risk classification*: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 'Country Risk Classifications of the Participants to the Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits', June 2021.

Data for Kosovo include some indicators relating to Serbia. Data for the State of Palestine include some indicators relating to both Israel/Palestine; data relating to Palestinian refugees include those under the UNHCR mandate only. Indicators were rebased as necessary to give an approximate equal weighting to the five categories above, with the exception of the prior geno-/politicide indicator. As a dichotomous variable this received a lesser weighting to avoid too great a distortion to the final ranking. Resulting values were then summed.

The full formula is:

$$(A/2) + (B \times 1.25) + (C \times 2) + (D \times 10) + (E + F)/6 + (G + H + I)/-1 + (J \times 0.625)$$

How is *Peoples under Threat* calculated?

Since the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, our ability to identify those situations most likely to lead to genocide or mass killing has improved. A number of comparative studies of the factors preceding historic episodes of political mass killing had been undertaken since the 1970s, but it was not until the 1990s that researchers pioneered quantitative longitudinal analysis of a wide range of such factors, enabling the testing of different causal hypotheses. This research enabled the identification of those preconditions that were most likely to lead to genocide and political mass murder (politicide).

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) has drawn on these research findings to construct the *Peoples under Threat* table, although responsibility for the final table is exclusively our own. *Peoples under Threat* is specifically designed to identify the risk of genocide, mass killing or other systematic violent repression, unlike most other early warning tools, which focus on violent conflict as such. Its primary application is civilian protection.

Indicators of conflict are included in the table's construction, however, as most, although not all, episodes of mass ethnic or religious killing occur during armed conflicts. War provides the state of emergency, domestic mobilization and justification, international cover, and in some cases the military and logistic capacity, that enable massacres to be carried out. Some massacres, however, occur in peacetime, or may accompany armed conflict from its inception, presenting a problem to risk models that focus exclusively on current conflicts. In addition, severe and even violent repression of minorities or indigenous peoples may occur for years before the onset of armed conflict provides the catalyst for larger scale killing.

The statistical indicators used all relate to the state. The state is the basic unit of enquiry, rather than particular ethnic or religious groups at risk, as governments or militias connected to the government are responsible for most cases of genocidal violence. Formally, the state will reserve to itself the monopoly over the legitimate means of violence, so that where non-state actors are responsible for widespread or continued killing, it usually occurs with either the complicity of the state or in a 'failed state' situation where the rule of law has disintegrated. Certain characteristics at the level of the state will greatly increase the likelihood of atrocity, including habituation to illegal violence among the

armed forces or police, prevailing impunity for human rights violations, official tolerance or encouragement of hate speech against particular groups, and in extreme cases, prior experience of mass killing. Egregious episodes of mass killing targeted principally at one group have also seen other groups deliberately decimated or destroyed.

However, some groups may experience higher levels of discrimination and be at greater risk than others in any given state. MRG has identified those groups in each state which we believe to be under most threat. (This does not mean that other groups or indeed the general population may not also be at some risk.) It should be noted that although these groups are most often minorities, in some cases ethnic or religious majorities will also be at risk and in relevant cases are therefore also listed in the table. In some cases, all the groups in the country are at risk of ethnic or sectarian killing.

The overall measure is based on a basket of ten indicators. These include indicators of democracy or good governance from the World Bank; conflict data from the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research and the Center for Systemic Peace; data on the flight of refugees, internally displaced persons and other populations of concern from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); indicators of group division or elite factionalization from the Fund for Peace and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; the US State Failure Task Force data on prior genocides and politicides; and the country credit risk classification published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (as a proxy for trade openness). For citations and further information, see the notes to the table. For a fuller discussion of the methodology, see *State of the World's Minorities 2006*.

Based on current indicators from authoritative sources, *Peoples under Threat* seeks to identify those groups or peoples most under threat in 2021.



Norad

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Minority Rights Group International

54 Commercial Street, London E1 6LT,
United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0)20 7422 4200 **Fax** +44 (0)20 7422 4201

Email minority.rights@minorityrights.org

Website www.minorityrights.org

