

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

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Unfreezing the Afghan assets, Tunisia's judicial crisis and Libya's new political deadlock

Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Poulomi Mondal, and Harshita Rathore



An executive order signed by President Biden on Afghanistan says the US administration "will seek to facilitate access to \$3.5 billion of those assets for the benefit of the Afghan people and Afghanistan's future pending a judicial decision." (Image Source: Reuters-Stringer)

Afghanistan: President Biden signs order to split USD seven billion in frozen Afghan assets

In the news

On 11 February, President Biden signed an Executive Order to help enable certain US-based assets belonging to Afghanistan's central bank, Da Afghanistan Bank. The order claimed that "this is one step forward in the United States' effort to authorize the transfer of a significant portion of the funds to meet the needs of the Afghan people."

According to the order, “The EOO will block the property of DAB held in the United States by USS financial institutions and require USS financial institutions to transfer this property into a consolidated account held at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. The Administration will seek to facilitate access to \$3.5 billion of those assets for the benefit of the Afghan people and Afghanistan’s future pending a judicial decision.” It added, “Even if funds are transferred for the benefit of the Afghan people, more than \$3.5 billion in DAB assets would remain in the United States and are subject to ongoing litigation by US victims of terrorism. Plaintiffs will have a full opportunity to have their claims heard in court.”

Following the order, Mohammad Naeem, a spokesman of the Taliban’s political office, said: “The theft and seizure of money held/frozen by the United States of the Afghan people represents the lowest level of human and moral decay of a country and a nation,” adding, “defeat and victory are common in human history and life, but the greatest and most shameful defeat is the combination of military and moral defeat.” Similarly, DAB, in a statement, said: “DAB considers the latest decision of USA on blocking FX (foreign exchange) reserves and allocating them to irrelevant purposes, injustice to the people of Afghanistan.”

Issues at large

First, the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. The Taliban takeover has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. Afghans are in desperate need of food assistance, livelihoods support, water, sanitation, health, hygiene, shelter and settlement assistance, and COVID-19-related assistance. 23 million Afghans are in need of food assistance. More than half a million people have lost their jobs since the Taliban takeover, deepening the economic collapse.

Second, Afghanistan's frozen assets. After the Taliban takeover in August 2021, several countries and international institutions decided to freeze Afghan’s central bank assets and have used it as leverage to get the Taliban to fulfil demands. Before the Taliban takeover, 80 per cent of Afghanistan’s national budget came from the international community. A total of about USD 10 billion is currently frozen; of which about USD seven billion is held by the US. The freezing of crucial Afghan assets has further aggravated the situation, as the Taliban government remains heavily underfinanced.

Third, the Taliban’s demand for unfreezing of assets. The Taliban has claimed that these assets are required to help stabilize the country’s deteriorating economy and prevent a humanitarian crisis. Given that the Taliban government’s is facing a financial crunch, it has called for the release of the fund since it took over the country. Pakistan and China have supported this and have called for the international community to release the funds.

Fourth, the US decision to release the assets. In January 2022, a US judge gave the White House until 11 February to draft a plan as to how it would handle the billions in Afghan assets frozen in the US. Following the above, the US Congress and other institutions called on the Biden administration to free up the funds to address Afghanistan’s extreme economic crisis. Although the executive decision has been made, it remains to be seen as to how the money would be dispensed with several lawsuits making claims to the funds and the Afghanistan aid efforts are expected to be a multi-step process.

In perspective

First, the US’s decision to unfreeze assets is partially complete. The decision has only moved the Afghan assets into a consolidated account. Thus, the USD 3.5 billion for the Afghan people is likely to take time to be dispensed given the hesitancy to directly finance the Taliban government.

Second, addressing Afghanistan's humanitarian and economic crisis. Afghanistan's economy was boosted substantially by foreign aid from the West. The sudden withdrawal of the funding has crippled the country's dwindling economy and aggravated the humanitarian crisis. To address the current situation, the international community would have to find a solution to dispensing aid to Afghanistan directly to the Taliban government or more efficiently through aid organizations to help curb the crisis.

Tunisia: Presidential decree to create a new judicial watchdog, and consolidate his power

In the news

On 13 February, Tunisia's President Kais Saied issued a decree establishing a new provisional Supreme Judiciary Council. He abolished the existing High Judicial Council and has now acquired additional powers to control Tunisia's top judicial organization. The decree says that the President controls the selection, promotion, appointment, and transfer of judges and, in certain circumstances can act as a disciplinary body in charge of removals.

On the same day, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) stated on Twitter that the decree "consolidates power in the hands of the President," effectively leading to the termination of "any semblance of judicial independence in the country."

Protestors took to the streets of Tunis, waving flags and chanting: "Shut down the coup...take your hands off the judiciary." Ambassadors to Tunisia from countries in the G-7 group, inclusive of major donor countries to Tunisia, voiced 'deep concern' regarding the dissolution of the judicial council and said that an independent judiciary was essential to democracy.

Issues at large

First, the consolidation of power by the President. Though President Kais Saied's narrative is on the need for a judicial overhaul to address the inefficiency of its functioning, the real reason is to consolidate his power. Abolition of the high judicial council to be replaced by a provisional council will go against the idea of separation of powers in a democracy and would make the executive stronger.

Second, executive vs judiciary. The discontent regarding the inefficiency of the high judicial council among the people justifies the actions taken by the President. Specifically, the issues of rising internal corruption, failures in terrorism rulings and stalling of investigations in high-end assassinations. The conspiracy theories behind these assassinations are also tactfully directed by the President in the debate to mobilize the public sentiments and attack the judiciary.

Third, internal opposition. The resignation of Tunisia's Chief of staff Nadia Akacha, often considered the 'right-hand' woman to Saied based on fundamental disagreements highlights that all is not well in the internal power dynamics. Besides, there has been widespread opposition from civil society against the President. It only exposes the conflict between Saied and the Ennhada Islamic movement that presents him with a multi-directional problem at home.

Fourth, external response. While the overt support by UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt for the coup and especially against the Ennhada Islamic movement have been favourable to Kais Saied's efforts.



In perspective

First, the democratic reversal. Steps were taken by the President in July 2021 (suspension of the Parliament, declaring a state of emergency, abolishing democratic constitution, stripping of parliamentary privileges) and in January 2022 (prosecution of opposition political leaders, and the puppeteering of unelected Prime Minister Najla Bpuden) highlights the efforts to consolidate power. This also dismantles democratic pillars like the Constitution, Parliament, and the judiciary.

Second, the Tunisian revolution. It has been ten years since the revolution. Tunisia presented a model of democracy and a progressive constitution. Unfortunately, the very same institutions and principles which helped in the Tunisian democratic transition is under threat.

Libya: With two Prime Ministers, a new political crisis

In the news

On 10 February, the Libyan Parliament appointed former Interior Minister Fathi Bashaga as its new Prime Minister. The decision comes due to the failure of the existing Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah to conduct national elections in December. Dbeibah refused to accept the decision and swore to remain in power until national elections. He said: “accept no new transitional phase or parallel authority.”

On 11 February, protestors gathered in large numbers in Tripoli and Misrata objecting to the appointment and demanded Dbeibah’s National Unity Government to stay. They also called for elections to be held as per the Geneva Agreement.

On the same day, UN Chief Antonio Guterres made a statement: “All parties to continue to preserve stability in Libya as a top priority.” The UN warns of renewed fighting and political instability. Earlier it appointed Dbeibah as part of the UN-led peace process to resolve the conflict.

On 12 February, Joint Operation Force gathered at Tripoli’s Martyrs Square in support of Dbeibah. According to Colonel Ibrahim Mohamed, Field Commander of the Joint Operations Force said: “...the reason for our presence here in the first place is to preserve the democratic path in Libya. We are here to defend international legitimacy, and our goal is to preserve legitimacy.”

Issues at large

First, the political divide in the east and west Libya. The divide can be seen from the existence of two governments - one backed by the UN and the other by the militia leaders of the east. Libya has been governed by a constitutional political system after the killing of Muammar Qadhafi in 2011. Since then, there was a divide between the east and west.

Second, the external actors. The West has urged the current government to remain until elections to prevent chaos. In terms of accepting the appointed new Prime Minister, the stance of the West, and other countries - Turkey, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates is unclear. Apart from them, Egypt’s Foreign Ministry welcomed the new government. The UN has constantly backed the Government of National Unity (GNU) and recognizes Dbeiba’s leadership. If the elections take place, it will replace the current power-sharing structure with Prime Minister leading the government with a three-person presidential council and a single

President. External actors hope that the elected President would act as the push toward a new constitution, ban foreign mercenaries inside Libya and bring one bank, one military force. Third, the problem of transition. Since 2011, the political system of Libya is tangled. Even after the constitutional government came to power, Qadhafi's political system has not been modified. The elections were to be conducted in December 2021. The political transition is yet to happen.

In perspective

First, the possibility of conflict continuing. Looking at the current scene and tensions brimming between the east, west, and the militia, the conflict is likely to continue. Second, political instability in Libya. Until an agreement or a common dialogue is agreed between the parties, Libya will remain unstable.

Also, from around the world

By Padmashree Anandhan, Sejal Sharma and Satyam Dubey

Peace and Conflict from East and Southeast Asia

Taiwan: Joins the WTO case against China

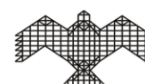
On 14 February, Taiwan has joined the group of countries backing the EU trade case against China in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) condemning Chinese trade curbs on Lithuania. The EU launched the case last month accusing Beijing's discriminatory trade practices against Lithuania. The Taiwan Foreign Ministry Spokesperson of Joanne Ou said, "Beijing's economic coercion has violated international economic and trade norms. Taiwan will cooperate with like-minded parties such as Lithuania and the EU to maintain a rules-based international trading system." The WTO will now allow 60 days for the parties to settle, and if they fail, the WTO panel will be set up to look over and study the claims of the EU against China.

South Korea: Warning of North Korea over continuous missile test

On 15 February, the South Korean Foreign Minister along with Japanese and US representatives in a trilateral meeting in Honolulu, issued a joint statement asking North Korea to halt its consistent destabilizing acts in the Korean peninsula and return to the table for dialogue. At the conference, the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, said, "We condemn the DPRK's ballistic missile launches and its unlawful nuclear programs, which are clear violations of the UN Security Council resolutions." While South Korea and Japan have raised concern over Pyongyang's recent seven missile launches in a calendar month and agreed to cooperate if North Korea will not repeat such wrongful activities which destabilize the region. However, North Korea has not responded to the joint statement issued after the trilateral meeting of the US, Japan, and South Korea.

New Zealand: Violent clash between police and protesters outside Parliament

On 10 February, more than 50 people protesting against the tough movement restrictions due to pandemic and COVID-19 vaccine mandates in New Zealand were arrested. Hundreds of them were forced to camp outside the Parliament by the police. New Zealand police, while trying to control the hues and cries of the protesters, was punched and kicked amidst the chant of 'this is not democracy,' 'shame on you, and 'drop the mandate.' New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said, "People have the right to protest, but when that tips into affecting business, people's ability to move, the ability of kids to go to school or the ability of emergency services to move around, obviously the police have to manage that." She told the protesters to move on and added that they did not even represent the majority viewpoints.



Japan: Tokyo continue military drills despite condemnation

On 14 February, Japan has continued to provide education and training programs, including live ammunition drills, to 10 members of the Myanmar military despite protests from Human Rights Watch. Since the military junta in Myanmar completed one year in February, more than 1500 civilians were killed by the army. Still, Japan has chosen to train their army personnel rather than condemning the coup, alleged the HRW. The Japanese Defence Ministry replied in response to the allegation that army personnel from 36 countries, including Myanmar, has been accepted under Self-Defence Forces law to learn academics and military training. Myanmar is one of the participating countries in this program. It occupies a critical position for Tokyo as it borders China and India.

Peace and Conflict from South Asia

India: New Delhi banned 54 more Chinese apps, citing security concerns

On 15 February, India has blocked 54 more mobile apps access, citing security concerns. Most of the apps were mainly of Chinese origin. Free Fire is one such big app banned by India, which Singapore-based Sea Ltd owns. With this, India's total tally of banned apps went up to 321 since the political tensions escalated with China in 2020. New Delhi reiterated that the data was being sent to servers in China through these apps, and in this way, Beijing-based firms are compiling huge personal data as reported by a government source. The source said this data could prove detrimental to national security if used by hostile elements.

Nepal: Parliament initiated a procedure to impeach the Chief Justice in Kathmandu

On 14 February, the Parliament has started an impeachment procedure against Cholendra Shumsher Rana, the second Chief Justice of Nepal Supreme Court, over the allegations of corruption during his tenure. However, till the final disposal of the case, the senior-most judge in the Supreme Court, Dipak Karki, has replaced Rana and took over as the acting Chief Justice. The trend of victimizing the judiciary in Nepal is not new. In the past 15 years, it faced many political onslaughts and extreme actions by the influential political parties in power. The political parties had refused to accept the demand of the Nepal Bar Association for the initiative proceedings so far. Law Minister Dilendra Badu said that the government thought the strike was affecting the image of the Supreme Court, and moving an impeachment motion would be the best option here.

Sri Lanka: Rameswaram fishermen arrested

On 12 February, the Sri Lankan Navy arrested 12 Rameswaram fishermen and their boats under poaching charges. According to the fisherman, the 12 others were fishing in the Dhanushkodi-Thalaimannar region and were taken away by the navy to Jaffna camp and later jailed. According to a fisherman leader: "We have no other option but to rely on the governments."

India: Court order on students' protest over Hijab

On 11 February, the High Court of Karnataka released an interim order stating restraining all students from wearing saffron shawls scarfs, hijab, and religious flags irrespective of their religion. The court ordered immediate re-opening of institutions and asked the student to return to classes. As per the bench: "Firstly, we are pained by the ongoing agitations and closure of educational institutions since the past few days, especially when this court is seized of this matter and important issues of constitutional significance and of personal law are being seriously debated. It hardly needs to be mentioned that ours is a country of plural cultures, religions and languages. Being a secular state, it does not identify itself with any religion as its own."

Pakistan: Violence in Balochistan

On 9 February, Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) launched terrorist attacks in districts and tribal areas of Balochistan, bringing back the fears of terrorism. The Pakistani authorities have raised the alarm due to the sophistication observed in those attacks. Despite the attacks, Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa stated that will counter such attacks. He said: “We will eliminate all remnants of terrorists, their abettors and accomplices whatever is the cost.” On 14 February, two accused from the TTP were arrested and sent for investigation. Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) released a statement stating the killing of a terrorist who was found to be active in various terrorist activities. It also reported the killing of a leader from a banned terrorist organization in Pasni city, followed by the killing of another two suspected militants who were arrested in the Khuzdar district.

Peace and Conflict from Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Tajikistan: Government clampdown continues in Gorno-Badakhshan

On 13 February, tensions following the killing of a local resident by the police last November continued to brew in the eastern region of the country. The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region has been under government pressure ever since the incident and the protests that followed. Excessive measures have been taken by the government to curb dissent. The internet services continue to be shut down, while local leaders are facing arrests. Natives living outside the country were reported to have been extradited for drawing attention to the government excesses.

Kazakhstan: Protests in Zhanaozen and Almaty

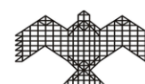
On 9 February, hundreds of workers from oil and nuclear energy companies launched a strike demanding higher salaries and better working conditions. Dozens of women demanding housing and social allowances for families and disabled members also rallied outside the Aqtau city administration. In addition, Almaty witnessed a gathering of hundreds despite the refusal of permission by the authorities. The demonstrations were held to honour the lives that were lost during last month’s violent state repression. The participants called for Toqaev’s impeachment along with the trial of former President Nazarbaev’s in suppressing the protests.

Sudan: pro-democratic protests in Khartoum and other cities

On 14 February, various cities in Sudan once again witnessed pro-democratic protests in Khartoum, Omdurman, Port Sudan and Wad Madani, demanding to installation of a civilian government. The protest was delt by security forces using ammunition and tear gas, where two men were shot down. Authorities in the capital city warned the protestors to assemble in public to prevent physical clash, and despite the warning, with continued protests, more than 2,200 were wounded. The internal situation of Sudan has deteriorated since the coup.

Yemen: Continuing violence and ever-increasing humanitarian crisis

On 14 February, the Saudi-led coalition government in Yemen wiped out the telecommunication system in Sanaa held by the Houthis. It found that the technology to be used for controlling drones and hostile operations. The act comes in response to a recent drone attack on Saudi Arabia’s Abha airport. On 11 February, local authorities reported that Al-Qaeda terrorists had kidnapped five UN workers in demand for the release of prisoners held by the Yemen government in Aden and a ransom of USD 266,000. The army of Chief of Staff highlighted the deepening violence in Yemen caused by the Houthis since the removal of the Houthi militia from the list of a foreign terrorist organizations by the US. He urged the UNSC to include the militia back on the list. On the situation in Yemen, US Special Envoy affirmed that the foreign policy of the US prioritizes ending the conflict in Yemen and supporting the Yemeni lives. On the same, a member of the Yemeni government said: “the Houthis have



obstructed every attempt at peace talks held in Kuwait, Geneva and Stockholm through intransigence.” Recently, the Norwegian Refugee Council reported a doubling of civilian death and injuries since the removal of UNHR monitors. As per the report, 823 civilians were killed in the last four months under the monitor, which increased to 1,535 after the removal.

Syria: Missile attack by Israel kills soldier, five wounded

On 9 February, the Israeli army targeted weapons facilities near Damascus, including radar and anti-aircraft batteries. Some missiles were intercepted by the Syrian defence forces, however, the attack killed a Syrian soldier and injured five others. The Israeli army reported the attack to be in response to an anti-aircraft missile fired into Northern Israel by Syria. The missile exploded in the air, and no injuries or damage were reported.

Palestine: Civilian killed amidst violent clashes

On 14 February, the Israeli army carried out an operation to demolish the house of a suspected terrorist in the West Bank. The demolition was a planned operation by the army and the border police, to take out Muhammad Jaradat, who was involved in the recent shooting of a Jewish settler. Violence broke out ahead of the operation, during which the army shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian, and wounded ten others. The army claimed armed participation by hundreds of Palestinians and said that stones and explosives were hurled at the troops. The troops returned fire in order to offset the attack.

Burkina Faso: French air raids kill armed group related to Benin attacks

On 13 February, 40 militants involved in recent Benin attacks were killed in a joint operation carried out by French forces. The French-led Barkhane forces in the Sahel region carried out the attack on the militants. The operation was conducted in view of the recent attacks on park rangers, where 9 people were killed including a French chief law enforcement instructor. The armed terrorist group had carried out two deadly attacks this week where lives were lost due to explosion in the National Park, a wildlife reserve bordering the disputed Nigeria and Burkina Faso regions.

Madagascar: Cyclone Batsirai death toll revised to 120

On 11 February, in the aftermath of Cyclone Batsirai, the death toll reached 120. The coastal town of Mananjary was the most affected, with entire surrounding villages swept away. More than 30,000 people have been displaced and 124,000 were rendered homeless due to the destruction caused by the cyclone. Several affected communities are still trapped and unable to receive aid owing to the road closures caused by landslides. German and French rescue teams are contributing to local aid efforts and reconstruction in the affected regions. The cyclone comes as the second destructive storm to hit Madagascar in the past two weeks.

Somalia: Several killed in a suicide bombing

On 10 February, a suicide bomber targeted a minibus carrying election delegates, in Mogadishu. However, the terrorist missed the target and ended up killing six civilians while 13 others were injured. The attack comes ahead of the Parliamentary elections happening across the country. The targeted delegates were responsible for selecting the lawmakers. The Al-Qaeda linked group Al Shabab claimed responsibility for the attack. The group aims to dismantle the disputed central government in order to seize power and carry out an attack to disrupt the ongoing elections.

Uganda: ICJ orders war reparations to be paid to the Democratic Republic of Congo

On 9 February, Kampala was directed by the ICJ to pay USD 325 million to Kinshasa for damages caused during the brutal war in the 1990s. The ruling for reparations was made in 2005 but had not been followed by Uganda yet. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) had demanded an amount of USD 11 billion, however, the court deemed only a fraction of it as justifiable. This comes as a shock to DRC as after decades of legal battles the court ruling stated insufficient evidence to support the complainants' claim for compensation. The ruling was perceived as unjust by the DRC's Foreign Ministry.

Peace and Conflict from Europe and the Americas

France: Court trial over the murder of priest begun

On 14 February, the trial over the murder of Father Jacques Hamel in 2016 began in Paris. Two attackers who murdered the priest were shot dead, those who were in contact with them are now being charged. According to the prosecutors, the four defendants were charged as involved in the murder and under "criminal terrorist association." Out of the four, Rachid Kassim will be given a sentence without an appearance as he's considered the motivator behind the attack. The murder of Hamel is seen as the first-ever Islamist militant attack to happen in a church in western Europe.

Belarus: the US asked citizens to leave Minsk amid intense Ukraine tension

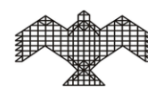
On 15 February, citing heavy Russian troops building near the Ukraine border, the US has urged its citizens in Belarus to leave the European nation as soon as possible. The US has already issued a travel advisory on the same day when Washington announced to close its embassy in Kyiv and relocate staff to Lviv, which is 540 km away from Ukraine's capital. Now, the advisory said, "Due to an increase in unusual and concerning Russian military activity near the border with Ukraine, the US citizens located in or considering travel to Belarus should be aware that the situation is unpredictable and there is heightened tension in the region." Washington has warned that Moscow could lead an attack any day now.

Russia: Moscow announced pulling some troops from the Ukraine border

On 15 February, Russia issued a statement saying it has started pulling back some of its troops from near Ukraine's border after heightened tensions raised fears of an invasion. The Russian Defence Ministry has given the reason that Moscow has deep cultural and historical relations with Ukraine and it has been looking for a guarantee that Kyiv will not join NATO military alliance. However, neither Ukraine nor NATO has promised to agree. Russian Defence Ministry Spokesperson Igor Konashenkov said, "Several combat trainings exercises, including drills, have been conducted as planned. Some exercises will continue till 20 February." Nato in response to the Russian announcement said that they had not seen any such evidence of de-escalation on the ground yet.

France: Macron to decide withdrawal of French forces after assessment

On 15 February, France has decided to assess the Mali situation with the foreign heads of state to discuss the steps regarding the military presence of the country in Bamako. Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said, "If the conditions are no longer in place so that we can act in Mali, which is the case, then we will continue to fight terrorism next door with the Sahel countries." The French withdrawal of troops from Mali would lead to the drawdown of the European special Takuba task force, which means the fight against terrorism will be left amidst. The Takuba mission formed to fight against terrorism in the Sahel region, consist of 600-900 troops out of which 40 per cent are French and it includes medical and logistical support teams. It is considered a symbolic force that use to accompany local troops in the region.



France: Macron reveals plan for nuclear reactor construction

On 10 January, French President Emmanuel Macron revealed France's energy plan. As a first step, he aims to construct six new nuclear reactors through state-run energy giant Electricite de France (EDF). Under the energy plan, "third generation pressurized water reactors facilities" are set to be constructed by 2050, and additional eight reactors are expected to be added. Macron, who has been in constant support of nuclear energy, is the viable and eco-friendly option. He said: "The time has come for a French nuclear renaissance." As far as EDF is concerned, it has been long in debt due to challenges in constructing the latest-generation EPR reactors for the UK, France, and Finland. Nuclear reactors involve more cost and complex technology. France has been less serious when it comes to financing reactor projects.

France: Freedom convoy protests in Paris

On 10 January, following the trucker's protest in Canada, convoys from around cities of France were scheduled to protest similarly on 11 January. The authorities in Paris, citing the risk of public disturbance, have banned the protests and strictly ruled that any civilian or driver found to be hindering the roads will be subject to license cancellation, two-year imprisonment, or EUR 4500 as a penalty. The protests are happening against the show of vaccine pass to enter social spaces. Police of France has estimated that convoys are using the online platform to organize protests, through which a mix of different political and ideological groups shall participate.

Slovakia: Defence Cooperation Agreement with the US

On 9 February, Slovakia's Parliament approved the Defense Cooperation Agreement with the US to use two Slovak air force bases for the next ten years. The signatories to the deal were US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Slovakian Defense Minister Jaroslav Nad. The bill was passed with a vote from 79 members out of 150 in the Slovakian Parliament. Bill is yet to be ratified by the President. The vote was approved amid protests as the fears of Russia invading Ukraine remained high. The protestors assembled outside the Parliament and held up banners and flags asking for the US army to stop. Blinken said: "Nothing in agreement creates permanent US bases or troop presence in Slovakia, and the agreement fully respects Slovakia's sovereignty and laws."

The United States: Trial began over the murder of Ahmaud Arbery

On 14 February, the hate crime trial over the murder of Ahmaud Arbery began with a petition of the defendants' racist statements. An important proof to the case was that the defendants had chased Arbery out of the neighbourhood as he was black. The said racist statements in the court reflected not the discrimination against Arbery but it reflected the evidence of racism. On which the three white men were sentenced to life. Bobbi Bernstein, a lawyer with the Justice Department's civil rights division said that the defendants had chased upon assumptions of one's skin colour. The lawyers of the defendants have argued that they had been chased only due to repeated entry into the neighbourhood. He said: "not because he was a Black man, but because he was the man."

Canada: Government proposes to freeze the bank accounts of the protestors

On 14 February, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked Canada's Emergency Act to control the truckers' protests over COVID-19 restrictions. He also proposed a plan to target the bank accounts and livelihoods. He warned: "These blockades are illegal, and if you are still participating, the time to go home is now." Through the act, the federal government will be enforced with powers to "restore order." The Canadian government has opted to freeze the truckers personal and business accounts and suspend insurance instead of threatening to tow

away the vehicles. In the past two weeks, hundreds and thousands of truckers have protested blocking the streets of Ottawa.

Haiti: Rising instability surrounding the political crisis

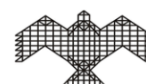
On 10 February, clashes between the police and factory workers demanding higher wages broke out. The police used tear gas to disperse the protestors gathered in an industrial park. The protests were triggered due to the continued spike in inflation. The worsening economic and political instability in the region follows the legitimacy crisis caused by the official term end of interim President Ariel Henry. President Henry has called for elections to form a renewed government however the Montana Accord in opposition has demanded a transitional government for two years instead. The Montana Accord is a group of economists, journalists and former politicians formed to deal with the political crisis in the country.

Guatemala: International Court to hear indigenous communities land rights case

On 9 February, the Maya Q'eqchi community took its decades' long fight against the State to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The ruling, expected to be given in a year would be a landmark judgement for indigenous land and resource rights. The ruling could force the Guatemalan State to acknowledge the collective rights of the indigenous communities over ancestral land and protect resources from mining megaprojects in the region. The community has been fighting for land title rights since 1974, and has faced continued repression and violence at the hands of the State and private actors.

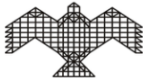
About the authors

Abigail Miriam Fernandez is a Project Associate at the School of Conflict and Security Studies, NIAS. Harshita Rathore and Padmashree Anandhan Research Assistant at the School of Conflict and Security Studies, NIAS. Poulomi Mondal, Sejal Sharma and Satyam Dubey are postgraduate scholars at Pondicherry University.





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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

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

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



About Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education”, in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. With 16 regional offices in Germany and over 120 offices abroad, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is committed to achieving and maintaining peace, freedom and justice through political education. KAS promotes and preserves free democracy, social market economy, and the development and consolidation of the value consensus. KAS also focus on consolidating democracy, the unification of Europe and the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation.

KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible

About Conflict Weekly

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



Editor: D. Suba Chandran

Assistant Editors: Padmashree Anandhan

Editorial Team: Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Apoorva Sudhakar, Sejal Sharma and Satyam Dubey