

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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The continuing crisis in Israel

Anu Maria Joseph



(Protests against the new far-right government's judicial reforms have entered the fourth week, with people raising their voice against "dictatorship." Image Source: Corinna Kern/Reuters)

Israel-Palestine: Escalating violence, protest over reforms and Blinken's visit

In the news

On 29 January, nearly 100,000 people including a contingent from a left-wing coalition held protests in Tel Aviv against the new right-wing government and its new reforms weakening the judiciary. The protests marked the fourth consecutive week and demonstrators carried Israel flags chanting “no to dictatorship” and demanded “democracy.” The protests come after gunmen killed seven people near a synagogue in an Israeli settlement in East Jerusalem. Previously, on 26 January, nine Palestinians were killed and dozens were injured in an Israeli military raid in the West Bank’s Janin city.

On 29 January, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that he would expedite gun permits to Israeli citizens and promised new steps to “strengthen” Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

On 31 January, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, during his visit to Israel and Palestine, criticised the Israeli settlements, simultaneously stressing the US support for Israel. Emphasising the need for preserving the two-state solution, Blinken said: “The United States is committed to working toward our enduring goal of ensuring that Palestinians and Israelis enjoy equal measures of freedom, security, opportunity, justice, and dignity.” He added that the US “will continue to oppose anything that puts that goal further from reach, including but not limited to settlement expansion and the legalisation of illegal outposts, moves towards the annexation of the West Bank, disruption to the historic status quo on Jerusalem’s holy sites, demolitions and evictions and incitement and acquiescence to violence.”

Referring to Palestinians, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu replied to Blinken that Israel is “working to close the file of the Arab-Israeli conflict that would also help us find a solution with our Palestinian neighbours.” He added: “We share common interests, and common values. We will remain, I assure you, two strong democracies.”

Issues at large

First, increasing violence. The latest Israeli army raid in the West Bank and the Palestinian attack against Israelis outside the synagogue is said to be the deadliest since 2005 and 2008 respectively. According to Al Jazeera, at least 35 Palestinians were killed in the raids in January alone. The new government's move to legalise further settlements across the West Bank has increased Israel-Palestine tensions. While Netanyahu continues further aggression against the Palestinians, the young Palestinians use violent resistance considering it as their only viable path to freedom.

Second, prolonging political instability. Israel has been going through an unprecedented political instability followed by five general elections in a span of four years: April 2019, September 2019, March 2020, March 2021, and November 2022. The refusal of the liberal wing to form a coalition with Netanyahu in the Knesset and his conservative Likud Party’s refusal to remove him from the party’s leadership led to a political stalemate and prolonged political instability.

Third, the return of Netanyahu and a far-right government. Netanyahu was ousted in June 2021 after 12 years in power by a loose coalition of rivals while he faced allegations of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust. Israel's longest serving leader has always taken a tough line toward the Palestinians, putting security concerns at the top. Prime Minister Netanyahu’s return to his sixth

term in power is added to the return of the country's far right-wing coalition. The far-right coalition parties reject the idea of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict and stick to the annexation of the West Bank.

Four, the new judicial reforms. The new proposed judicial reforms restrict the High Court of Justice's powers and give new powers to the Knesset. According to the proposed reform, a majority in the Knesset will be enough to pass a law. Further, the Supreme Court will be prohibited from hearing any appeal against the Basic Laws. Additionally, the Judicial Appointments Committee's composition will change and will include 11 members, seven of whom will be appointed directly by the parliament.

In perspective

First, the government's hardline conservative policies, continuing attacks and aggression against the Palestinians, and expanding settlements would mean that the crisis is likely to escalate. Second, the return of Netanyahu and a far-right government would mean that the new government's policies are likely to inflame political instability as well as escalate Israel-Palestine tensions. Third, the proposed reforms face popular disagreement. If implemented, the new reforms weakening the judiciary's authority would undermine democracy and accelerate intrusive policies on Palestine. Four, as the violence increases, with international actors falling behind to take necessary steps, the speculation of another Palestinian Intifada is growing.



Also, from around the World

Avishka Ashok, Abigail Fernandez, Rashmi Ramesh, Ankit Singh, Apoorva Sudhakar, Anu Maria Joseph, Sethuraman N, and Padmashree Anandhan

East and Southeast Asia

China: US think tank claims increase in Chinese patrols in South China Sea

On 31 January, The Strait Times cited a report by the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative and reported that the Chinese Coast Guard maintained an almost-daily presence in 2022 in the South China Sea. According to the tracking data, tensions in the Strait remained high in 2022 with Chinese and Vietnamese vessels engaging in 310 days of scattered standoffs. Near the Philippines, Chinese patrols increased from 279 to 232. The increase in patrols has pushed analysts to believe in China's aim to claim over 80 per cent of the South China Sea.

South Asia

Pakistan: 92 people killed in suicide blast in Peshawar

On 30 January, 92 people were killed and 159 injured in a suicide attack targeting a Shia mosque in Peshawar's Police Lines. Initially, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack; however, the group later distanced itself from the statement. According to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the assailant has been identified through CCTV footage, revealing that he was dressed in a police uniform and was riding a motorcycle with a helmet and face mask. Additionally, the IGP claimed that the assailant did not work alone but had backing from a larger network. Meanwhile, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir said that such attacks will not change Pakistan's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism. Similarly, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif urged the political forces to work together to fight against anti-state elements in the country.

Sri Lanka: 285 suspects in possession of narcotics apprehended

On 29 January, Sri Lanka's Police Special Task Force (STF), police, army and airforce arrested 285 suspects with narcotics in a seven-hour joint operation in Western and Southern provinces of Sri Lanka. The officials seized one kilogram (kg) of heroin, one kg of cannabis and other drugs during the operation carried out in multiple locations simultaneously. The police said that among the 285 arrested suspects, many are identified as drug traffickers including infamous drug trafficker Dharmakeerthi Udeni Inuka Perera alias 'Disco.'

Central Asia, Middle East, and Africa

Armenia-Azerbaijan: Baku and Yerevan take the Lachin Corridor blockade and other matters to the ICJ

On 30 January, the government of Armenia told the International Court of Justice that Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin Corridor was a deliberate attempt at "ethnic cleansing." This comes as the Lachin Corridor, the only link connecting Armenia to the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region has been blocked since 12 December after protesters, claiming to be environmental activists, stopped traffic by setting up tents. Azerbaijan denies claims of the blockade, stating that the activists were holding legitimate demonstrations against illegal mining activity. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan asked the ICJ to instruct Armenia to assist in marking areas it previously controlled and stop planting explosive devices, which prevent Azerbaijani nationals from returning back.

Iraq: Rockets target Turkish base

On 1 February, the Kurdish Regional Government's anti-terror department said that eight rockets targeting a Turkish military base in the north were fired. The Islamic Resistance Ahrar al-Iraq Brigade, an Iran-backed militia and part of Iraq's Iran-backed Popular Mobilization Forces claimed responsibility for the attack. The Turkish officials however confirmed that there were no material damages and casualties following the incident.

Iran: Drone attack on a military factory

On 29 January, drones struck the military factory in Isfahan, Central Iran. Tehran intercepted the drones, however, the extent of the damage remains unknown. On 2 February, Iran's UN envoy Amir Saeid wrote a letter to UN Secretary General António Guterres: "Primary investigation suggested Israel was responsible," and that the state "reserves its legitimate and inherent right to defend its national security and firmly respond to any threat or wrongdoing of the Zionist regime [Israel] wherever and whenever it deems necessary."

Somalia: Senior IS militant killed by US special forces

On 27 January, the US government said that its special forces killed senior Islamic State militant Bilal al-Sudani in Somalia along with his ten associates; al-Sudani was a key figure in the funding and expansion of the group across Africa. The US Secretary of Defence, Lloyd Austin described the development as "a successful counterterrorism operation." Prior to joining the IS, al-Sudani worked for al-Shabab, and later split from the group to form an IS-affiliated group.

Somalia: East African leaders meet to discuss operations against al-Shabab

On 31 January, BBC reported that security chiefs from East Africa are meeting in Mogadishu to discuss joint military operations against the al-Shabab militant group. The meeting comes following the significant gains by Somali forces along with the US, African troops, and local militia against the group. On 30 January, the Somali government said that it killed more than 130 al-Shabab militants including top commanders. The summit of the regional leaders is also expected to discuss the phased withdrawal of the African Union troops in Somalia.

Mali: Independent probe into Wagner Group operations

On 31 January, independent human rights experts appointed by the UN and the UN Working Group on Mercenaries called on Mali to begin an immediate probe into the mass killings in Moura village in 2022. The UN News quoted the experts: "We are particularly worried by credible reports that over the course of several days in late March 2022, Malian armed forces accompanied by military personnel believed to belong to the Wagner Group, executed several hundred people, who had been rounded up in Moura, a village in central Mali." The experts said they had also received reports of the Wagner Group's human rights and sexual abuses in the Central African Republic; they said they were apprehensive of the "increased outsourcing of traditional military functions" to the Wagner Group.

Ghana: Eight people allegedly killed by military; high command dismisses claims

On 1 February, BBC quoted eyewitnesses who said eight people, including a 12-year-old boy, had been killed after armed men shot at civilians in Bawku town in the north along the Burkina Faso border; the boy was reportedly burnt to death. The MP for Bawku Central accused the military of carrying out the attack and demanded an immediate investigation.



Europe and the Americas

Germany: Announces to provide 14 Leopard battle tanks to Ukraine

On 25 January, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced the decision to provide 14 Leopard 2A6 main battle tanks to Ukraine. With this, other European countries can send similar tanks to Ukraine and train Ukrainian troops. He said: “I need to explicitly say; it was right and it keeps on being right not to have been pushed forward but to have waited for international cooperation to take place.” In response, Zelenskyy thanked Germany for the support, while the Kremlin spokesperson Dimitry Peskov condemned the move and said it would “Bring nothing good to the future relationship.” Germany’s decision was supported by Latvia’s President Egils Levits who said: “And if we have an aggressive neighbour, it is natural that we are increasing our defense capabilities.” Along with Latvia, NATO, the UK, and France welcomed Germany’s move. Spain and Norway have expressed consent to provide Leopard 2A4 and Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine.

Italy: Gas station workers hold strikes

On 25 January, gas station workers belonging to FAIB, FEGICA, and FIGISC unions staged a walkout after failing to reach a consensus with the government. The workers of the FEGICA and FIGISC staged a 48-hour strike whereas FAIB workers staged a 24-hour strike. This comes as the Italian government withdrew discounts on gas prices and put forth a transparency policy to prevent “speculation in prices.” The unions objected to this as the latter clause could lead to a clash between gas stations and customers.

The UK: Hundreds of Albanian children reported to be missing from asylum centres

On 25 January, the Home Office Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Simon Murray stated that 88 per cent of 200 missing migrant children are Albanian. This comes as UK Interior Minister Robert Jenrick informed the parliament that since 2021, at least 4,600 child asylum seekers had arrived in the UK out of which 440 had gone missing and only half had returned. Murray added: “The Home Office has no power to detain unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in these hotels, and we do know that some of them go missing,” and that many are traced and found later. This drew criticism from NGOs who questioned the government’s lack of action over the issue. The Director of Stand For All, a human rights advocacy organisation, said: “The [UK] government has done nothing but attack Albanians, ignoring how Albanian young people are one of the most at-risk groups of child trafficking.” The Child Rights Centre in Albania (CRCA) criticised the government saying that it is obligated under international law to protect unaccompanied children and added: “One has to wonder if this lack of care and responsibility comes from the fact that they are foreign children.”

Poland: Mateusz announces to increase defence budget

On 30 January, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawieck announced that Poland will be increasing its defence budget from 2.4 per cent to four per cent of its GDP. As a part of this increased spending, Poland would purchase 116 Abrams tanks worth USD 1.4 billion from the US. It will also purchase 180 K2 “Black Panther” from South Korea and has plans to acquire over 800 units of the tank whose production begins in Poland in 2026. Poland will also be purchasing around 48 FA-50 light combat fighter jets and 600 K9 howitzers from South Korea. It also will be increasing its armed personnel from 50,000 to 250,000 in the coming years.

The US: Ilhan Omar removed from foreign affairs committee over stance on Israel

On 2 February, the House of Congress controlled by Republican lawmakers removed Congresswoman Ilhan Omar from the House Foreign Affairs Committee over her past criticism of Israel. Omar later tweeted: “Representation matters. We didn’t come to Congress to be silent. We

came to Congress to be a voice for families who are displaced in refugee camps and those seeking justice around the world. Because that's what this child survivor of war would have wanted." Dean Phillips, a Jewish lawmaker from Democrats described the Republican push as 'weaponisation of anti-Semitism.'

Haiti: Jamaica offers troops after Haiti request international security deployment

On 31 January, Jamaican Prime Minister while addressing the lawmakers said: "Jamaica would be willing to participate in a multinational security assistance deployment to Haiti under the appropriate jurisdictional parameters to support a return to a reasonable level of stability and peace." Haiti has been struggling with levels of violence, health and food crises not seen in decades, ever since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse at his private home. Gangs are now believed to control 60 percent of the capital Port-au-Prince.

The US: Biden calls for police reforms following protests over Tyre Nichols's death

On 2 February, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris met with members of the Congressional Black Caucus to explore options for police reforms. In 2022, a law named, George Floyd Justice in Policing Act got stalled in Congress over the Republican opposition to elements of the legislation. The development comes after Tyre Nichols died with injuries in January 2023, after he was heckled by the Memphis police for reckless driving. Nichols was unarmed and his death triggered protests across the US.

The US: Lawmakers call for sanctioning Peru and suspending aid

On 30 January, a group of Democrats in the House of Representatives urged the Biden administration to suspend all security assistance to Peru over a "pattern of repression" against anti-government protests that have resulted in more than 50 civilian deaths. The country has been through a political storm after ex-President Pedro Castillo was impeached and arrested. According to the Washington Office on Latin America, the US provides more than USD 40 million annually to Peru in security assistance. The vast majority is aimed at helping Peru counter drug trafficking.

About the authors

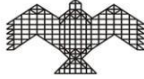
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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative(IPRI)

National Institute of
Advanced Studies



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 researches 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. 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 manner.

KAS has organized its program priorities in India into five working areas: Foreign and Security Policy; Economic, Climate, and Energy Policy; Rule of Law; Political Dialogue focused on Social and Political Change; and Media and Youth. The India Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation takes great pride in its cooperation with Indian partner institutions that implement jointly curated projects and programmes.

About Conflict Weekly



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

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