



Global Intelligence Summary

REPORTING PERIOD: 23 JUN – 30 JUN 2023



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Week 27: 23 June – 30 June 2023

Executive Summary

- Violent protests are highly likely to continue across major urban centres in **France** over the coming days.
- The desecration of a Quran in Stockholm may increase the risk of Islamist-inspired terror attacks in **Sweden** or other European countries in the immediate term.
- Fighting in **Sudan** will very likely continue to proliferate outside of Khartoum in the short term.
- The Tour de France cycling race and Wimbledon tennis tournament, alongside other high-profile sporting events across Europe, will very likely be targeted by environmental protest groups in the coming weeks.



Figure 1: Significant activity identified during the current reporting period (23-30 June 2023)

AMER

- 1 Security Ministry staff kidnapped in Mexico
- 2 Guatemalan presidential election heads to run-off
- 3 Security enhanced in Honduras following fatal shooting
- 4 Disruption due to widespread flooding in Chile

EMEA

- 5 Unrest across France after fatal shooting
- 6 Quran desecrated in Stockholm
- 7 Netanyahu softens judicial reform proposal
- 8 Constitutional reforms approved in Mali
- 9 Conflict spreading in Sudan
- 10 Armed attack kills five in Lamu, Kenya
- 11 Shooting outside US Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

APAC

- 12 Pakistan secures IMF bailout
- 13 Security situation in Pakistan remains volatile
- 14 Anti-US rally in Pyongyang



Americas (AMER)

Mexico. On 27 June, at least 14 administrative employees of the Mexican state security ministry were kidnapped by an armed group in the southern state of Chiapas. The incident took place around 22 miles west of the state capital Tuxtla Gutierrez, on the highway connecting the city to Ocozocoautla. Video footage reportedly of the incident appeared to show three trucks blocking the highway, before armed gunmen halted a bus transporting ministry employees. Less than 24 hours after the kidnapping, a police station in the city of Tapachula, Chiapas, was targeted by an explosive device which damaged two patrol vehicles. On 28 June, the kidnapped employees appeared in a proof-of-life video in which they conveyed the kidnappers' demands for the resignation of three prominent security officials. The kidnappers also stated in the video that their grievance lies with the Chiapas State Police, and not with Mexican security or political authority more widely. At least two people have been arrested for their alleged participation in the kidnap so far, whilst more than 1,000 state and federal security officers are conducting air and land-based searches.

So What? It is likely that this kidnapping and the subsequent bombing are retaliation for a confrontation between security forces and members of local organised criminal gangs on 19 June. This series of incidents marks a significant deterioration in the security situation in the state of Chiapas. Whilst the state has experienced land, ethnic, political, and religious conflicts, until recently it had not seen the same levels of cartel violence which afflicts other Mexican states. This upsurge in drug and criminal violence in the state comes amid an ongoing territorial dispute between the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel as they fight for control of the Mexico – Guatemala border region. Alongside this, both cartels have accused the Chiapas state police of favouring the other. Given the general prevalence of insecurity across Mexico and the recent deterioration in Chiapas, further instances of bombings, kidnappings, and cartel violence will almost certainly occur in the short term. It should be noted that the kidnapping in particular will be seen by authorities as a major escalation and comes as Mexico's political class begin gearing up for the Presidential election. Given the country's increasingly precarious internal security situation, expect all presidential candidates to focus their attention on this issue in the coming months. The fact that the former head of Mexico's federal anti-kidnapping unit, Gualberto Ramírez Gutiérrez, was placed in custody on charges relating to kidnapping, forced disappearances, and torture on 25 June only underscores the influence of organised crime in the country, and how difficult the next president may find it to enforce security.

Guatemala. The Guatemalan presidential election will proceed to a second round run-off vote on 20 August after no candidate secured the required 50 percent of the first round vote. Former presidential candidate Sandra Torres of the National Unity of Hope (UNE) party secured around 16 percent of the vote, with Bernardo Arevalo of the Movimiento Semilla (Seed Movement) party securing around 12 percent. At least 17 percent of the presidential votes were spoiled, with a further 7 percent left blank, whilst voting was also suspended in several regions of the country due to unrest and violence at polling stations. Movimiento Semilla also secured 23 seats in the Senate to become the third largest party in the chamber. Arevalo subsequently noted that he would pursue closer relations with China if he secures victory in the run-off.

So What? The high percentage of spoiled votes and the unexpectedly strong performance from Arevalo and his Movimiento Semilla party almost certainly indicates considerable displeasure with the current political establishment amongst the Guatemalan public. Guatemalan politics has long been beset by allegations of corruption, whilst persecution of political opposition and press freedoms is also commonplace. It remains unclear whether Arevalo will gather enough support in the run-off to defeat Torres, particularly given the influence of Guatemala's powerful business and civil society organisations, although a narrow victory for Torres would likely spark further violent unrest across parts of the country. Guatemala is currently one of only 12 countries with official diplomatic ties with Taiwan, although Arevalo's pledge to pursue closer relations with China would mirror recent foreign policy changes in neighbouring Honduras, which would very likely result in increased Chinese investment in the country over the longer term.

Honduras: President Xiomara Castro has announced enhanced security measures across much of the northern parts of the country, following a series of violent episodes which have left over 20 dead. On 23 June, unidentified gunmen killed 11 people at a pool hall in Choloma, Cortes province. A further 11 people were killed in separate incidents across the northern Valle de Sula zone on 24 June, with three killed in a bakery in San Pedro Sula. The enhanced security measures include a 15-day curfew in Choloma between 21:00 and 04:00 which has already commenced, whilst a second curfew will go into effect in San Pedro Sula on 4 July. Alongside this, the frequency of security operations, raids, and checkpoints is set to increase dramatically, and there have been widescale sweeps of the country's prisons. Furthermore, the area around both Choloma and San Pedro Sula will also see an extra 1000 troops, police, and security officials deployed.

So What? Honduras has long struggled with widespread gang violence, although the fatal riot inside a women's prison in Tamara on 20 June and several subsequent security incidents have caused nationwide outrage. The country has been under a state of emergency since December 2022, which has since been extended to October 2023 and is almost certain to be extended further. The implementation of curfews, enhanced security presence, and widespread sweeps of the country's prisons highlights how the Honduran government appears to be adopting policies recently implemented by El Salvador, in a bid to control their internal security situation. Such tactics have notably improved security in El Salvador, and have started to be emulated across Central America. Further to this, the government is almost certain to approve a motion from the security minister that would class all members of a criminal structure or mara (gang) as terrorists. Such a move would enable the government to use anti-terror legislation to counter internal violence. It is realistically possible that the attack in Choloma was retribution for the recent prison killings, which was reportedly conducted by inmates belonging to the Barrio 18 gang, since Choloma is reportedly a known area of operation and influence for Barrio 18 members. Consequently, despite the enhanced security measures it is realistically possible that the country will see an upsurge in violence as Barrio 18 and its rivals enter a cycle of intra-gang warfare.

Chile. The National Service for the Prevention and Response to Disasters (SENAPRED) has confirmed that two people have been killed, several are missing and over 13,000 others have been affected by flooding across southern Chile. At least 1,400 homes have been destroyed and a further 3,500 have been damaged. Chilean authorities have expanded the flooding red alert to include the entirety of the Bio Bio region, whilst further north a red alert has also been issued for the Los Andes and San Felipe provinces of Valparaiso.

So What? Whilst the extent of the flooding is unlikely to worsen now that the weather front has passed, the humanitarian and ecological impacts of the flooding will almost certainly persist over the short term. Water and power supplies have been interrupted across the region, with considerable damage to local infrastructure and commercial facilities. Disruption to transportation networks and localised freedom of movement will also very likely continue whilst the floodwaters recede over the coming days. Further severe weather would also very likely prompt additional alerts from the authorities and evacuations in coastal or low-lying regions proximate to water sources.

AMER Regional Forecast. On 2 July, municipal elections will be held in Peru which will see 12 mayors and 60 local officials appointed in the country's first elections since nationwide mass unrest began in December 2022. Embattled President Dina Boluarte is likely hoping that any remaining anti-government sentiment will be channelled towards these elections, rather than towards calls for the dissolution of her government and fresh general elections.

Domestic security will almost certainly remain a critical issue across Central and South America, including Ecuador, Honduras and Mexico.

Over the coming reporting period, eastern Canada will likely continue to experience high levels of air pollution due to the effects of ongoing wildfires. Further south, Hurricane Beatriz has formed off the coast of Mexico, with associated heavy winds and flooding risks for much of Mexico's Pacific coast over the next week. Temperatures across much of Mexico will begin to reduce, following a three-week heatwave which has caused more than 100 deaths from heat-related injuries, although temperatures will remain elevated across several northern regions. Volcanic activity in Peru is also likely to result in further evacuations around the Ubinas Volcano.



Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA)

France. Mass unrest has occurred across the country, after a police officer shot and killed a teenager during a traffic stop in the Nanterre region of Paris on 27 June. By the night of 29 June, violent unrest had spread beyond Paris to Marseille, Lyon, Pau, Toulouse and Lille. Associated protests have also been reported in Belgium. The French Interior Ministry noted that more than 875 people had been arrested so far during the protests, in which multiple buildings and vehicles had been set alight and stores looted, with at least 240 police injured. President Macron has convened two crisis meetings, amidst calls for him to declare a state of emergency, whilst the officer involved in the shooting has been charged with intentional homicide and remanded in custody.

So What? French authorities have deployed more than 40,000 police across the country in a bid to curtail the spread of violence, although the protests appear to have gathered considerable momentum and are very likely to continue in the short term across major urban centres. Previous unrest sparked by deaths associated with police activity persisted for several weeks in 2005, whilst national tensions are already elevated after President Macron forced through controversial pension reform legislation in April 2023 in a move which also sparked weeks of violent unrest. It is therefore realistically possible that Macron will declare a state of emergency in the coming days, particularly if the unrest escalates further over 1-3 July.

Sweden. On 28 June, an Iraqi national desecrated a copy of the Quran outside of the Stockholm Central Mosque. The individual was later charged with agitation against an ethnic or national group. The incident has led to widespread condemnation from Islamic countries.

So What? The incident coincided with the first day of Eid al-Adha, a major Islamic holiday. Much of the anger has been directed towards the Swedish authorities for approving the protest. Although Swedish police have rejected numerous applications for anti-Quran demonstrations, their decisions have been overturned by Swedish courts, citing infringements on freedom of speech. Previous Quran burnings in Sweden have been conducted by individuals associated with extreme right-wing politics and have provoked counter-demonstrations and localised unrest, although it is unclear whether the nationality of the perpetrator will influence the response to this incident from Sweden's domestic Muslim population. The incident may also increase the risk of Islamist-inspired terror attack in Sweden or other European countries in the immediate term. Internationally, several Islamic countries have criticised the incident, with Morocco recalling its ambassador to Sweden for an indefinite period. The incident may also set back ongoing negotiations between Sweden and Turkey regarding the former's accession to NATO. Discussions were previously suspended in January 2023 after a Danish far-right politician burned a copy of the Koran near the Turkish embassy in Stockholm. NATO sources are now suggesting that Swedish accession may not come before the NATO summit in July.

Israel. On 26 June, Lebanese militant group Hezbollah claimed to have shot down an Israeli drone near Zibqin, southern Lebanon. The Israeli military did confirm a drone had fallen into Lebanese territory although denied it had been shot down. The Israeli Defence Ministry subsequently claimed to have seized substantial amounts of digital funds allegedly intended for use by Hezbollah and the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also confirmed that a particularly controversial aspect of his proposed judicial reforms was being dropped and he would no longer seek to grant parliament the authority to overturn Supreme Court rulings.

So What? The incident in southern Lebanon follows several weeks of heightened tensions in the region, with localised unrest and protests reported between local residents and Israeli border forces over the past month, and comes shortly after Israel warned Lebanon that it could use force to clear Hezbollah camps that had been recently erected near the contested Shebaa Farms and Kfar Chouba hills. Low-level confrontations are likely to persist whilst a diplomatic resolution is sought, with Israel likely to prefer avoiding the use of force to clear the camps in order not to provoke retaliation from Hezbollah. Whilst Netanyahu has rowed back on one of the most

contentious aspects of his proposed reform, it is unlikely that the amendment will be enough to satisfy opposition groups and prevent further unrest manifesting in the coming weeks.

Mali. The Malian electoral authority has confirmed that proposed constitutional reforms have been approved by voters, with 97 percent of votes cast in favour of the changes. Turnout was around 39 percent. Separately, the mandate for UN peacekeeping mission MINUSMA ended on 30 June, with the UN Security Council (UNSC) approving a resolution which will provide six months (until 31 December 2023) to conduct an orderly withdrawal from the country. German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius has noted that Germany would seek to withdraw its forces before the six-month deadline.

So What? Whilst the approval of the proposed reforms would theoretically facilitate a return to democracy in Mali, in practice it will very likely result in considerable power for the executive branch of government and very little influence for the legislative branch, despite the proposed implementation of a bicameral Senate. Notwithstanding, it is highly likely that the military will retain overall power in Mali since the current junta leader Assimi Goita is very likely to run in the presidential election in February 2024. The proposed timeline for the withdrawal of MINUSMA would also appear to facilitate a legitimised power-grab by the Goita regime. As MINUSMA operations draw down, a notable uptick in violence across much of northern and eastern Mali should be anticipated. Indeed, a 28 June attack by suspected Islamic State (IS) militants south of Gao that killed at least 13 people very likely represents a reasonable indicator of Mali's security outlook over the coming months.

Sudan. Rapid Support Forces (RSF) claimed to have seized control of a Central Reserve Police base in southern Khartoum on 25 June, reportedly capturing multiple armoured vehicles and other equipment. Both the RSF and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) announced unilateral ceasefires to coincide with the beginning of Eid al-Adha. Elsewhere, clashes between the SAF and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/North (SPLM-N) rebel group were reported in Kurmuk, Blue Nile State, on 25-26 June.

So What? Both sides continue to disregard truces and ceasefire agreements at the tactical level, regardless of statements made by respective commanders, and will almost certainly continue to do so in the coming weeks. Indeed, SAF airstrikes appear to have intensified over the course of this reporting period as the RSF consolidate their control over southern Khartoum, having previously captured critical infrastructure and military facilities in this region of the capital. The SPLM-N appear to be emerging as a third armed actor in the conflict, which will almost certainly complicate the security environment outside of Khartoum. When viewed alongside recent claims that thousands of Islamists linked to former Sudanese leader Omar al-Bashir are fighting alongside the SAF, it is inevitable that conflict will continue to expand to other states in the short term.

Kenya. Five people were killed after armed attackers raided Salama and Juhudi villages in Lamu country, southeast Kenya, on 25 June. The attackers reportedly beheaded four of the victims, before burning houses and destroying property, with several hundred locals displaced. Kenyan security forces have noted the attackers are being pursued through nearby forests.

So What? Kenyan police have described the incident as a 'terrorist attack', which is typically used to refer to incursions by Somali terror group al-Shabaab. Whilst the group has not officially claimed responsibility for the incident, they are very likely to be involved. Lamu country has previously been targeted by the group, including the 2020 Camp Simba attack which killed three American citizens, with al-Shabaab citing Kenyan military operations in Somalia as justification for such attacks. This latest incident follows a recent uptick in al-Shabaab activity across southern Somalia, although it is unclear if this was an isolated incident or whether it represents the beginning of a concerted cross-border targeting campaign by the group. The Kenya-Somalia land border has been officially closed since 2011, although crossing points at Mandera-Belet Hawo (Belethawa), Liboi Harhar-Dhobley and Kiunga-Ras Kamboni are set to re-open on 1 July. The attack in Lamu may therefore have been partially intended to discourage the reopening.

Saudi Arabia. One Nepalese security guard was killed after an unidentified gunman opened fire outside the United States Consulate in Jeddah on 28 June. The attacker was also killed during the firefight, with no United States citizens injured. No further information regarding the perpetrator has been released and investigations continue.

So What? The shooting occurred on the first day of the Eid al-Adha Islamic holiday. Whilst incidents of this nature are unusual in Saudi Arabia, the United States Consulate in Jeddah has previously been targeted in attacks, including a 4 July 2016 suicide bombing in a car park opposite the facility that injured two. Similarly, a suicide bombing in Jeddah's Al Samer neighbourhood in August 2022 injured four. Previous attacks have been conducted by individuals associated with regional terror groups, such as the Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda. Security in Jeddah and at the Consulate will almost certainly be enhanced in the short term, whilst investigations into the attacker's motive continue, with subsequent attacks unlikely to occur in the immediate term.

EMEA Regional Forecast. Political tensions will likely remain elevated in Kosovo and Serbia, despite the release of three Kosovan police officers and the announcement that Kosovan Prime Minister Albin Kurti is willing to re-run disputed elections if more than 20 percent of local voters agreed. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has been invited to visit the White House during a call with President Biden, although it is not clear when the visit will occur. In Spain, as the country's elections draw closer the polls are continuing to tighten in favour of the country's right-wing Partido Popular, but not enough to for it secure outright victory, potentially meaning the country's far-right Vox party could play kingmaker in a future coalition deal.

Zimbabwe's election campaign has commenced as the country prepares to head to the polls on 28 August, with the country likely to see disruption from political rallies and marches both for and against the incumbent Zanu-PF party over the coming weeks. Ethiopia, one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, has applied to join the BRICS group of economies. If it is successful in its membership bid, it would become the second African country to join the group after South Africa, which joined in December 2010. Expect further discussion around Ethiopia's application over the coming weeks, ahead of the BRICS summit in August.

In the north-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and possibly southwest Uganda, violent attacks by the ADF militant group are highly likely to continue. There has been an uptick in attacks perpetrated by the group along the DRC-Uganda border in recent weeks, highlighting that ADF cells retain considerable operational capacity despite the ongoing security operations against them. Expect political tensions and volatility to persist in Sierra Leone after the opposition rejected the election results, with a realistic possibility that this leads to further political and civil unrest in the forthcoming reporting period. Such an outcome is made more likely by the fact that the pre-election period witnessed a number of violent incidents.

The Tour de France will commence on 1 July, whilst the Wimbledon tennis tournament will be held in the United Kingdom from 3 July. Both of these events will very likely be considered notable targets for protest activity given their high-profile nature, particularly for environmental activist groups. Such groups have targeted several high-profile sporting events in recent months, including the British Premiership Rugby Union Final in London, the Epsom Derby, the Berlin E-Grand Prix, the Giro d'Italia, and several cricket matches in London. The Tour de France has also previously been targeted.



Asia Pacific (APAC)

Pakistan: The country has reached a preliminary deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over a USD 3 billion nine-month agreement, subject to approval by the IMF board in July. The agreement grants the country USD 0.5 million more than expected, with Pakistani officials expecting to agree on terms for the release of the remaining USD 2.5 billion from the 2019 bailout package worth USD 6.5 billion.

So What? The announcement came hours before a deadline which would have almost certainly plunged the country into default. The IMF agreement will correspondingly unlock other sources of bilateral and multilateral finance for Pakistan from key creditor nations such as the UAE and possibly also China. Throughout the year, Pakistan has had to implement a series of fiscally retrenching measures to align with the terms of the IMF deal, including a revised 2023-24 budget which was finally passed on 25 June. They have also cut subsidies, raised energy and fuel prices, increased the interest rate to 22 percent, allowed the Rupee to float freely on international markets, and raised a further USD 1.34 billion through new taxes. These measures have only further worsened Pakistan's political volatility, and stoked civil unrest, as the country heads to general elections in the latter half of this year. The fiscal concessions required of Pakistan in order to reach agreement with the IMF will remain vulnerable to criticism politically and unpopular with the electorate. In the near term, however, this agreement staves off the risk of default and has already begun to restore investor confidence in the country, as evidenced by the fact that the country's sovereign dollar bonds were trading higher after the announcement, with some of its bonds seeing gains of more than eight percent.

Pakistan. Islamic State (IS) have continued to target Pakistan's Sikh minority community, with two targeted assassinations over 24–25 June. Meanwhile, Pakistani security forces continue to conduct counter-IS operations along the Afghanistan border, claiming to have killed two militants and IS commander Shafi Ullah during a raid in Bajur, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province (KPK). In Balochistan province, one police officer was killed and a second injured after a suicide bomb targeted a police vehicle in Turbat on 24 June. The Pakistani army has also announced that two civilians had been killed by Indian forces in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, and that three senior military officers had been fired for failing to prevent violent attacks on military assets by supporters of former Prime Minister Imran Khan during protests over his arrest.

So What? The multitude of security incidents and the actors involved serves to highlight how increasingly precarious the country's security situation now is. Since April 2023, at least 6 Sikhs have been targeted by IS in Pakistan, suggesting that the Sikh community and places of worship will almost certainly remain vulnerable to further targeted attacks in the coming weeks. Whilst no group have claimed the attack in Turbat, the attack methodology and targeting preferences are consistent with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Such attacks have become increasingly common since the end of the ceasefire between the Pakistani state and the TPP. The Pakistani military is also likely to respond to the killing of civilians in Kashmir, which could set off a new cycle of violence in the disputed region over the short to medium term. Counter-IS operations are also almost certain to continue along the Afghanistan border in Balochistan and KPK. The firing of senior Pakistani military officials is to be expected, given the attacks against military infrastructure represented notable intelligence and security failures. More than 100 people are already on trial in military courts for participating in the violence, with further arrests or sackings also possible. Sentences perceived as disproportionately harsh will likely trigger further protests and unrest.

North Korea. More than 100,000 people participated in rallies across Pyongyang to mark the 73rd anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, with demonstrators vowing revenge against the United States. The North Korean Foreign Ministry has also claimed that the United States is attempting to provoke a nuclear war by deploying strategic military assets across the region.

So What? The latest provocations come amidst concern that Pyongyang is preparing to attempt a second satellite launch, following the failure of their initial launch on 31 May. South Korean media is reporting that the military has now recovered a military reconnaissance satellite from the 31 May launch attempt, which has been

transferred to a military facility for inspection. South Korea has also announced fresh sanctions against two companies owned by a former South Korean national who acquired Russian citizenship and is suspected of involvement in North Korean weapons programmes. North Korea is highly likely to reattempt a satellite launch in the coming months, once they have identified what caused the first launch to fail.

APAC Regional Forecast. The coming reporting period will almost certainly see monsoon rains causing localised flooding across India and Pakistan, however the flooding is unlikely to be as devastating as the flooding across Pakistan in 2022. In China, Beijing has been placed under a Yellow Weather alert, with the city is expected to see temperatures remain elevated over the coming days.

In Sri Lanka, the cabinet has approved a debt restructuring plan which will be put to a special session of parliament on 1 July. The country's total debt is over USD 83 billion, with around half domestically owned and the other half foreign-owned. If the restructuring involves fiscal retrenchment or large domestic losses, it is highly likely to lead to further anti-government protests, alongside volatility in the country's financial markets. The fact a restructuring has been agreed on, however, will be welcomed positively by the IMF, who have provided the country with a USD 3 billion bailout.

In Thailand, the new parliament will be opened on 1 July, with a sitting taking place on 13 July to elect a new Prime Minister. Despite the claims from Pita Limjaroenrat, leader of the Move Forward Party, that he had secured enough support in the country's upper house to become Prime minister, his coalition officially remains some seats short of a guaranteed majority.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) will be holding a virtual summit on 4 July which will see delegations attend from China and Russia. Chinese President Xi Jinping will also reportedly deliver a speech to the summit. It is expected that officials will discuss regional peace and border issues, and the terror threat emanating from Afghanistan. Kazakhstan is expected to assume the SCO presidency from India following the conclusion of the summit. Astana has stated it wishes to use its time as President to champion issues of security, economy, trade, energy and healthcare.

The next reporting period will see the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands visit China. China has recently increased its funding in the Solomon Islands, and indeed last year the two states signed a security pact which has triggered a competition for influence between China and the United States and its allies amongst the Pacific islands. It is likely that this visit will see further agreements signed pertaining to Chinese investment and enhanced security cooperation.