

Regional Overview: Africa 12-18 January 2020

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Bringing clarity to crisis

Last week, armed clashes and attacks on civilians fell across the continent. The most pronounced fall was recorded in Western Africa, where militant attacks in the Sahel have claimed hundreds of lives in recent weeks. In Northern Africa, a reduction in violence was also recorded in Libya, as opposing forces observed a shaky ceasefire. Contrastingly, Cameroon experienced a significant growth in attacks on civilians, as state forces carried out raids on villages in the country's Anglophone western regions. Where organised violence fell during the week, demonstration activity rose, driven heavily by nationwide anti-government demonstrations in Guinea.

In **Egypt's** North Sinai, ongoing violence between Islamic State and Egyptian military forces resulted in multiple fatalities. Islamic State targeted military vehicles in two separate IED attacks in the Rafah area, also executing a civilian for allegedly collaborating with military forces. In response to the explosions, Egyptian military forces launched airstrikes against Islamic State targets. Two children were reportedly killed in one such airstrike. Military forces and Islamic State militants also clashed south of Rafah, as both groups attempted to reach the site of a plane crash in which an Egyptian fighter pilot died. Although the circumstances of the crash were unclear, multiple reports suggest that the plane may have been shot down by Islamic State.

Violence fell in **Libya** following the commencement of a ceasefire on Sunday 12 January. Several violations were, however, reported in the districts of Sirte, Misrata and Tripoli. During a clash at Ayn Zarah in Tripoli district, a Government of National Accord (GNA) combatant was killed. The Libyan National Army (LNA) also announced a decision to block oil exports from the country in response to Turkey's decision to deploy troops in support of the GNA ([AFP, 19 January 2020](#)). Anti-Turkish protests were held in LNA-controlled areas.

In **Guinea**, several people were reportedly killed during three days of nationwide demonstrations against planned revisions to the Guinean constitution. Beginning on January 13, the opposition National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC) led demonstrations over fears that President Alpha Condé intends to seek a third term as president, despite current constitutional barriers. The demonstrations were the latest in an ongoing anti-government campaign that began in October. Condé was the country's first democratically elected leader when he came to power in 2010.

Although fatalities dropped in the Sahel states, suspected Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) militants remained active in **Niger** and **Burkina Faso**. A total of 20 civilians were reportedly killed in attacks by suspected JNIM or ISGS militants in Burkina Faso's East, Centre-North and Sahel regions. A further six Burkinabe soldiers were killed during an IED attack in the Sahel region.

In **Cameroon**, military forces staged attacks on civilian targets across the Anglophone Southwest and Northwest regions, whilst ongoing clashes with Ambazonian separatists resulted in three deaths. Military raids were reported in at least 30 villages during the week, with 14 people killed and more than 200 houses burnt down in the Northwest's worst hit district of Boyo. Several fatalities were also recorded in Kupe-Manenguba in the Southwest region. The raids follow the large deployment of security forces to both the Southwest and Northwest regions ahead of February elections ([VOA, 10 January 2020](#)), which Ambazonian separatists have vowed to disrupt ([Xinhua, 7 January 2020](#)). The Ambazonian insurgency has been fighting to carve out an Anglophone republic in the western regions of the majority Francophone Cameroon (for more on Ambazonian separatism, see these ACLED reports from [2018](#) and [2019](#)).

Boko Haram continued attacks on civilian targets in **Nigeria's** Borno state, with eleven people reportedly killed during an attack on Gajiram town. Four Nigerian soldiers were also killed when Boko Haram militants attacked a military post in Auno. Suspected Boko Haram militants also abducted and killed two civilians across the border in Cameroon's Far North.

Finally, Somali state forces reportedly killed a senior Al Shabaab explosives expert during a raid in **Somalia's** Lower Shabelle region. Also in Lower Shabelle, Al Shabaab launched an attack on a Somali military base and an IED attack on a Somali military convoy escorting Turkish construction workers. Multiple fatalities were reported in the attacks. Meanwhile, Al Shabaab targeted civilians in both Somalia and Kenya, killing three school teachers in Kenya's Garissa county and four civilians accused of working with the government in Somalia's Lower Shabelle.



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