



Nigeria's 2019 Elections: Six States to Watch

Africa Report N°268 | 21 December 2018

Headquarters

International Crisis Group

Avenue Louise 149 • 1050 Brussels, Belgium

Tel: +32 2 502 90 38 • Fax: +32 2 502 50 38

brussels@crisisgroup.org

Preventing War. Shaping Peace.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
I. Introduction	1
II. Rivers: Reigniting an Old Rivalry.....	4
III. Akwa Ibom: Dimming Prospects for Peaceful Polls.....	8
IV. Kaduna: New Tensions Aggravate Old Grievances.....	10
V. Kano: Struggle for Strategic Battleground	12
VI. Plateau: Continuing Ethno-religious Tensions.....	13
VII. Adamawa: Between President and Challenger	14
VIII. Mitigating Risks in Conflict-prone States	16
APPENDICES	
A. Six States to Watch	19
B. About the International Crisis Group	20
C. Crisis Group Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2015.....	21
D. Crisis Group Board of Trustees	24

Principal Findings

What's new? As presidential, gubernatorial and legislative elections draw near in Nigeria, the risk of violence is widespread, particularly in six states where stakes are high or other conflicts fester.

Why does it matter? Nigeria's last three elections have been deadly. More than 100 people died during and after the 2015 polls – and those were peaceful compared to the previous two. In 2019, with parts of the country in turmoil, violence could take more lives and jeopardise the country's stability.

What should be done? The Nigerian government should move to defuse tensions, bolstering police deployments in vulnerable states and fostering dialogue between antagonists. Nigeria's foreign partners should monitor hotspots and warn politicians of consequences for inciting violence.

Executive Summary

Nigeria will hold national and state elections in February and March 2019. Voters will choose a president, governors for 29 of the country's 36 states, and federal and state lawmakers countrywide. Incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) faces a stiff challenge from Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which dominated national politics from 1999 to 2015. Many contests for state governor also involve high stakes, given the enormous spoils that elected office brings. Electoral politics in Nigeria is a brutal affair with a winner-take-all ethos and a history of violence, often driven by local as much as national dynamics. Already there have been incidents of violence, with some states displaying particularly troubling signs ahead of the vote. In such hotspots, the Nigerian authorities should enhance security plans; encourage rivals to pledge jointly to campaign and resolve disputes peacefully; sanction politicians using inflammatory rhetoric or inciting violence; and promote local dialogue in states suffering intercommunal strife.

Recent Nigerian elections have all been violent, the 2011 polls particularly so. More than 800 people died, as post-election protests morphed into mob attacks on minorities in twelve northern states. Even the more peaceful 2015 polls saw scores killed during campaigning and after the vote. A range of factors conspire to heighten risks of bloodshed nationwide around next year's vote. These include the "win or die" attitude of many politicians, acrimony between the two major parties as they head into what appears likely to be a closely fought contest, widespread popular distrust of security agencies, opposition parties' misgivings about the electoral commission's neutrality, and the prevalence of conflict and deadly criminal violence in parts of the country. It remains uncertain how either side would respond to losing, particularly if the margin is narrow.

Risks of violence appear to be highest in six states: Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau and Adamawa. Dynamics in each state vary, but all feature at least two of four major triggers: an intense struggle between the APC and PDP for control over states with large electorates, vast public revenues or symbolic electoral value; local rivalry between former and incumbent governors; tension resulting from ethno-religious or herder-farmer conflict; and the presence of criminal groups that politicians can recruit to attack rivals and their constituents. Local violence is not only a problem for the areas affected. It can have wider implications, with pre-election bloodshed undermining the vote's credibility and aggravating risks of disputes, and local protests after the ballot potentially ballooning into a national crisis.

At the national level, Nigerian authorities can take a number of steps to reduce risks. The federal government should speedily release all funds that are outstanding from the allocations that the federal legislature, the National Assembly, approved for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and security agencies but that are still stuck in the bureaucracy, to let them prepare for the elections properly. Political parties should fulfil commitments their leaders have recently made to avoid inflammatory rhetoric, campaign peacefully, pursue grievances lawfully and rein in any supporters in the event of their defeat. The electoral authorities should intensify outreach to political parties aimed at winning their confidence and firm up logistical

arrangements, particularly for election day. Security agencies should act professionally, ensure neutrality between all parties, and finalise contingency plans for preventing or responding to violence.

In addition to these national-level steps, the authorities should redouble efforts to prevent violence in hotspots. While policies should be tailored to each state, priorities include:

- ❑ Improving security arrangements by identifying and sanctioning politicians and groups using inflammatory rhetoric, inciting violence or plotting to perpetrate it; ensuring order at campaign rallies; strengthening inter-agency cooperation; and protecting polling centres in a non-partisan and non-threatening manner;
- ❑ Encouraging leading politicians at the state and local levels to honour commitments, already made at the national level, to campaign and pursue any grievances peacefully and lawfully (ideally, the main rivals in conflict-prone states would make joint pledges to do so in public ceremonies);
- ❑ Holding confidence-building dialogues between the local leaders of ethnic, religious and farmer-herder communities that are locked in conflict, as a way to undercut efforts by politicians to stoke divides for their own ends.

For their part, Nigeria's international partners, through their diplomatic missions in the federal capital, Abuja, should set up a forum to coordinate their messaging, particularly to the main political contenders and electoral and security institutions. They should consider establishing an international working group, comprising prominent statespersons with sway in Nigeria, which could intervene in the event of a major crisis. Such a forum and working group helped lower tension and ensure a peaceful transition around the 2015 elections. Those sending observers should pay particular attention to hotspots. Diplomats also could warn state-level politicians, many of whom travel frequently abroad, that those responsible for inciting violence could face travel bans, asset freezes and other targeted sanctions.

Abuja/Dakar/Brussels, 21 December 2018

Nigeria's 2019 Elections: Six States to Watch

I. Introduction

Nigerians go to the polls in February 2019 to elect a president and national legislators and again in March to select governors and state assembly members. With hundreds of sought-after posts up for grabs, and many races laced with communal tensions and bitter personal rivalries, the elections promise to be fiercely fought.

The election management agency, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), has 91 political parties on its register, 69 of which are presenting candidates for the presidency. But two contestants will dominate the presidential election: the All Progressives Congress (APC)'s Buhari, president since 2015, and the People's Democratic Party (PDP)'s Atiku Abubakar (widely known as Atiku). Both Buhari and Atiku are Muslims from Nigeria's north, which somewhat lowers the risk of bloodshed (violence during past elections has sometimes pitted Christians against Muslims; contests in which a presidential candidate from the north competes against one from the south have tended to accentuate such risks).¹ Yet the election faces significant dangers of disruption, some familiar, others recent and more worrying.

Nigeria's election history augurs poorly for the security of the 2019 contests.² Over the eight years from June 2006 to May 2014, there were about 915 cases of election violence in the country, resulting in about 3,934 deaths, according to Nigeria Watch, a research project that monitors lethal conflict and human security.³ The 2007 polls were widely condemned as the most massively rigged in the country's troubled history and saw widespread violence during the campaign and polling. The 2011 vote was cleaner, but also deadlier, with more than 800 people killed in post-election violence that targeted in particular minorities in northern cities. The most recent polls, in 2015, were peaceful by comparison; but even then, according to the National Human Rights Commission, at least 108 people were killed – 58 in pre-election violence, and another 50 or so on polling day and afterwards, as fights broke out between the major parties' supporters in nine states.

Nigerian elections are blighted by violence in large part because they are high-stakes battles for the huge rewards of public office, and in many states also for control of power and revenues between rival ethnic and religious identity groups. Impunity

¹ For background on campaign violence countrywide, see Crisis Group Africa Reports N°126, *Nigeria: Failed Elections, Failing State?*, 30 May 2007; N°113, *Nigeria: Want in the Midst of Plenty*, 19 July 2007; and N°220, *Nigeria's Dangerous 2015 Elections: Limiting the Violence*, 21 November 2014. See also Crisis Group Africa Briefings N°79, *Nigeria's Elections: Reversing the Degeneration?*, 24 February 2011; and N°81, *Lessons from Nigeria's Elections*, 15 September 2011.

² See Crisis Group Report, *Nigeria: Failed Elections, Failing State?*, op. cit., Crisis Group Briefing, *Nigeria's Elections: Reversing the Degeneration*, op. cit., and Crisis Group Report, *Nigeria's Dangerous 2015 Elections: Limiting the Violence*, op. cit.

³ Shamsudeen Kabir Bello, *Political and Electoral Violence in Nigeria: Mapping, Evolution and Patterns (June 2006-May 2014)*, IFRA-Nigeria Working Papers Series, No. 49, 2015. Nigeria Watch, which started monitoring violence in the country in 2006, has been based at Nigeria's University of Ibadan, supported by the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA), since July 2013.

is rife: attackers are rarely punished due to deficits in both political will and judicial capacity.⁴ Violence has traditionally blighted all phases of the entire election season. Before the vote, parties' supporters clash and politicians often deploy thugs against their rivals. Around voting, those same thugs invade polling centres and snatch materials and intimidate voters. After the vote, defeated parties and aggrieved constituencies launch protests, clashing with security forces; in 2011, those clashes evolved into a major crisis across the north. Ahead of the 2019 elections, there have already been violent incidents.⁵ A number of factors heighten risks ahead.

The piecemeal release of funds for INEC and the security agencies, largely due to bureaucratic red tape, may be delaying election arrangements and could threaten the administration and security of the polls. INEC says it anticipated delays and made contingency plans, but concerns remain over its preparations for elections that will be more logistically challenging than in 2015, involving more parties, candidates and voters than the contests four years ago.⁶ Security agencies similarly claim readiness, yet as of 14 December (exactly two months before the presidential polls), the federally controlled public safety agency, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), said it had not received funds allocated to it by the National Assembly for the elections.⁷ It needs this money to arrange for logistics ahead of elections among other expenses. Delays could thus hamper such arrangements, potentially jeopardising the security and credibility of the vote and creating grounds for violent post-election disputes.

The perceptions among opposition politicians that the security forces are partisan could also trigger violence around the polls. The conduct of federally controlled security agencies in recent gubernatorial elections in Ekiti and Osun states and their

⁴ INEC has been unable to prosecute offences due to four main factors: it has no mandate to sanction violence before and after elections as these incidents are classified as disruptions of public order under the purview of security agencies; it lacks human and material resources to document and follow up on the many offences committed in the 120,000 polling units across the country; it lacks prosecutorial power over election-day offences, which is vested in the police and justice ministries; it cannot compel prosecutions that are often undermined by political interference, with state attorneys-general often filing notices of *nolle prosequi* that terminate charges against suspected perpetrators. Crisis Group interview, former senior INEC official, Abuja, 14 December 2018.

⁵ For instance: on 17 October, two thugs were killed in a fight at a political rally in the Obanikoro area of Lagos, Lagos state; on 26 October, gunmen shot a PDP member of the Ekiti state House of Assembly, Michael Adedeji – he died 29 October; on 27 October, gunmen believed to be hired assassins stormed the residence of the APC chairman in Enugu state, Ben Nwoye, and severely wounded his police orderly (Nwoye said the attack was a “politically calculated assassination attempt” arising from controversy over the party’s primaries in the state); on 14 November, about 25 gunmen attacked a rally organised by local PDP leaders in Ipo community, Ikwere local government area, Rivers state, with the local government chairman, Samuel Nwanosike, narrowly escaping death; on 1 December, some APC leaders were almost lynched when thugs attacked their meeting in Nasarawa village, Gwaram local government area, Jigawa state.

⁶ Crisis Group interview, INEC official, Abuja, 29 November 2018. Also, addressing a conference at the end of November, INEC’s head of health infrastructure, Amina Zakari, said: “With over 120,000 polling units, the biggest challenge the commission will encounter is the election day logistics. Our problem will be transportation in terms of movement of electoral materials”. “INEC to deploy one million personnel for poll”, *The Nation*, 29 November 2018.

⁷ “Our challenges ahead of the elections are enormous – NSCDC boss”, *Leadership*, 14 December 2018.

apparent dislike of some opposition leaders raise doubts about their impartiality.⁸ Such mistrust could fuel disputes and protests over results.

Heightened insecurity in parts of the country adds risks, too. The escalation of herder-farmer violence in the first half of 2018 has ratcheted up ethnic and religious tensions in much of the Middle Belt. Neither of the two main parties enjoys a clear edge in those areas and the campaign there is likely to be hotly contested as Middle Belt votes could swing the presidential contest. Already local politicians have stoked divisions among communities to shore up their bases.⁹ Meanwhile, the surge of attacks by Boko Haram's Islamic State in West Africa (ISWAP) faction in the north east during the second half of 2018, and the spread of banditry in Zamfara and other north-western states, pose significant threats to the conduct of elections and integrity of outcomes in those areas.

Uncertainty over how the major political camps will respond to losing, nationally or locally, adds further to the danger. President Buhari has pledged that the vote will be free and fair, and all the major parties, on 11 and 12 December, signed a new accord sponsored by the eminent citizens' group, National Peace Committee, committing to peaceful campaigns and respect for the results. But there is no guarantee that the parties and their supporters will respect this accord across the country, especially in areas where the vote suffers significant logistical deficiencies or is won with narrow margins.

Civil society, research and other organisations have identified risks of violence in most of the country's 36 states. For instance, on 29 November, the Civil Society Joint Action Committee, a coalition of civil society groups, warned of likely disturbances in twenty states.¹⁰ That said, while problems are possible almost nationwide, concerns appear particularly high in six states, namely Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau and Adamawa.

This report looks closely at those concerns, laying out the risk factors specific to each of the six states. It offers recommendations to both the Nigerian government and its foreign partners for mitigating the risks, both in especially conflict-prone states and nationwide. It is based on dozens of interviews with Nigerian officials, national- and local-level politicians, election monitors, diplomats, scholars and civil society leaders.

⁸ Crisis Group interviews, several civil society leaders and foreign diplomats, Abuja, 27-29 November 2018.

⁹ Crisis Group interview, civil society leader, Abuja, 16 November 2018.

¹⁰ Briefing for journalists by Chidi Odinkalu, senior team manager for the Africa Program, Open Society Justice Initiative, Abuja, 29 November 2018. For other warnings of 2019 political violence, see Aly Verjee, Chris Kwaja and Oge Onubogu, "Nigeria's 2019 Elections: Change, Continuity and the Risks to Peace", United States Institute of Peace, September 2018; and Idayat Hassan, *Voting Amidst Insecurity: Nigeria's 2019 Elections*, Briefing Paper, Centre for Democracy and Development, Abuja, 20 October 2018. The Lagos-based geopolitical intelligence group, SBM Intelligence, believes "electoral violence in 2019 will be of a greater magnitude than in 2011", with sixteen states at particular risk: Abia, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Bauchi, Benue, Cross River, Imo, Kaduna, Kano, Kogi, Nasarawa, Osun, Oyo, Rivers, Taraba and Zamfara. "The Year ahead – choose your evil", SBM Intelligence, 4 December 2018.

II. Rivers: Reigniting an Old Rivalry

Rivers state, in the oil-producing Niger Delta, has seen several fiercely fought elections, replete with vote buying, rigging, ballot box snatching and blocking of roads to hinder access to polling stations, as well as kidnappings and assassinations of candidates and prominent supporters. In 2015, it recorded the most election-related fatalities of any state, mostly occurring around the gubernatorial vote.¹¹ On polling day, INEC reported that Rivers state witnessed almost a quarter – sixteen out of 66 – of the incidents of violence targeting polling stations, the commission's officials, voters and election materials countrywide.¹² Counting down to 2019, the factors fuelling the past attacks are still in place.

First, the state remains a major theatre of the national contestation between the APC and PDP, the latter of which, except for a two-year interlude, has held power in the state since 1999. In Nigeria, governors often siphoned off state revenue with impunity, notably under the guise of so-called security votes.¹³ Some transfer such revenue to their political parties. Because Rivers state, as a major oil producer, is the second highest recipient of federal fiscal transfers (after Akwa Ibom), as well as the second highest generator of internal revenues (after Lagos), it is widely believed to be a main source of PDP funding.¹⁴ The PDP will go to any lengths to retain control, and the APC will spare no effort to capture the state, so as to deny its chief adversary this vital revenue stream, at least for the next four years.¹⁵

A second risk stems from the state's internal politics, particularly the bitter rivalry between Nyesom Wike, the incumbent governor, and Rotimi Amaechi, his predecessor who served from 2007 to 2015. The two former allies parted ways in 2013, when Amaechi defected from the PDP to the APC. The acrimonious 2015 gubernatorial race deepened the rift, as Wike, running on the PDP ticket, defeated Amaechi's APC candidate, Dakuku Peterside. Amaechi, now federal transport minister and Buhari's re-election campaign chief, played a key role in drafting Tonye Cole, billionaire co-

¹¹ A commission instituted by then-Governor Rotimi Amaechi to investigate politically motivated violence reported an average of nineteen killings per month between November 2014 and April 2015, the six-month period before the elections. See Commission of Inquiry to Investigate Politically Motivated Killings and Damage to Property Before, During and After the 2015 General Elections in Rivers State, Final Report, 21 May 2015, p. 7.

¹² "INEC confirms poll violence in Akwa Ibom, Rivers, others", *The News*, 12 April 2015.

¹³ See for example, Matthew Page, "Camouflaged Cash: How 'Security Votes' Fuel Corruption in Nigeria", Transparency International, May 2018. "Security votes" are funds meant for discretionary spending on public safety measures at the state and local level. But because no one audits the expenditures, several state governors have embezzled the money and transferred it to their personal or political campaign accounts. Others make it a point not to include "security votes" in their state budgets to avoid the appearance of illicit spending. Not every governor has escaped justice for such transgressions; two former governors – Jolly Nyame (Taraba) and Joshua Dariye (Plateau) were jailed for corruption, in May and June 2018 respectively.

¹⁴ "States generated N579.5 bn in six months – NBS", *The Punch*, 28 November 2018; "\$1bn: APC funded 2015 presidential campaigns with stolen money from Lagos, Rivers – PDP", *Vanguard*, 18 December 2018. The federal government shares revenue, much of it from oil production, with the 36 states according to a complicated formula.

¹⁵ Crisis Group interview, professor of political science, University of Port Harcourt, Abuja, 19 November 2018.

founder of Sahara Energy, one of the biggest indigenous oil and gas firms in Nigeria, as the APC's challenger to Wike in 2019.¹⁶

Until early December, the gubernatorial contest in the state seemed headed for a straight fight between Wike and Cole. Both men were approaching the polls with considerable strengths: the governor commands vast state resources and boasts grassroots support; his challenger has ample personal resources and the federal government's backing. On 12 December, however, following a suit by an APC faction challenging the conduct of the party's primaries in the state, the Appeal Court nullified the primaries, invalidating Cole's governorship candidacy, as well as those of all others vying for seats in the Senate, House of Representatives and the state's House of Assembly.¹⁷ Cole's camp insists he is still in the race, as three other appeals remain before the court, aimed at overturning the primaries' nullification. If these appeals uphold Cole's candidacy, the risk of inter-party violence will remain high; if they fail, the APC in effect would be excluded from the campaign, and the risk may drop considerably.¹⁸

A third threat stems from armed gangs and cults.¹⁹ These groups have penetrated the state's Emohua, Ikwerre, Khana, Ogba, Egbema, Ndoni and Ahoada local government areas.²⁰ As in previous elections, many of them are offering their services to politicians to intimidate opponents and rig the polls.²¹ They could contribute significantly to election violence, particularly in remote riverine villages with little or no law enforcement – or where the overstretched federal police fear to tread.

The state government's establishment of a new security organisation, Rivers State Neighbourhood Safety Corps Agency in March 2018, and the federal government's clampdown on the agency's recruits in November, may have added to the risk.²² The agency's stated objective is to supply federal security agencies with intelligence to help fight crime and improve public safety.²³ Some opposition leaders had expressed fears that members of the organisation, who feel beholden to Wike, may harass his opponents; or that the governor could deploy them to obstruct and disrupt the expected heavy deployment of federal security personnel in the state during the elec-

¹⁶ "Rivers 2019: How Amaechi convinced me to run as APC candidate – Tonye Cole", *Vanguard*, 11 November 2018.

¹⁷ The ruling also nullified the congresses that produced the party's ward executives, local government executives and state executives.

¹⁸ Crisis Group telephone interview, Port Harcourt-based official of election monitoring group, Abuja, 14 December 2018.

¹⁹ For detailed analysis of the backgrounds and profiles of these gangs and cults, see Nicolas Florquin and Eric G. Berman (eds), *Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns and Human Security in the ECOWAS Region*, Small Arms Survey, Geneva, May 2005. Over the years, four groups – Deybam, Deywell, the Greenlanders and the Icelanders – have emerged as the most notorious, while lesser-known ones include the Doctor's Squad, the Italians, the Blood Hunters, the Junior Vikings and Bermuda. See "Rise in Cult Violence and Insecurity in Rivers State", The Fund for Peace, et al, November 2015; and "Organized Crime in the Niger Delta: Implications for the 2019 Elections", The Fund for Peace, et al, April 2018.

²⁰ The gangs and cults are also prevalent in Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Cross River and Delta states.

²¹ Crisis Group interview, Port Harcourt-based civil society leader, Abuja, 12 November 2018.

²² On 15 March 2018, Wike signed Neighbourhood Watch Safety Corps Law No. 8 of 2018. The group appears similar to those in several other states, including Lagos and Kogi.

²³ "Wike gives assent to Rivers State Neighbourhood Watch Safety Corps Law, others", *This Day*, 16 March 2018.

tions, much as the PDP and others say such deployments aided the APC's victories in the gubernatorial elections in Ekiti and Osun states.²⁴

On 29 November, soldiers, claiming they had discovered an "illegal militia training camp", disbanded the agency's recruits who were being trained at the National Youth Service Corps camp at Nonwa Gbam in Tai local government area.²⁵ Wike said the army's action was politically motivated, as the high command was duly informed about the organisation and its objectives. He also said the state government would continue training the recruits.²⁶ Some locals worry that the Neighbourhood Safety Corps members may clash with soldiers around the polls.²⁷

There have already been notable incidents of election-related violence. In August 2018, INEC had to suspend indefinitely a by-election in the state capital, Port Harcourt, following widespread disruption by thugs.²⁸ On 11 November, gunmen abducted the APC's organising secretary in Ikwerre local government area, Samuel Wanjoku, and another party member, Moses Ogu: a search party found Wanjoku's dead body in a forest six days later and police later found his missing colleague alive.²⁹ On 14 November, two people were killed and many wounded as about 25 gunmen attacked a PDP-organised rally in Ipo meant to educate voters about the need to collect their Permanent Voter Cards.³⁰ On 16 November, assailants in Old Bakana district of Degema local government area shot at the APC gubernatorial candidate, Cole, and members of his team. The politicians escaped unhurt.³¹ PDP and APC leaders traded blame for the attacks.³²

Charges and counter-charges of parties acquiring guns raise the spectre of more violence. Governor Wike alleges the APC-led federal government is colluding with security agencies to disrupt the gubernatorial election, including the planting of 800

²⁴ "Buhari militarising electoral process, PDP alleges", *Daily Sun*, 24 November 2018. Civil society organisations have also expressed concerns over heavy security deployments during the gubernatorial elections in the two states. For instance, in a communiqué at the end of its conference on "Securitization of the electoral process and prevention of violence towards the 2019 elections", held in Abuja on 4 December, the Peace and Security Network, an umbrella group of over 500 Nigerian civil society organisations, urged security agencies to "avoid being used as agents of intimidation through heavy-handed militarization during the 2019 elections as witnessed in the 2015 elections and recently in Ekiti and Osun States governorship elections".

²⁵ "Rivers govt, army bicker over militia training camp", *The Guardian* (Lagos), 30 November 2018.

²⁶ "Army's shutdown of Rivers security group gets political", *Daily Trust*, 8 December 2018; "Rough road to 2019 polls in Rivers", *Leadership*, 17 December 2018.

²⁷ Crisis Group interview, Port Harcourt-based civil society leader, Abuja, 16 December 2018.

²⁸ According to the state's Resident Electoral Commissioner, Obo Effanga, the commission was compelled to take action after "miscreants and hoodlums, accompanied by heavily armed security personnel in uniform, stormed the various polling units and Registration Areas, disrupting voting activities, destroying and carting away election materials, including smart card readers and ballot boxes" and also "manhandled, injured and held hostage" many election officials. "INEC suspends Port Harcourt 3 state constituency by-election", INEC News, 18 August 2018; and "Rivers by-election remains suspended – INEC", *The Punch*, 15 November 2018.

²⁹ "Rivers communities live in fear as gunmen run riot in Ikwerre LGA", *Vanguard*, 27 November 2018.

³⁰ The chairman of Ikwerre local government area, Samuel Nwanosike, who was at the event, narrowly escaped death.

³¹ "Rivers APC gov candidate escapes assassination", *The Nation*, 18 November 2018.

³² Crisis Group telephone interview, journalist based in Port Harcourt, 18 December 2018.

guns in order to “destabilise the state” and the use of subsequent unrest as an excuse to “mobilise security agencies to manipulate the results”.³³ The APC counters it has uncovered an “ongoing distribution of illegally acquired arms to some PDP leaders in the various local government areas of the state”.³⁴ These charges are yet to be proven, but all signs point to greater danger of violence as the Rivers state campaign heats up.

³³ “FG allegedly plotting to plant 800 guns in Rivers to destabilise state, alleges Wike”, *This Day*, 24 November 2018.

³⁴ “Rough road to 2019 polls in Rivers”, *Leadership*, 17 December 2018.

III. Akwa Ibom: Dimming Prospects for Peaceful Polls

Akwa Ibom state, also located in the oil-producing Niger Delta, has been a PDP-governed state since the return to civilian rule in 1999.³⁵ In local elections on 2 December 2017, the party won in all the state's 31 local government areas.³⁶ Akwa Ibom also has a history of election-related violence, including deadly clashes between supporters of opposing parties and assassinations of candidates.³⁷ Risks around the 2019 elections arise from both national and local politics.

First, the stakes are high. Akwa Ibom, like Rivers, is emerging as a major battleground in the APC-PDP battle for revenue. It receives the most federal money of any state, and it is widely believed to be a pillar of PDP finances.³⁸

A second factor is partisan rancour in the state, aggravated by the split between PDP Governor Udom Emmanuel and his predecessor Godswill Akpabio, as well as the struggle for control of the state House of Assembly. Emmanuel, a key figure in Akpabio's state cabinet, was his anointed heir in 2015.³⁹ Soon after he assumed office, however, their relationship began to sour. Some attribute the falling-out to Emmanuel's alleged reluctance to complete some projects started by Akpabio; others say it was a dispute over control of the state machinery.⁴⁰ At any rate, on 8 August 2018, Akpabio defected to the APC, switching his support to Nsima Ekere, who later emerged as the APC's gubernatorial candidate.⁴¹ Taking along two state House of

³⁵ Governors include Obong Victor Attah (1999-2007), Godswill Akpabio (2007-2015) and Udom Emmanuel (2015-present).

³⁶ "Akwa Ibom council polls: PDP wins in all 31 local governments", *Premium Times*, 3 December 2017.

³⁷ In March 2011, more than twelve people were killed in a fight between supporters of the PDP and the opposition Action Congress, with extensive property damage, including the campaign office of then-President Goodluck Jonathan. "Election violence leaves 12 dead in Nigerian Akwa Ibom state", VOA, 22 March 2011. In the 2011 gubernatorial election, both main parties reportedly employed thugs in the state: the most violent incident, after a campaign rally, left several dead and many injured, the president's campaign office destroyed, and about 500 private and official vehicles burned. In 2012, at least seven people were killed in violent clashes after the PDP's councillorship primaries. "Akwa Ibom: Seven die in post-PDP councillorship primaries violence", *The Will*, 6 April 2012. Several attacks occurred during the 2015 campaign, including the assassination of the deputy speaker of the State House of Assembly, the APC's Obong Okon Uwah, who was seeking re-election. In the 2015 elections, INEC reported, five of 66 violent election incidents occurred in Akwa Ibom. "INEC confirms poll violence in Akwa Ibom, Rivers, others", *The News*, 12 April 2015. In the December 2017 local government elections, thugs attacked the state's independent electoral commission office, killing at least one person and wounding many others. "Violence, apathy mar A'Ibom council polls", *The Nation*, 3 December 2013. Akwa Ibom state has a growing culture of violence. In the second quarter of 2018, 46 people were killed in communal conflict, violent criminality, gang and cult clash and other forms of violence. "With 46 casualties, Akwa Ibom, most violent state in Niger Delta", International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 11 August 2018.

³⁸ Crisis Group interview, official of Niger Delta Development Commission, Abuja, 30 November 2018.

³⁹ Emmanuel was secretary to the state government from 2013 to 2014, when he joined the race for the state governorship.

⁴⁰ Crisis Group interview, Akwa Ibom House of Representatives member, Abuja, 30 November 2018.

⁴¹ Nsima Udo Ekere was Akpabio's deputy governor for seventeen months from May 2011 to October 2012, but hurriedly resigned to avoid impeachment planned by the state's House of Assembly, after he fell out of favour with his principal. In November 2016, President Buhari appointed him managing director of the Niger Delta Development Commission. He retains that post while running for governor.

Assembly members – Idongesit Ituen, who represents his Itu state constituency, and Gabriel Toby – as well as two commissioners in Emmanuel's cabinet, one of them Akpabio's brother.⁴² Three other lawmakers also dumped the PDP, raising the number of APC legislators in the 26-member state House to five.

The PDP-dominated House responded by declaring the defectors' seats vacant. Ituen sought an injunction from a federal high court in the state capital, Uyo, but it rejected his request and instead upheld a countersuit filed by House Speaker Onofiok Luke.

Amid the heated inter-party wrangling, the five embattled defectors held a session at which they "sacked" Speaker Luke and replaced him with one of their own, Nse Ntuen. That action invited a police siege of the House, ostensibly to prevent factional clashes. Two days after police lifted the siege, as directed by the federal Senate, the five defectors met again, allegedly trying to impeach Governor Emmanuel, who was backed by the majority PDP lawmakers. The five, along with some of their supporters, were battered and dispersed by a band of security personnel and thugs, led by the governor himself.⁴³

The PDP alleges that the APC orchestrated the crisis, deliberately stoking violence to provide the federal government with justification for declaring a state of emergency. This in turn would warrant postponing the vote to a later date, when the ruling party would deploy a large number of troops to intimidate voters and rig the ballot.⁴⁴ The APC denies the charge.⁴⁵ Whether the PDP's claim is true or false, the developments in November signal that the state could suffer violence between the two parties' supporters before, during and after the elections.

⁴² The two were Commissioner for Culture and Tourism Victor Antai and Commissioner for Labour, Productivity and Manpower Planning Ibanga Akpabio.

⁴³ "Akwa Ibom governor leads security officials to chase away APC lawmakers", *Premium Times*, 27 November 2018.

⁴⁴ "PDP accuses APC of instigating violence in A/Ibom, others", *The Nation*, 21 November 2018.

⁴⁵ "Emmanuel responsible for Akwa Ibom crisis", *The Nation*, 5 December 2018.

IV. Kaduna: New Tensions Aggravate Old Grievances

Kaduna state has a long history of lethal ethnic tensions. It was the state hardest hit by the 2011 post-election violence, accounting for about 500 of the over 800 people killed across twelve states.⁴⁶ A number of factors make Kaduna a likely hotspot as the 2019 polls draw near, including increasing communal strife and political feuding.

Violent incidents in Kaduna – pitting ethnic rivals against one another, Christians against Muslims, herders against farmers, and bandits against community vigilantes – have killed more than a hundred since the beginning of 2018.⁴⁷ Tensions generated by these incidents are running high and could turn ugly around the elections.⁴⁸

Local politics add to the risk. While 36 candidates are running for the governorship, the race appears to be largely between the incumbent APC governor, Nasir Ahmad el-Rufai, and the PDP candidate, Isa Ashiru. El-Rufai's policies and governing style have alienated key members of his party in the state, essentially splitting the party into three factions. His feud with the state's three senators in the National Assembly led two of them to defect – Suleiman Hunkuyi to the PDP and Shehu Sani to the People's Redemption Party.⁴⁹ The contest between these incumbents and el-Rufai's preferred APC senate candidates could become violent if their supporters clash ahead of the polls.

El-Rufai's selection of a fellow Muslim, Hadiza Abubakar Balarabe, as his running mate, has heightened tensions further.⁵⁰ This choice is a departure from long-running tradition whereby governors choose their deputies from the other main religious group. It is also controversial because Balarabe hails from southern Kaduna, a part of the state that is predominantly Christian, and where many view his action as a deliberate affront to Christians.⁵¹ The governor has defended his action, arguing that he chose Balarabe strictly on her merits, as she was the best of the 32 people proposed for the job, that he had President Buhari's approval and that the governorship is not a religious office but a means of serving the people.⁵²

⁴⁶ "Nigeria: Post-Election Violence Killed 800", Human Rights Watch, 16 May 2011.

⁴⁷ See "24-hour curfew imposed in Nigeria's Kaduna after scores killed in communal violence", CNN, 23 October 2018. Some of the more notable incidents are as follows: on 5 May, at least 71 people were killed in an attack on Gwaska village in Birnin-Gwari local government area. "Kaduna killings: Death toll rises to 71", *The Nation*, 7 May 2018. In October, at least 77 people died in ethnic and religious confrontations in different parts of the state. "El-Rufai relaxes curfew on Kaduna metropolis, environs", *Premium Times*, 28 October 2018. On 16 December, gunmen killed at least fourteen people Angwan Pah village, Jama'a local government area.

⁴⁸ Crisis Group interview, Kaduna-based politician, Abuja, 17 December 2018.

⁴⁹ Hunkuyi had earlier accused el-Rufai of ordering the demolition of a building belonging to his APC faction. "Why we demolished factional APC building – Kaduna govt", *Premium Times*, 20 February 2018. The state government responded that the building "was removed for flagrant violations of land use and non-payment of ground rent since 2010. This illegal violation of use had begun to distress neighbours who were being forced to endure an influx of thugs and blockage of the road". "Outrage as El Rufai pulls senators building", Sahara Reporters, 21 February 2018.

⁵⁰ Balarabe is former executive secretary of the state's primary health care development agency. The current deputy governor, Barnabas Bala, is running for the senate.

⁵¹ Crisis Group interview, retired army general from Kaduna state, Abuja, 28 November 2018.

⁵² "I picked running mate on merit", *The Nation*, 14 November 2018.

But critics, mostly but not exclusively Christians, view this choice of a Muslim-Muslim ticket as insensitive, especially since religious tensions are already high. Christians fear that the ticket, if it succeeds, could create the impression that they are inconsequential in the state's politics and thus set a dangerous precedent.⁵³ However noble the governor's intentions may have been, his choice has further polarised the electorate along sectarian lines, heightening the risk of election-day disturbances.⁵⁴

⁵³ Crisis Group interview, retired army general from Kaduna state, Abuja, 28 November 2018.

⁵⁴ Popular Kaduna-based Muslim cleric Sheikh Ahmad Gumi said Kaduna state is not ready for a Muslim-Muslim ticket and that el-Rufai's choice could create more tension. "Why I picked fellow Muslim as my running mate – el-Rufai", *Daily Sun*, 14 November 2018.

V. Kano: Struggle for Strategic Battleground

Kano, with an estimated 11 million people, is Nigeria's second-most populous state after Lagos. And with over five million registered voters (again, second only to Lagos), it is an electoral prize in itself. Kano is currently under an APC government. The risks of violence around the 2019 elections stem from both national and state politics.

Located in the president's home region – Buhari hails from neighbouring Katsina state – Kano was a theatre of post-election violence after he lost in 2011 and was key to his victory in 2015. The state is again a crucial battleground heading into 2019. On 27 July 2018, Buhari's campaign coordinator, Amaechi, vowed that the APC would sweep the state even if the president conducts the race "on a sickbed".⁵⁵ Undoubtedly, Kano is pro-Buhari: the APC claims that he garnered 2.9 million votes in the state's primaries, almost 21 per cent of his 14 million votes countrywide. Former Governor Ibrahim Shekarau's return to the APC from the PDP on 25 November (he had defected earlier) further boosted Buhari's chances. Current Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje has promised that the state will deliver five million votes for the president. Yet the PDP is seeking to undercut him, so as to at least reduce his margin of victory.

Another risk lies in the feud between the previous APC governor, now a PDP senator, Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, and his former deputy and successor Ganduje, running for a second term on the APC ticket. While in office from 1999 to 2003 and again from 2011 to 2015, Kwankwaso and his deputy worked harmoniously together. But after Ganduje took over, their relationship deteriorated. Sources in the state say the two parted ways over control of the state apparatus, just like Emmanuel and Akpabio in Akwa Ibom state: Kwankwaso wanted to retain some authority, and Ganduje brooked no interference.⁵⁶

Over the last two years, the squabble intensified, resulting in several clashes between their respective supporters – known in the local Hausa language as the Kwankwasiyya and the Gandujiyya. Kwankwaso, now based in Abuja, has been unable to hold meetings, rallies or other public events in the state. His campaign called off a planned January 2018 visit when police said they could not guarantee order after one of Ganduje's men, Commissioner for Special Duties Abdullahi Sunusi, was seen on video urging Gandujiyya to "stone" Kwankwaso if they ever saw him in Kano.⁵⁷ Kwankwaso's defection (along with his supporters) to the PDP has drawn the battle lines even more sharply. He is backing a PDP candidate, Abba Kabiru Yusuf, for governor. Though the Kwankwasiyya were weakened when some members switched to the APC on 25 November, they could still clash with Gandujiyya during the campaign.

⁵⁵ "Buhari'll win in Sokoto, Kano, Bauchi even on sickbed – Amaechi", *Punch*, 28 July 2018.

⁵⁶ Crisis Group interview, Kano-based politician and civil society activist, Abuja, 12 November 2018.

⁵⁷ "Kano commissioner asks supporters to 'stone' Kwankwaso", *Daily Trust*, 11 January 2018.

VI. Plateau: Continuing Ethno-religious Tensions

Located in the Middle Belt and currently ruled by the APC, Plateau state has seen long-running tension between earlier-settled communities that consider themselves “indigenes”, and others who migrated to the region since the 19th century, whom they regard as “settlers” or even “strangers”.⁵⁸ This dichotomy is a permanent source of animosity and insecurity in the state, sometimes degenerating into violence.

For the 2019 elections, a first risk of violence stems from the deterioration of security in parts of the state. Over the last two years, clashes have escalated between Fulani herders and Berom and Irigwe farmers. On 12 November, the Committee on Resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), set up by the state government five months prior, reported that recent attacks in the state have killed over 1,800 people and displaced more than 50,000 in Jos North, Jos South, Bassa, Riyom, Bar-kin Ladi and Bokkos local government areas.⁵⁹ The raw feelings left by these killings could lead to renewed clashes around the elections.⁶⁰

The state is also expected to witness a ferocious gubernatorial contest involving 22 candidates, but basically setting the APC incumbent, Simon Lalong, against a PDP senator, Jeremiah Useni. Among “indigenes”, Lalong’s refusal to introduce laws banning herders from letting their livestock graze on farmland, has cast him as a Fulani “sympathiser”, diminishing his support among mostly Christian farmers (such laws are on the books in other states on the fault line, such as Benue).⁶¹ Senator Useni, 75, a retired army general from the small “indigenous” ethnic group, Tarok, is rallying all “indigenes” to oust Lalong.⁶²

Jos North local government area, which recorded incidents of electoral violence in 2002, 2008 and 2011, is a particular flashpoint. Locals allege that many young men from Tilden Fulani, a city in neighbouring Bauchi state, came to register for the elections in Jos North, in order to tilt the balance in the Fulani’s favour. Those who consider themselves “indigenes” are threatening to block “outsiders” from casting votes.⁶³ If they follow through with this threat, the result will be bloodshed.

⁵⁸ See Crisis Group Africa Report N°196, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (I): The Jos Crisis*, 17 December 2012.

⁵⁹ “1,801 persons killed in Plateau attacks, says report”, *This Day*, 13 November 2018.

⁶⁰ “1,801 killed, 50,212 displaced in Plateau attacks – IDP C’ittee”, *New Telegraph*, 13 November 2018. The situation is further complicated by population displacements resulting from the conflict. The IDP resettlement committee’s recent report identified 87 villages where farmlands were destroyed and “in most cases annexed by Fulani herdsmen”. There are fears that, as was the case in 2015, attempts to return IDPs to vote near their homes where they registered for the elections, could spark violence between the IDPs and those who had occupied such areas. Crisis Group interview, journalist based in Plateau state, 18 December 2018.

⁶¹ “It’s your turn, Lalong”, *The Sun*, 28 June 2018. For more on farmer-herder conflict, see Crisis Group Africa Reports N°252, *Herders against Farmers: Nigeria’s Expanding Deadly Conflict*, 19 September 2017; and N°262, *Stopping Nigeria’s Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence*, 26 July 2018.

⁶² Crisis Group interview, lecturer, University of Jos (Plateau state), Abuja, 21 November 2018.

⁶³ Crisis Group interview, Berom youth leader, Abuja, 20 November 2018.

VII. Adamawa: Between President and Challenger

Adamawa, in north-eastern Nigeria, is one of the country's most diverse states, with about 70 ethnic groups split among the Muslim majority and largely Christian minorities. From 2012 to 2015, the Boko Haram insurgency spilled over into Adamawa from Borno state, posing a serious challenge to the 2015 elections in the north east of the state. Since then, the insurgents have been virtually pushed out, yet the 2019 elections here could still be violent, because of the state's symbolic importance, escalating farmer-herder conflict and growing problem with armed youth gangs.

First, at the national level, Adamawa state is strategic territory in the APC-PDP power struggle. Though under APC rule since 2015 and the birthplace of Buhari's wife, Aisha, the state is also the home state of Atiku Abubakar. APC officials vow to retain control, for the symbolic purpose of showing that Atiku is unpopular even at home.⁶⁴ Atiku, by the same token, sees a win in Adamawa as required if he is to credibly claim victory elsewhere in the country. His investiture on 25 November as the Adamawa emirate's new waziri, the chief kingmaker and adviser to the Lamido (traditional ruler) of Adamawa, appears part of his effort to boost his local legitimacy ahead of the elections. Furthermore, while Buhari and Atiku both hail from the north, some of Atiku's supporters see his candidacy as a historic opportunity to break the tradition of northern presidents hailing from Buhari's north west, rather than the north east.⁶⁵ Adamawa will be a key battleground between the two parties.

Secondly, at the state level, the escalation of herder-farmer conflict, particularly since late 2017, adds to risks of electoral violence. Over the last year, Numan, Demsa and Lamorde local government areas have witnessed recurrent confrontations between Fulani herders and mostly Bachama farmers, with hundreds killed, numerous villages destroyed and tens of thousands displaced, both within Adamawa and to neighbouring Gombe state. The displacement and prevailing insecurity could depress turnout in some areas. Worse, since the herders are predominantly Fulani and Muslim while farmers are ethnically diverse and in many cases Christian, the conflict has aggravated intercommunal tension across the state. There is a danger that politicians from all parties may whip up ethno-religious hostility to advance their partisan or even personal objectives.⁶⁶

A further risk arises from the activities of youth gangs, known locally as the Shila Boys. As during previous elections, politicians may recruit gang members – along with other unemployed youths – to intimidate opponents. In one incident before the gubernatorial primaries in October, a band of youths attacked a meeting of an APC faction that had been pushing for direct primaries, wounding several persons and damaging vehicles. A senatorial aspirant, Ibrahim Waziri, alleged that the attackers

⁶⁴ Crisis Group interview, senior APC member, Abuja, 1 November 2018. See also "Atiku will suffer humiliation in north-east", *Leadership*, 17 December 2018.

⁶⁵ Crisis Group interview, leader of Abubakar support group, Abuja, 30 November 2018. Seven of the eight northerners who have headed the Nigerian government have been from the north west. The only exception was Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the country's first and only prime minister (1960-1966), who hailed from Bauchi state in the north east. Abacha, head of state from 1993 to 1998, though a Kanuri from Borno state, was born and raised in Kano and was buried there.

⁶⁶ Crisis Group telephone interview, journalist based in Yola, Adamawa state, 19 December 2018.

were working for Governor Mohammed Bindow, which the governor's aides denied.⁶⁷ The state may witness more such violence around the elections.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ "Unhappy with APC's direct primary decision, 'Governor Bindow's thugs' attack Babachir Lawal's office", Sahara Reporters, 4 September 2018.

⁶⁸ There have already been allegations of serious threats. For instance, in September, three journalists, TVC correspondent Adenusi Owolabi, Sahara Reporters correspondent Phineas Padio and *Punch* freelancer Hindi Livinus, told police that security operatives attached to the government house had organised a hit squad including "a horde of political thugs" to kill them for their reporting, which could "have negative consequences on Governor Mohammed Jibrilla Bindow's re-election bid in 2019". "Journalists petition IGP, DSS on killer squad in Adamawa", *The Guardian* (Lagos), 14 September 2018. At press time, there had been no follow-up reports on these allegations.

VIII. Mitigating Risks in Conflict-prone States

The first step toward peaceful 2019 polls is to reduce tensions at the national level. The government itself can do much in this regard, particularly by speedily releasing all funds earmarked for INEC and the security agencies. It should also avoid any act that could be construed as deploying security agencies for electoral gains, such as sending anti-corruption agencies to target opposition leaders and states. For their part, federal security agencies should strive to show professionalism and impartiality, by relating to all parties even-handedly, in all election-related actions, in order to retain or regain the parties' trust and build confidence around the polls.

Following their 11-12 December signing of a peace accord, at the behest of the National Peace Committee, political parties and their candidates should publicly urge their supporters to stop inflammatory rhetoric, campaign peacefully, pursue grievances lawfully and remain calm in the event of their defeat. Atiku did not attend the signing of the accord on the same day as Buhari, robbing the event of the powerful symbolic message it was supposed to convey. Nonetheless, all signatories should respect the accord's provisions.

In addition to these steps, brewing tensions in the six states of greatest concern suggest that the authorities should make further efforts to prevent or manage local violence. While risks differ among states, the government ought to focus on three areas:

Improve state and local security arrangements: Security agencies, particularly the Nigeria Police Force, which is the lead agency on election security, should step up efforts to detect and manage election-related threats. On 1 November, Inspector-General Ibrahim Idris issued a "red alert" to his commissioners in all 36 states to respond proactively to challenges that may arise ahead of the elections.⁶⁹ This step is welcome, but further action should follow.

State police chiefs should intensify monitoring aimed at identifying and preempting politicians or groups who may be plotting violence. They should collaborate more closely with local civil society and community-based groups that already have programs in place for such election-related monitoring. They also should review and follow the recommendations of national and international observers, particularly to maintain order at campaign rallies impartially, secure polling centres in a non-intimidating manner and manage likely public protests over election results without resorting to excessive force. For now, police (and military) responses to protesters – from members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria to pro-Biafra agitators – suggest that the force has not improved its strategies for crowd control. They should strengthen their cooperation with other security agencies under the Inter-agency Consultative Committees on Election Security, established to coordinate election security arrangements. Such coordination is presently weak in some states and barely exists in many local government areas.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ "2019: IGP places police on red alert", *Daily Sun*, 2 November 2018.

⁷⁰ Crisis Group interview, civil society leader, Abuja, 27 November 2018.

Both civil society organisations and international partners have expressed serious concerns about the conduct of security agencies, particularly the police.⁷¹ To address this, the Police Service Commission, which is vested with oversight and disciplinary powers over all police personnel (except the inspector-general), needs to exercise those powers more effectively.⁷² Specifically, it should raise awareness of the telephone lines it dedicates to public complaints about police conduct, deploy nationwide more than the 400 monitors it fielded in 2015 and sanction any officer proven to be acting in a partisan manner.

Encourage state-level actors to commit to non-violence: The National Peace Committee, which has already committed political parties to peaceful campaigns at the national level, should further engage with state-level branches of the Inter-party Advisory Committee, the umbrella body of registered political parties in Nigeria, as well as with influential civil society groups to the same end. More broadly, it should urge major actors in all states to commit to non-violence. In some cases, such as the Kwankwaso-Ganduje feud in Kano state and the Akpabio-Emmanuel contest in Akwa Ibom state, the two committees and influential civil society actors should bring the antagonists together and get them to commit to campaign peacefully, pursue disputes without violence and call on their supporters to follow suit. A model is Sokoto state, where gubernatorial candidates have formed a Sokoto State Gubernatorial Candidates Forum and will soon sign an agreement committing them to peaceful elections. Other states should replicate their example.⁷³

Hold confidence-building dialogues: In states like Adamawa, Kaduna and Plateau, where ethnic, religious and herder-farmer tensions could contribute to election violence, institutions dedicated to peace-building at the state level, such as the Plateau Building Peace Agency and the Kaduna State Peace Commission, should urgently organise intercommunal forums for dialogue. Such forums could take place at state, local government and community levels, and could help restore a degree of trust among divided communities ahead of the elections and undercut attempts by politicians to exploit those divides for political ends.

For their part, Nigeria's foreign partners, already supportive of the elections, ought to take further steps both to deter violence and to be prepared in the event a crisis erupts. In Abuja, they should create a diplomatic forum to coordinate messaging to President Buhari, political parties, candidates and security agencies. The statements jointly issued by European Union (EU) member states, the U.S. and the UK, following the Osun state governorship elections in September and at the commencement of the election campaigns on 18 November, are welcome steps in this regard.⁷⁴ They

⁷¹ "Local EU Statement on elections and conduct of law enforcement services", European Union Delegation, Abuja, 9 August 2018.

⁷² Police Service Commission (Establishment) Act (No. 1) of 2001.

⁷³ Crisis Group interview, House of Representatives member from Sokoto state, Abuja, 12 December 2018.

⁷⁴ Joint Statement by the EU, UK and US on the Osun election, European Union Delegation, Abuja, 2 October 2018; "Statement on the occasion of the beginning of 2019 election campaigns", European Union Delegation, Abuja, 19 November 2018. The statements were jointly signed by the U.S. and

should also set up a high-level international working group, spearheaded by prominent statespersons with sway in Nigeria and access to the two main presidential contenders, that could intervene in the event of a major electoral crisis.⁷⁵

International observers (notably from the EU, U.S. organisations, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States) as well as Nigerian civil society platforms (such as the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room, Peace and Security Network, Centre for Democracy and Development and CLEEN Foundation) should devote particular attention and resources to potential hotspots. Nigeria's major international partners, including the UN, EU, U.S., UK and Canada, should step up communication with key state-level politicians, particularly in the six vulnerable states identified here, and urge them to avoid violence around gubernatorial and legislative contests. They should complement these efforts with warnings to Nigeria's politicians, many of whom travel abroad frequently, that they could well pay a price for inciting violence, such as incurring visa bans for them and their families as well as other targeted sanctions.

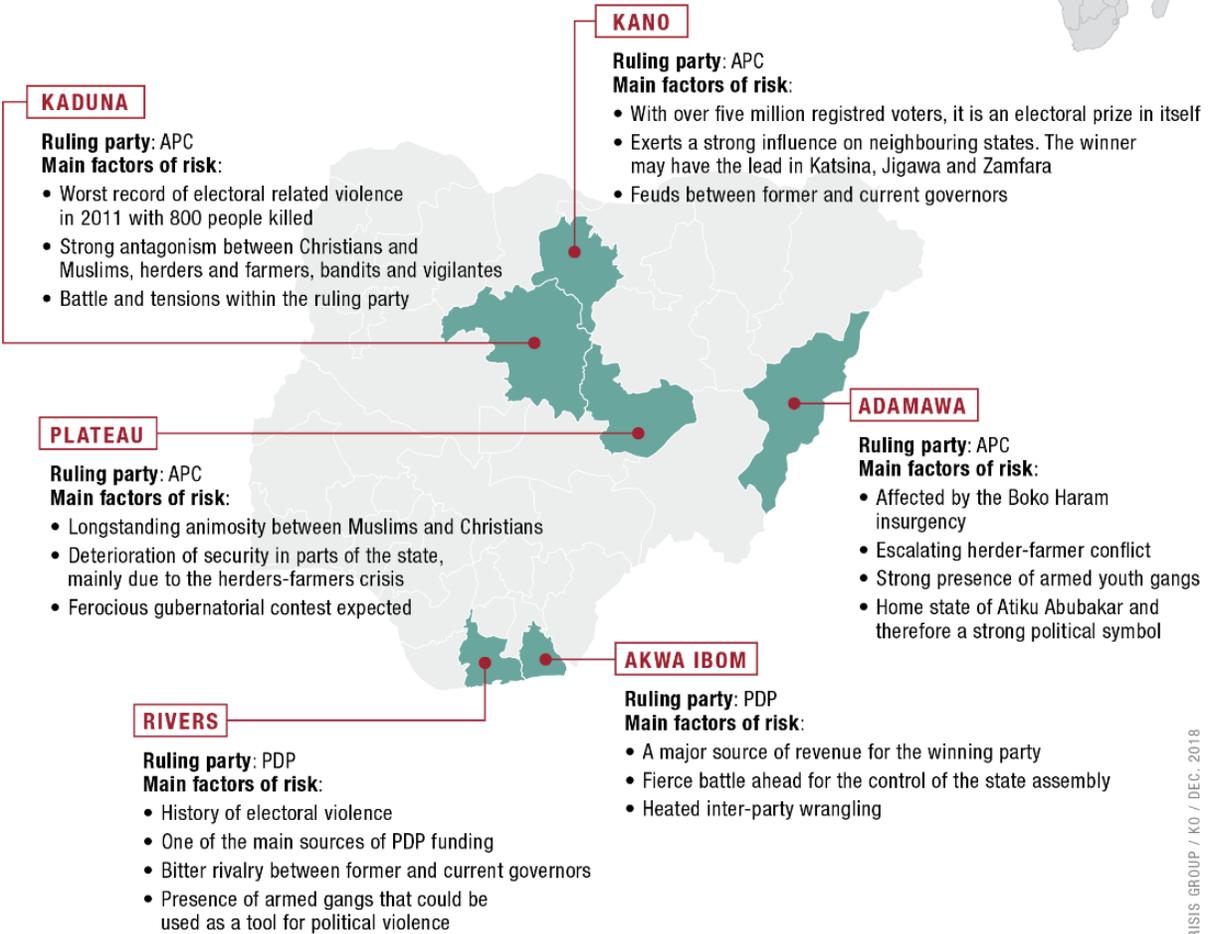
Nigeria's last several elections have witnessed spates of campaign-related violence, up to and including assault and murder. The government and its foreign partners should remain vigilant in detecting threats, and proactive in heading them off, so that the 2019 contests do not see a repeat performance.

Abuja/Dakar/Brussels, 21 December 2018

other countries with missions in Nigeria including, France, Germany, the UK, Austria, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

⁷⁵ Crisis Group, *EU Watch List 2018 – Third Update*, 25 October 2018.

Appendix A: Six States to Watch



Appendix B: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries or regions at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international, regional and national decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a monthly early-warning bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in up to 70 situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on its website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board of Trustees – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policymakers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lord (Mark) Malloch-Brown.

Crisis Group's President & CEO, Robert Malley, took up the post on 1 January 2018. Malley was formerly Crisis Group's Middle East and North Africa Program Director and most recently was a Special Assistant to former U.S. President Barack Obama as well as Senior Adviser to the President for the Counter-ISIL Campaign, and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region. Previously, he served as President Bill Clinton's Special Assistant for Israeli-Palestinian Affairs.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices in seven other locations: Bogotá, Dakar, Istanbul, Nairobi, London, New York, and Washington, DC. It has presences in the following locations: Abuja, Algiers, Bangkok, Beirut, Caracas, Gaza City, Guatemala City, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Juba, Mexico City, New Delhi, Rabat, Tbilisi, Toronto, Tripoli, Tunis, and Yangon.

Crisis Group receives financial support from a wide range of governments, foundations, and private sources. Currently Crisis Group holds relationships with the following governmental departments and agencies: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrian Development Agency, Global Affairs Canada, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, French Development Agency, French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid, Japanese International Cooperation Agency, Liechtenstein Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Emirati Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Crisis Group also holds relationships with the following foundations: Carnegie Corporation of New York, Elders Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Korea Foundation, Oak Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Ploughshares Fund, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, UniKorea Foundation and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.

December 2018

Appendix C: Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2015

Special Reports

- Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State*, Special Report N°1, 14 March 2016 (also available in Arabic and French).
- Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action*, Special Report N°2, 22 June 2016.
- Counter-terrorism Pitfalls: What the U.S. Fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda Should Avoid*, Special Report N°3, 22 March 2017.

Central Africa

- Elections in Burundi: Moment of Truth*, Africa Report N°224, 17 April 2015 (also available in French).
- Congo: Is Democratic Change Possible?*, Africa Report N°225, 5 May 2015.
- Burundi: Peace Sacrificed?*, Africa Briefing N°111, 29 May 2015 (also available in French).
- Cameroon: The Threat of Religious Radicalism*, Africa Report N°229, 3 September 2015 (also available in French).
- Central African Republic: The Roots of Violence*, Africa Report N°230, 21 September 2015 (also available in French).
- Chad: Between Ambition and Fragility*, Africa Report N°233, 30 March 2016 (also available in French).
- Burundi: anatomie du troisième mandat*, Africa Report N°235, 20 May 2016 (only available in French).
- Katanga: Tensions in DRC's Mineral Heartland*, Africa Report N°239, 3 August 2016.
- The African Union and the Burundi Crisis: Ambition versus Reality*, Africa Briefing N°122, 28 September 2016 (also available in French).
- Boulevard of Broken Dreams: The "Street" and Politics in DR Congo*, Africa Briefing N°123, 13 October 2016.
- Cameroon: Confronting Boko Haram*, Africa Report N°241, 16 November 2016 (also available in French).
- Fighting Boko Haram in Chad: Beyond Military Measures*, Africa Report N°246, 8 March 2017 (also available in French).
- Burundi: The Army in Crisis*, Africa Report N°247, 5 April 2017 (also available in French).
- Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads*, Africa Report N°250, 2 August 2017 (also available in French).
- Avoiding the Worst in Central African Republic*, Africa Report N°253, 28 September 2017 (also available in French).
- Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations*, Africa Report N°255, 17 October 2017 (also available in French).

- Cameroon: A Worsening Anglophone Crisis Calls for Strong Measures*, Africa Briefing N°130, 19 October 2017 (also available in French).
- Cameroon's Far North: Reconstruction amid Ongoing Conflict*, Africa Briefing N°133, 25 October 2017 (also available in French).
- Time for Concerted Action in DR Congo*, Africa Report N°257, 4 December 2017 (also available in French).
- Seven Priorities for the African Union in 2018*, Africa Briefing N°135, 17 January 2018 (also available in French).
- Electoral Poker in DR Congo*, Africa Report N°259, 4 April 2018 (also available in French).
- Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis: How the Catholic Church Can Promote Dialogue*, Africa Briefing N°138, 26 April 2018 (also available in French).
- Increasing the Stakes in DR Congo's Electoral Poker*, Africa Briefing N°139, 8 June 2018 (also available in French).
- DR Congo: The Bemba Earthquake*, Africa Briefing N°140, 15 June 2018 (also available in French).
- Cameroon's Far North: A New Chapter in the Fight Against Boko Haram*, Africa Report N°263, 14 August 2018 (also available in French).
- Helping the Burundian People Cope with the Economic Crisis*, Africa Report N°264, 31 August 2018 (also available in French).
- Election présidentielle au Cameroun : les fractures se multiplient*, Africa Briefing N°142, 3 October 2018 (also available in French).
- Chad: Defusing Tensions in the Sahel*, Africa Report N°266, 5 December 2018 (also available in French).

Horn of Africa

- Sudan and South Sudan's Merging Conflicts*, Africa Report N°223, 29 January 2015.
- Sudan: The Prospects for "National Dialogue"*, Africa Briefing N°108, 11 March 2015.
- The Chaos in Darfur*, Africa Briefing N°110, 22 April 2015.
- South Sudan: Keeping Faith with the IGAD Peace Process*, Africa Report N°228, 27 July 2015.
- Somaliland: The Strains of Success*, Africa Briefing N°113, 5 October 2015.
- Kenya's Somali North East: Devolution and Security*, Africa Briefing N°114, 17 November 2015.
- Ethiopia: Governing the Faithful*, Africa Briefing N°117, 22 February 2016.
- Sudan's Islamists: From Salvation to Survival*, Africa Briefing N°119, 21 March 2016.

South Sudan's South: Conflict in the Equatorias, Africa Report N°236, 25 May 2016.

Kenya's Coast: Devolution Disappointed, Africa Briefing N°121, 13 July 2016.

South Sudan: Rearranging the Chessboard, Africa Report N°243, 20 December 2016.

Instruments of Pain (II): Conflict and Famine in South Sudan, Africa Briefing N°124, 26 April 2017.

Instruments of Pain (III): Conflict and Famine in Somalia, Africa Briefing N°125, 9 May 2017.

Instruments of Pain (IV): The Food Crisis in North East Nigeria, Africa Briefing N°126, 18 May 2017.

Kenya's Rift Valley: Old Wounds, Devolution's New Anxieties, Africa Report N°248, 30 May 2017.

Time to Repeal U.S. Sanctions on Sudan?, Africa Briefing N°127, 22 June 2017.

A New Roadmap to Make U.S. Sudan Sanctions Relief Work, Africa Briefing N°128, 29 September 2017.

How to Ensure a Credible, Peaceful Presidential Vote in Kenya, Africa Briefing N°129, 2 October 2017.

Managing the Disruptive Aftermath of Somalia's Worst Terror Attack, Africa Briefing N°131, 20 October 2017.

An Election Delay Can Help Avert Kenya's Crisis, Africa Briefing N°132, 23 October 2017.

Uganda's Slow Slide into Crisis, Africa Report N°256, 21 November 2017.

After Kenya's Leaders Reconcile, a Tough Path Ahead, Africa Briefing N°136, 13 March 2018.

Somalia and the Gulf Crisis, Africa Report N°260, 5 June 2018.

Averting War in Northern Somalia, Africa Briefing N°141, 27 June 2018.

Al-Shabaab Five Years after Westgate: Still a Menace in East Africa, Africa Report N°265, 21 September 2018.

Southern Africa

Zimbabwe: Stranded in Stasis, Africa Briefing N°118, 29 February 2016.

Zimbabwe's "Military-assisted Transition" and Prospects for Recovery, Africa Briefing N°134, 20 December 2017.

West Africa

Burkina Faso: Nine Months to Complete the Transition, Africa Report N°222, 28 January 2015.

Security Sector Reform in Guinea-Bissau: An Opportunity Not to Be Missed, Africa Briefing N°109, 19 March 2015 (only available in French).

Mali: An Imposed Peace?, Africa Report N°226, 22 May 2015 (only available in French).

Burkina Faso: Meeting the October Target, Africa Briefing N°112, 24 June 2015 (only available in French).

The Central Sahel: A Perfect Sandstorm, Africa Report N°227, 25 June 2015 (also available in French).

Curbing Violence in Nigeria (III): Revisiting the Niger Delta, Africa Report N°231, 29 September 2015.

The Politics Behind the Ebola Crisis, Africa Report N°232, 28 October 2015.

Mali: Peace from Below?, Africa Briefing N°115, 14 December 2015 (only available in French).

Burkina Faso: Transition, Act II, Africa Briefing N°116, 7 January 2016 (only available in French).

Implementing Peace and Security Architecture (III): West Africa, Africa Report N°234, 14 April 2016 (also available in French).

Boko Haram on the Back Foot?, Africa Briefing N°120, 4 May 2016 (also available in French).

Nigeria: The Challenge of Military Reform, Africa Report N°237, 6 June 2016.

Central Mali: An Uprising in the Making?, Africa Report N°238, 6 July 2016 (also available in French).

Burkina Faso: Preserving the Religious Balance, Africa Report N°240, 6 September 2016 (also available in French).

Nigeria: Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency, Africa Report N°242, 5 December 2016 (also available in French).

Watchmen of Lake Chad: Vigilante Groups Fighting Boko Haram, Africa Report N°244, 23 February 2017.

Niger and Boko Haram: Beyond Counter-insurgency, Africa Report N°245, 27 February 2017 (also available in French).

The Politics of Islam in Mali: Separating Myth from Reality, Africa Report N°249, 18 July 2017 (only available in French).

Double-edged Sword: Vigilantes in African Counter-insurgencies, Africa Report N°251, 7 September 2017 (also available in French).

Herders against Farmers: Nigeria's Expanding Deadly Conflict, Africa Report N°252, 19 September 2017.

The Social Roots of Jihadist Violence in Burkina Faso's North, Africa Report N°254, 12 October 2017 (also available in French).

Finding the Right Role for the G5 Sahel Joint Force, Africa Report N°258, 12 December 2017 (also available in French).

Preventing Boko Haram Abductions of Schoolchildren in Nigeria, Africa Briefing N°137, 12 April 2017.

Frontière Niger-Mali : mettre l'outil militaire au service d'une approche politique, Africa Report N°261, 12 June 2018 (only available in French).

Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence, Africa Report N°262, 26 July 2018.

Drug Trafficking, Violence and Politics in Northern Mali, Africa Report N°267, 13 December 2018.

Appendix D: International Crisis Group Board of Trustees

CHAIR

Lord (Mark) Malloch-Brown
Former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

PRESIDENT & CEO

Robert Malley
Former White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region

OTHER TRUSTEES

Fola Adeola
Founder and Chairman, FATE Foundation

Hushang Ansary
Chairman, Parman Capital Group LLC; Former Iranian Ambassador to the U.S. and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs

Carl Bildt
Former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Sweden

Emma Bonino
Former Foreign Minister of Italy and European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid

Cheryl Carolus
Former South African High Commissioner to the UK and Secretary General of the African National Congress (ANC)

Maria Livanos Cattau
Former Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce

Nathalie Delapalme
Executive Director and Board Member at the Mo Ibrahim Foundation

Alexander Downer
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and High Commissioner to the United Kingdom of Australia

Sigmar Gabriel
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Vice Chancellor of Germany

Robert Fadel
Former Member of Parliament in Lebanon; Owner and Board Member of the ABC Group

Frank Giustra
President & CEO, Fiore Group

Hu Shuli
Editor-in-chief of Caixin Media; Professor at Sun Yat-sen University

Mo Ibrahim
Founder and Chair, Mo Ibrahim Foundation; Founder, Ceted International

Yoriko Kawaguchi
Former Foreign Minister of Japan; former Environment Minister

Wadah Khanfar
Co-Founder, Al Sharq Forum; former Director General, Al Jazeera Network

Nasser al-Kidwa
Chairman of the Yasser Arafat Foundation; Former UN Deputy Mediator on Syria

Bert Koenders
Former Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations

Andrey Kortunov
Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council

Ivan Krastev
Chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies (Sofia); Founding Board Member of European Council on Foreign Relations

Ramtame Lamamra
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria; Former Commissioner for Peace and Security, African Union

Tzipi Livni
Former Foreign Minister and Vice Prime Minister of Israel

Helge Lund
Former Chief Executive BG Group (UK) and Statoil (Norway)

William H. McRaven
Retired U.S. Navy Admiral who served as 9th commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command

Shivshankar Menon
Former Foreign Secretary of India; former National Security Adviser

Naz Modirzadeh
Director of the Harvard Law School Program on International Law and Armed Conflict

Saad Mohseni
Chairman and CEO of MOBY Group

Marty Natalegawa
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Permanent Representative to the UN, and Ambassador to the UK

Ayo Obe
Chair of the Board of the Gorée Institute (Senegal); Legal Practitioner (Nigeria)

Thomas R. Pickering
Former U.S. Under Secretary of State and Ambassador to the UN, Russia, India, Israel, Jordan, El Salvador and Nigeria

Ahmed Rashid
Author and Foreign Policy Journalist, Pakistan

Juan Manuel Santos Calderón
Former President of Colombia; Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2016

Wendy Sherman
Former U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and Lead Negotiator for the Iran Nuclear Deal

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
Former President of Liberia

Alexander Soros
Deputy Chair of the Global Board, Open Society Foundations

George Soros
Founder, Open Society Foundations and Chair, Soros Fund Management

Pär Stenbäck
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and of Education, Finland; Chairman of the European Cultural Parliament

Jonas Gahr Støre
Leader of the Labour Party and Labour Party Parliamentary Group; former Foreign Minister of Norway

Jake Sullivan
Former Director of Policy Planning at the U.S. Department of State, Deputy Assistant to President Obama, and National Security Advisor to Vice President Biden

Lawrence H. Summers
Former Director of the U.S. National Economic Council and Secretary of the U.S. Treasury; President Emeritus of Harvard University

Helle Thorning-Schmidt
CEO of Save the Children International; former Prime Minister of Denmark

Wang Jisi
Member, Foreign Policy Advisory Committee of the Chinese Foreign Ministry; President, Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Peking University

PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL

A distinguished group of individual and corporate donors providing essential support and expertise to Crisis Group.

CORPORATE	INDIVIDUAL	
BP	(5) Anonymous	Stephen Robert
Shearman & Sterling LLP	Scott Bessent	Luděk Sekyra
Statoil (U.K.) Ltd.	David Brown & Erika Franke	Alexander Soros
White & Case LLP	Herman De Bode	Ian R. Taylor

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Individual and corporate supporters who play a key role in Crisis Group's efforts to prevent deadly conflict.

CORPORATE	INDIVIDUAL	
Anonymous	(3) Anonymous	Faisal Khan
APCO Worldwide Inc.	Mark Bergman	Cleopatra Kitt
Atlas Copco AB	Stanley Bergman & Edward Bergman	Michael & Jackie Lambert
Chevron		Samantha Lasry
Edelman UK	David & Katherine Bradley	Leslie Lishon
Eni	Eric Christiansen	Malcolm Hewitt Wiener Foundation
HSBC Holdings Plc	Sam Englehardt	The New York Community Trust – Lise Strickler & Mark Gallogly Charitable Fund
MetLife	The Edelman Family Foundation	
Noble Energy	Seth & Jane Ginns	The Nommontu Foundation
RBC Capital Markets	Ronald Glickman	Brian Paes-Braga
Shell	David Harding	Kerry Propper
	Geoffrey R. Hoguet & Ana Luisa Ponti	Duco Sickinghe
	Geoffrey Hsu	Nina K. Solarz
	David Jannetti	Clayton E. Swisher
		Enzo Viscusi

AMBASSADOR COUNCIL

Rising stars from diverse fields who contribute their talents and expertise to support Crisis Group's mission.

Amy Benziger	Lindsay Iversen	Nidhi Sinha
Tripp Callan	Azim Jamal	Chloe Squires
Kivanc Cubukcu	Arohi Jain	Leeanne Su
Matthew Devlin	Christopher Louney	Bobbi Thomason
Victoria Ergolavou	Matthew Magenheim	AJ Twombly
Noa Gafni	Madison Malloch-Brown	Dillon Twombly
Christina Bache	Megan McGill	Annie Verderosa
Lynda Hammes	Hamesh Mehta	Zachary Watling
Jason Hesse	Tara Opalinski	Grant Webster
Dali ten Hove	Perfecto Sanchez	

SENIOR ADVISERS

Former Board Members who maintain an association with Crisis Group, and whose advice and support are called on (to the extent consistent with any other office they may be holding at the time).

Martti Ahtisaari Chairman Emeritus	Christoph Bertram Lakhdar Brahimi	Aleksander Kwasniewski Ricardo Lagos
George Mitchell Chairman Emeritus	Kim Campbell Jorge Castañeda	Joanne Leedom-Ackerman Todung Mulya Lubis
Gareth Evans President Emeritus	Joaquim Alberto Chissano Victor Chu	Graça Machel Jessica T. Mathews
Kenneth Adelman Adnan Abu-Odeh HRH Prince Turki al-Faisal	Mong Joon Chung Sheila Coronel Pat Cox	Miklós Németh Christine Ockrent Timothy Ong
Celso Amorim Óscar Arias Richard Armitage Diego Arria Zainab Bangura Nahum Barnea Kim Beazley Shlomo Ben-Ami	Gianfranco Dell'Alba Jacques Delors Alain Destexhe Mou-Shih Ding Uffe Ellemann-Jensen Stanley Fischer Carla Hills Swanee Hunt Wolfgang Ischinger	Roza Otunbayeva Olara Otunnu Lord (Christopher) Patten Surin Pitsuwan Fidel V. Ramos Olympia Snowe Javier Solana