

The Risk Monitor: June 2021

Africa-wide forecasts from the Violence Early Warning System (ViEWS)

Forecasts as of 1 April 2021, based on data up until and including February 2021*

By: The ViEWS Team

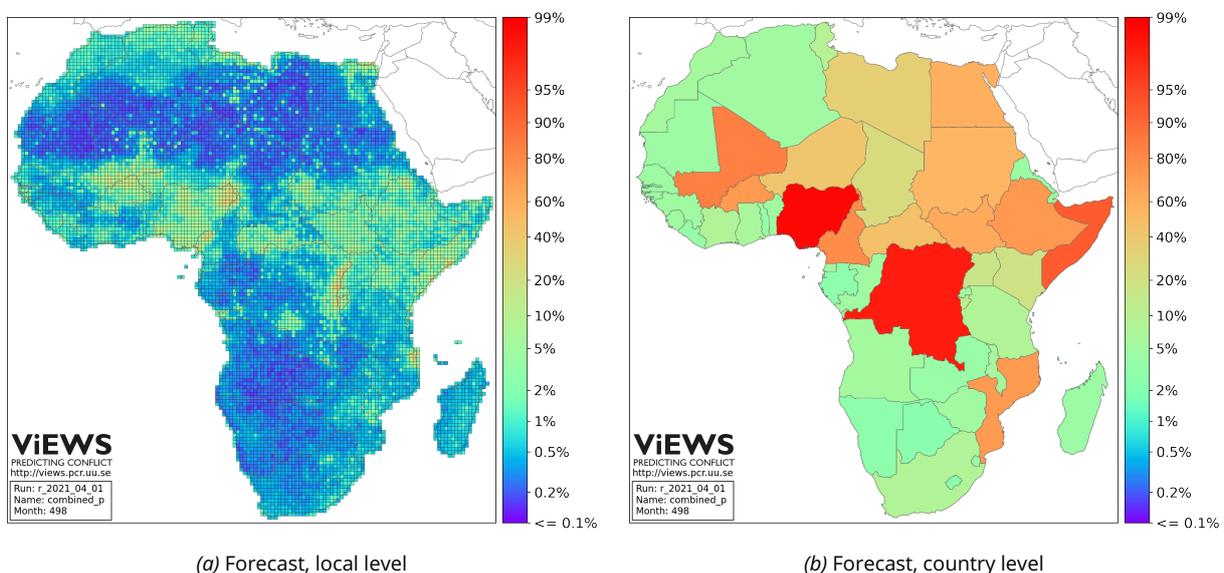


Figure 1. Combined forecasts for fatal political violence in June 2021. Predicted risk (0-100%) that at least one fatality occurs per sub-national location (left), or at least 25 fatalities per country (right)—from either state-based, non-state, or one-sided violence.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ViEWS generates high-risk alerts for countries with a recent history of fatal political violence. By June 2021, 25 or more fatalities from at least one type of violence that ViEWS predicts (see list and definitions on page 9) is almost certain in DRC and Nigeria, and highly likely in Somalia, Mali, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Mozambique (> 70% risk; Figure 1b).

More specifically, the sub-national forecasts of at least one fatality per 0.5x0.5 degree location and month highlight Borno and Katsina states in Nigeria, Anglophone

Cameroon, the Ituri and Kivu provinces of DRC, the extended border areas between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, the Tigray region of Ethiopia, Mogadishu and Kismayo in Somalia, as well as in the Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique as particular 'hot-spots' for political violence over the near future (Figure 1a). Diffuse risks furthermore form a belt across the Sahel region, its southern neighbours, and the Horn of Africa.

Changes to the sub-national forecasts as compared to last month are predominantly confined to the regions above (Figure 2b). Of particular note is the significant risk elevation in Ethiopia's Tigray region, which observed well

*The full suite of data sources and descriptions of the ViEWS methodology can be found at <http://views.pcr.uu.se>, further detailed in Hegre et al. (2019) and Hegre et al. (2021). The full list of models are carefully detailed in the corresponding online appendices to the 2020 update article on ViEWS in *Journal of Peace Research*, available at <http://files.webb.uu.se/uploader/1576/AppendixB.pdf> and <http://files.webb.uu.se/uploader/1576/AppendixC.pdf>. Brief definitions, notations and other useful information can in turn be found on page 9 of this report.

Table 1. Short-term watchlists^a

Top 5 high-risk locations in June 2021		Most notable risk elevations since last month	
Nationally	Locally	Nationally	Locally
Nigeria	Borno state (NGA)	Uganda*	Tigray (ETH)*
DRC	The Ituri and Kivu provinces (COD)	South Sudan*	Cabo Delgado (MOZ)
Somalia	Anglophone Cameroon	Tunisia*	Far North (CMR)*
Mali	Cabo Delgado (MOZ)	Ethiopia	Sahel region (BFA)
Cameroon*	Central Mali/NE Burkina Faso	Cameroon*	Ituri (DRC)*

^aBased on Figure 1–2. New entries this month are marked by an asterisk (*).

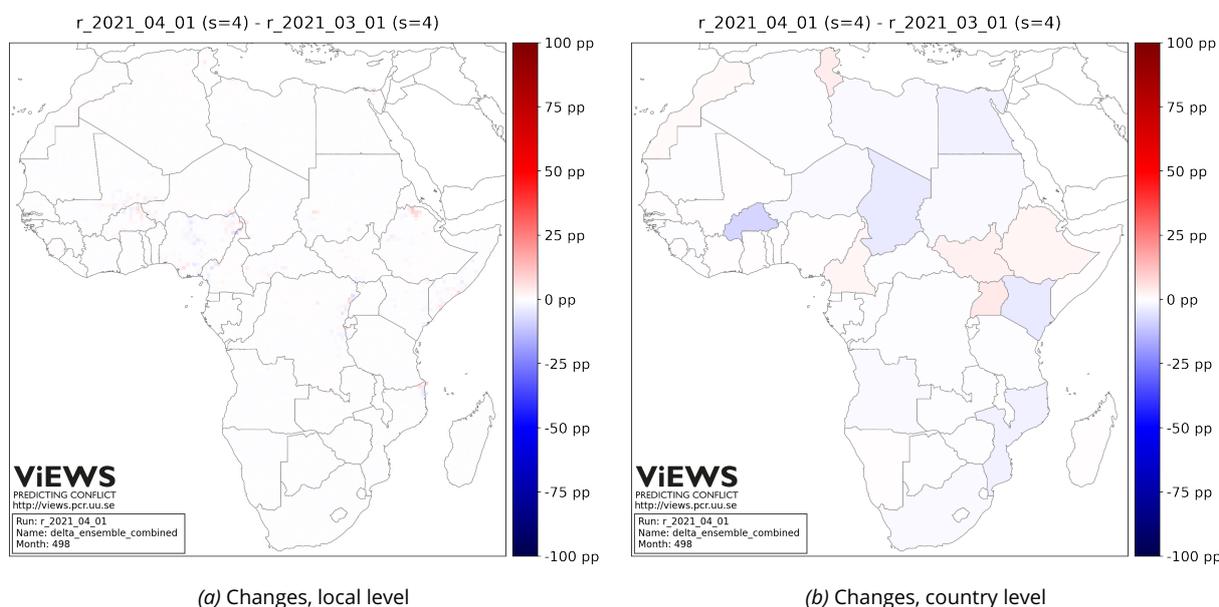


Figure 2. Changes to the combined forecasts since last month by percentage points (pp). Sub-national level (left) and country level (right).

over 2,000 fatalities over the course of February alone.¹

At the country level, the most notable change to the forecasts this month is the risk reduction for Burkina Faso, coupled with moderate de-escalations for Chad, Kenya, Mozambique and Egypt (Figure 2b). The combined risks of 25 or more fatalities from at least one of the three types of violence that ViEWS predicts are nevertheless heightened for Ethiopia, Cameroon, South Sudan, Uganda, Tunisia, and Morocco. The three former observed continued or newly erupted volatility over the month of February 2021. This is also what the system interpreted from the fatality counts in Tunisia and Uganda this February— giving rise to the risk elevations—albeit neither case involved active combat. The Tunisian incidence concerned an exploding landmine, whereas the Ugandan entailed an unfortunate detonation of a bomb that is believed to have been left behind by rebels active in the area at hand several decades ago (see ‘State-based conflict’ below for more information). The Moroccan escalation, in turn, was informed by a preliminary UCDP record of four fatalities in clashes between the armed wing of POLISARIO and Moroccan forces in Western Sahara, which has since been removed from

the database as part of the continuous coding process of the UCDP. The latter three escalations should thus be interpreted with caution.

STATE-BASED CONFLICT (SB)

The ViEWS system continues to generate alerts for conflict involving a government of a state in countries with a recent history of fatal political violence and/or mass protests. In DRC, Nigeria, Somalia, Cameroon, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mozambique and Egypt, risks of 25 or more fatalities per month by June 2021 remain high and above 50%, as seen from the bright orange fill colors in Figure 3a (red colors indicating a near-certain risk, light orange a risk equal to a coin toss, and purple < 0.1% risk.)

The country-level forecasts have remained relatively stable as compared to last month. This is illustrated by the mostly white or faint fill colors in Figure 3b. Mapping the difference between the forecasts generated in April 2021 and those produced in March 2021, red shades in the figure alert to heightened risks, whereas blue shades point

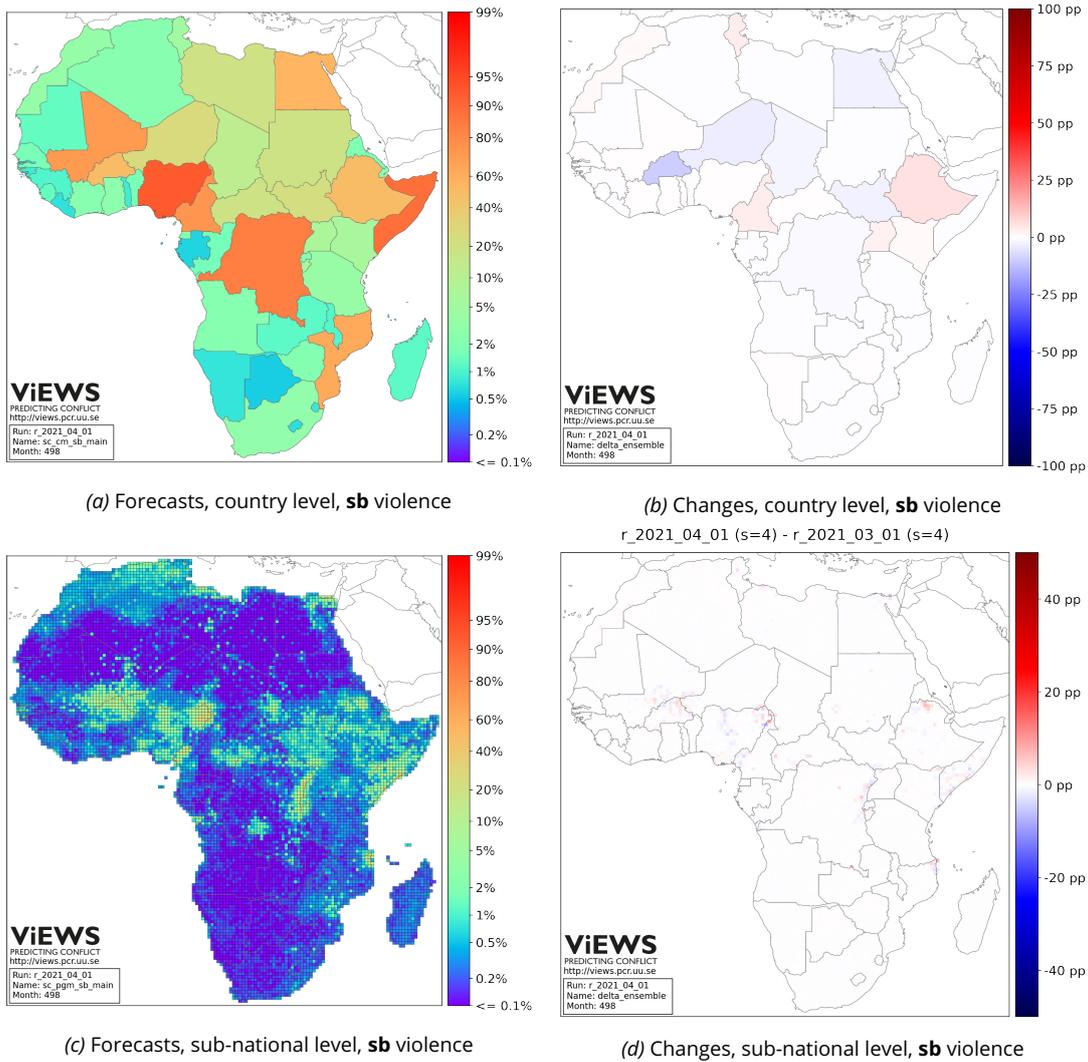


Figure 3. Forecasts for the risk of at least 25 fatalities (country level, top left) and 1 fatality (sub-national level, bottom left) from state-based (sb) violence in June 2021, and changes to the respective forecasts since last month by percentage points (right-hand column).

to declining risks. The severity of each risk alteration (by percentage points, *pp*) is illustrated by the color saturation; white indicating no change.²

From Figure 3b, we can however find a reducing monthly risk of 25 or more fatalities from state-based violence in Burkina Faso over the near future, as the death toll from Islamist violence in the Nord and Sahel regions plummeted from nearly 50 in January 21 to about 15 the following month. Modest risk declines are also detected in Niger, Egypt, Chad, and South Sudan.

The opposite is found in Ethiopia, where high-intensity violence continued to plague the Tigray region over the month of February—current death tolls exceeding 2,000 from state-based violence alone.³ Modest risk elevations are also found in Cameroon due to continued Boko Haram activity in the Far North and separatist violence in the Anglophone regions; in Tunisia where the ACLED

team picked up a number of conflict events, and the UCDP recorded the death (from a landmine) of four Tunisian soldiers during a counter-terrorism operation in Mount Mghila; and in Uganda where ACLED picked up both protest and conflict events over the month of February, and the UCDP recorded the unfortunate death of six children to an exploding bomb in the Maji 11 Refugee Settlement, Adjumani District, believed to have been left behind by Konyi rebels in the late 1980s–early 1990s.⁴

Shifting our focus to the more refined sub-national level of analysis, instead assessing the predicted risk of at least one fatality per 0.5x0.5 degree location⁵ by June 2021, we find the areas at particularly high risk of fatal violence over the near future to be concentrated in north-eastern Nigeria, the Far North and Anglophone regions of Cameroon, the Ituri and Kivu provinces of DRC, southern Somalia, around Sinai and the Egyptian border to Israel,

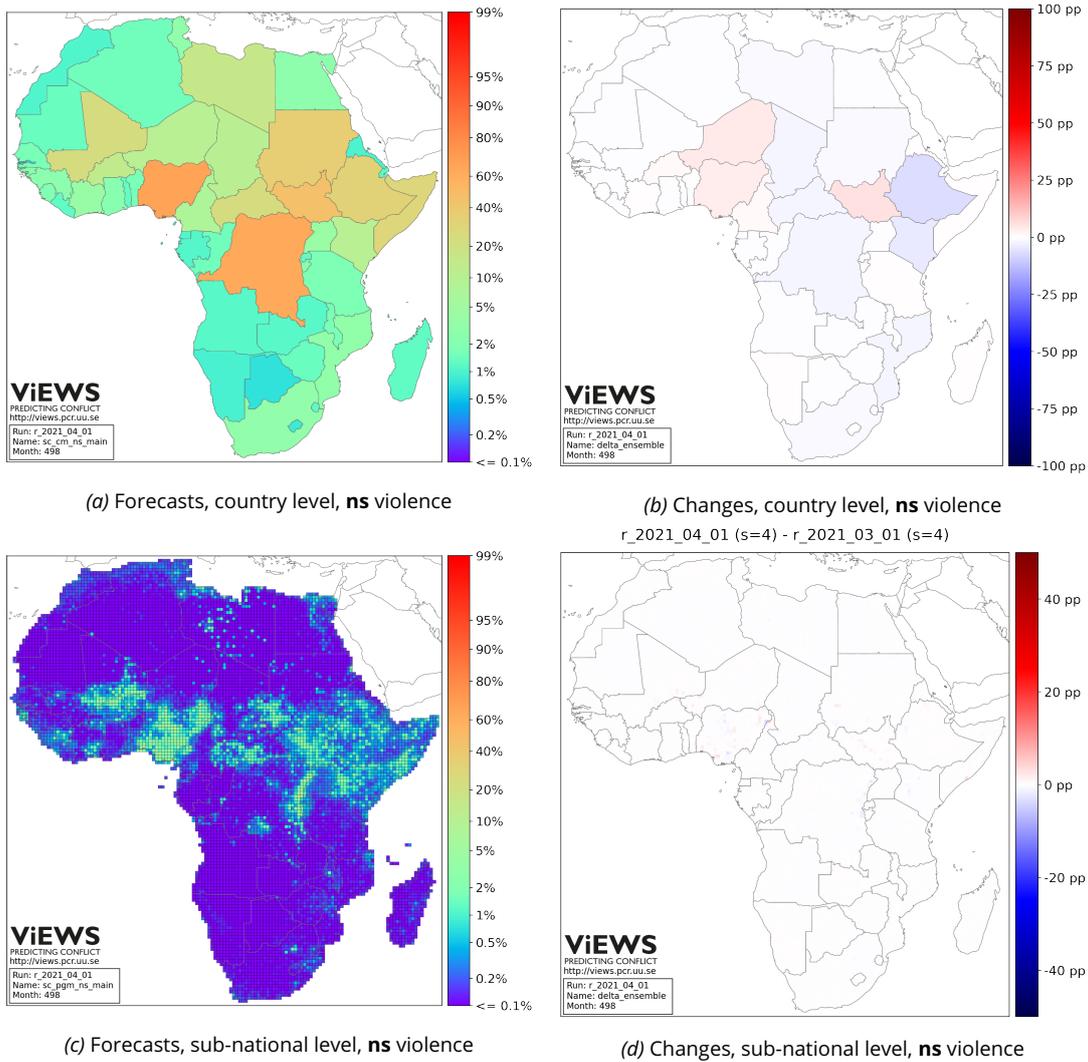


Figure 4. Forecasts for the risk (0-100%) of at least 25 fatalities (country level, top left) and 1 fatality (sub-national level, bottom left) from non-state (ns) violence in June 2021, and changes to the respective forecasts since last month by percentage points (right-hand column).

in the Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique, around Tripoli in Libya, in the Cabinda exclave of Angola, as well as in the extended border areas between central Mali, northern/north-eastern Burkina Faso, and south-western Niger. A more diffuse risk cluster also spans the Horn of Africa and the protest-prone regions of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.

Changes to the sub-national forecasts since last month are largely confined to the high-risk areas above, with the exception of the location of the landmine explosion in Tunisia (see the change map in Figure 3d and the conflict history map in Figure 5a). The greatest local risk elevation is found in Ethiopia's Tigray region, as seen by the bright red grid cells in Figure 3d, while clusters of less severe escalations can be observed in Cabo Delgado (Mozambique), southern Somalia, Mopti and Gao in Mali, and in the Sahel region of Burkina Faso—all of which grap-

ple with continuous Islamist violence. Notably, we also see a continued de-escalation of conflict risk in Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara states of Nigeria.

NON-STATE CONFLICT (NS)

Seen from the mostly blue, green, or light orange shades in Figure 4a, the short-term risks of 25 or more fatalities per month from non-state violence are relatively low for the strong majority of the African countries, most often less than 10 or even 5%. DRC and Nigeria remain the only two countries to exceed a monthly risk of 50% over the next few months—both at around 65% risk.

At the sub-national level, locations at risk of at least one fatality per month over the near future form a belt spanning the Horn of Africa, the southern parts of Su-

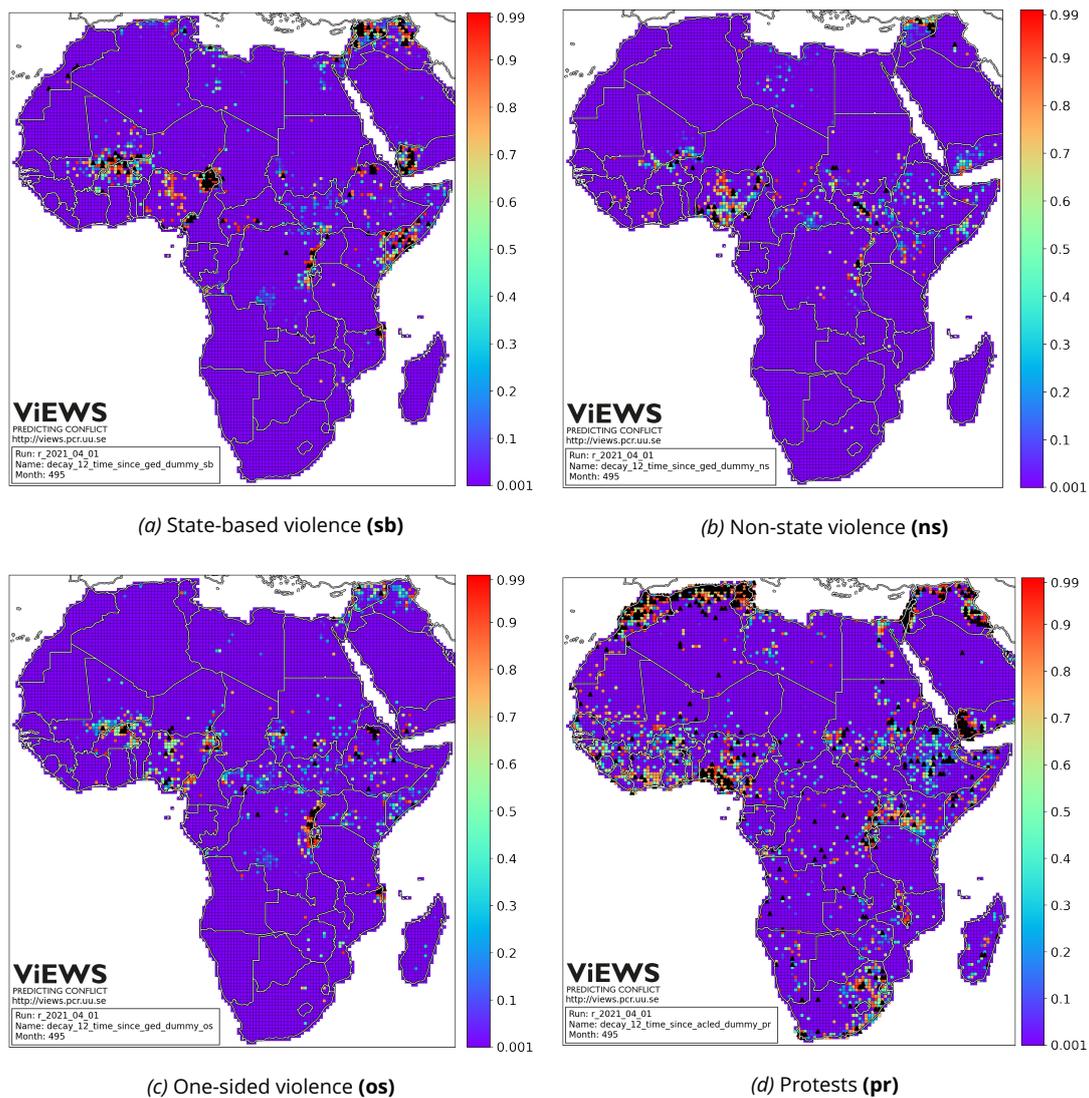


Figure 5. Illustrations of the recent history of fatal political violence as well as protests (violent and non-violent), as recorded by the UCDP (<http://ucdp.uu.se>) and ACLED (<http://acledata.com>), respectively. Red cells observed qualifying incidents in February 2021 (distinguished by a black marker) or January 2021. Purple cells have not experienced such incidents for many years.

dan, South Sudan, CAR, south-western Chad, northernmost Cameroon, Nigeria, and the extended border areas between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger (Figure 4c). A more intense risk cluster is also found in the Ituri and Kivu provinces in DRC, coupled with scattered at-risk locations across Libya, and broader areas at higher risk over the Nile delta, southern Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, West Kasai in DRC, the larger cities in eastern South Africa, and Eswatini.

Changes to the sub-national forecasts as compared to last month are very few and moderate, seen from the predominantly white or very faint color saturation in Figure 4d. Reducing risks prevail in the Ituri and Kivu provinces of DRC, while mild risk escalations appear in scattered locations in South Sudan, Nigeria, Cameroon, Mali and Niger,

in which fatal violence was recorded in February 2021 (see Figure 4d and the conflict history map in Figure 5b).

Changes to the country-level forecasts are more pronounced. After a month free from fatalities from conflict involving two or more armed non-state actors, we find a notable risk reduction in Ethiopia (not to be confused with the forecasts for the other two violence categories), coupled with moderately reducing risks in e.g. DRC, Kenya, Chad, and CAR (Figure 4d). Conflict risks are however escalating in neighbouring South Sudan, where an attack by a suspected ethnic Nuer militia in the Upper Nile state killed at least 23 people on February 2-3, and another 40 lives were lost in a number of episodes of communal and inter-communal clashes in Lakes, Warap and Central Equatoria state over the course of the month.

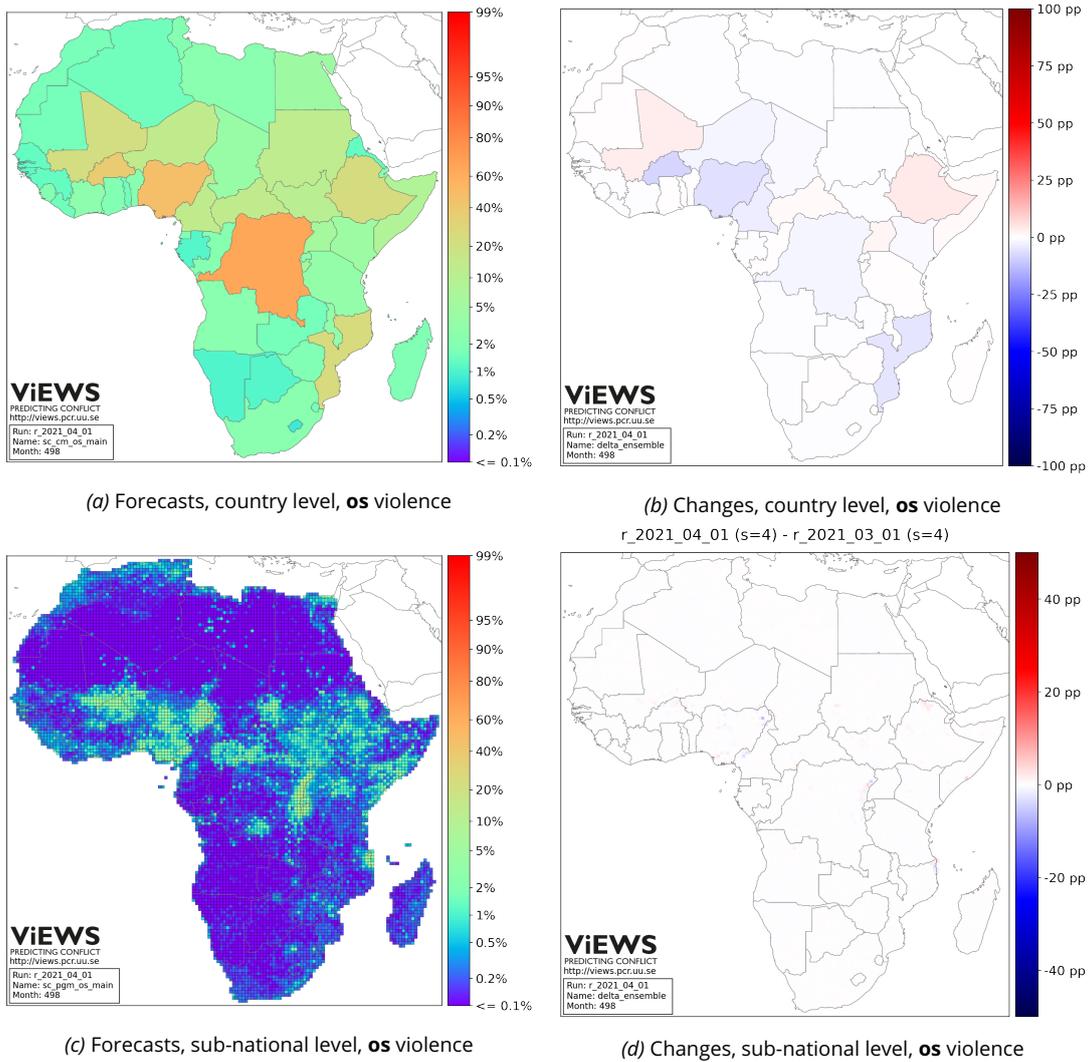


Figure 6. Forecasts for the risk (0-100%) of at least 25 fatalities (country level, top left) and 1 fatality (sub-national level, bottom left) from one-sided (OS) violence in June 2021, and changes to the respective forecasts since last month by percentage points (right-hand column).

Notable cases of escalating risk at the country level are also detected for Niger and Nigeria this month. In Niger, the heightened risks follow the death of 30 people in a clash between Islamist groups in the country's Diffa region mid-February, coupled with post-election violence in the capital Niamey after the authorities declared the ruling party candidate, Mohamed Bazoum, the winner of the Niger's presidential elections this February. At least one person was killed in the protests that ensued, with hundreds detained.

For Nigeria, the risk elevation is informed by a myriad of fatal conflict events, marked on the conflict history map in Figure 5b. Most notably, a clash between the Hausa and Yoruba killed 24 people in Oyo state mid-February. Another 16 were killed in sectarian violence in Plateau, and an additional 12 in a clash between the Irigwe and Fulani in the same state. Nine were killed in inter-

jihadist fighting near the Nigerien border, while 10 lives were lost at the hands of suspected herders in Edo state, and a series of Fulani attacks on farming communities took place in Ogun. Islamist violence continued in Borno, cult clashes prevailed in Delta and Lagos state, an intercommunal clash broke out in Osun, an attack by gunmen was recorded in Ebonyi, and a farmer was killed by a suspected herdsman in Ondo state.

ONE-SIDED VIOLENCE (OS)

With a handful exceptions, the risk of 25 or more fatalities per month are relatively low (less than 5-10%) also with regards to one-sided violence—violence exerted by an armed actor against unarmed civilians—for the majority of African countries. Most pronounced are the risk pro-

files for DRC, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso (bright orange colors in Figure 6a). Also Mozambique, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Cameroon, South Sudan, Sudan, and CAR nevertheless stand out in the conflict forecasts for June 2021.

At the sub-national level—assessing the risk of at least one fatality per 0.5x0.5 degree location—results are more refined (Figure 6c). We find the Ituri and Kivu provinces of DRC to be particular hot-spots for one-sided violence, persistently plagued by ADF attacks, police brutality, and various armed groups. A less severe risk cluster is also found over DRC's Kasai/Kasai-Central. In Nigeria, in turn, particularly high-risk locations include Borno state (which continues to grapple with Boko Haram and IS-affiliated groups), Katsina, Kaduna, and Zamfara states (with a history of banditry), and the southern regions. Other 'hot-spots' include Cabo Delgado in Mozambique, central and western CAR, West and South Darfur in Sudan, and the broader risk cluster spanning central Mali, northern/north-eastern Burkina Faso, and south-western Niger (which are also very prone to state-based violence as Islamist militants operate in the area). Last, a more diffuse cluster is found over the Horn of Africa.

Changes to the risk projections can be observed for a number of countries and sub-national locations. Compared to last month's projections, the predicted risk of 25 or more fatalities per country and month come June 2021 have decreased for Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Mozambique (bright blue colors in Figure 6d), as well as for e.g. Cameroon, Niger, DRC, Chad, and Kenya—most of which observed a lower death toll in February as compared to the previous month. Risk escalations are in turn observed for Ethiopia, Mali, Somalia, CAR, and Uganda.

Also at the sub-national level can we find heightened risks for the countries above, more specifically in locations that observed one-sided violence over the course of February 2021 (see the conflict history map in Figure 5c in relation to the change map in Figure 6d). The most pronounced changes at this level are the risk elevations in the volatile Tigray region in Ethiopia, which suffered a number of massacres of civilians at the hands of Ethiopian, Eritrean, and regional Amhara forces over the course of February, with casualties currently counting in the hundreds in the UCDP Candidate dataset. A series of reports on civilian fatalities from protests in both Tigray and Oromiya also contributed to this month's forecasts, as did the loss of at least 11 civilians to an OLF attack in East Wellega zone, and the death of 26 following an attack on Albasa village in the Metekel zone of Benishangul-Gumuz state, at the alledged hands of Ethiopian forces.

Mali, turn, faces local risk elevations for select locations in the Mopti region following continued JNIM activity; Somalia observes escalations in Mogadishu and in the town of Jilib (where Al-Shabaab conducted attacks this February); and for CAR, we detect minor risk elevations for areas in the Ombella-M'Poko province following fatal attacks by the Shark militia. While a small risk elevation is recorded for Uganda at the country level, in line with updates of the ACLED datasets, the ViEWS system has however not recorded any local changes to the country's risk projections this month.

NOTES

1. All fatality counts and details on conflict events in this report are, unless otherwise stated, derived from the UCDP Candidate Event Dataset (Pettersson, Högbladh, and Öberg, 2019; Sundberg and Melander, 2013; Hegre et al., 2020).
2. Changes to the risk assessments as compared to last month are indicative of effects from new input data, most commonly by publicly available conflict and protest data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP, <http://ucdp.uu.se>) (Pettersson, Högbladh, and Öberg, 2019; Sundberg and Melander, 2013; Hegre et al., 2020) and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset (ACLED, <http://acleddata.com>) (Raleigh et al., 2010).
3. Please note that the forecasts presented in this report show the predicted risks of fatal political violence in June 2021 (based on data up until and including February 2021, the last month with available conflict data). The risk projections for earlier months are significantly higher than those produced for June 2021.
4. A moderate risk elevation can also be detected for Morocco on the change map in Figure 3b. It was informed by a preliminary UCDP record of four fatalities from clashes between the armed wing of POLISARIO and Moroccan forces in Western Sahara, which has since been removed from the database as part of the continuous coding process of the UCDP. The record was removed after the production of this month's forecasts, why it still appears on the change

map but can be disregarded from further analysis.

- The systematic grid structure formed is known as the PRIO-GRID. It is the most spatially granulated level that the ViEWS system currently produces forecasts for. See page 9 for the full definition.

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DATA SOURCES

Conflict and protest data

Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)

<http://ucdp.uu.se>

Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED)

<https://acleddata.com>

Other input data

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)

<https://v-dem.net>

World Bank World Development Indicators (WDI)

<https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/world-development-indicators>

International Crisis Group's Crisis Watch (ICGCW)

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>

PRIO-GRID dataset

<https://grid.prio.org/#/>

REIGN Rulers, Elections, and Irregular Governance dataset (REIGN),

<https://oefdatascience.github.io/REIGN.github.io/>

SPEI Global Drought Monitor (SPEI)

<https://spei.csic.es/index.html>

Shared Socioeconomic Pathways dataset (SSP)

<https://tntcat.iiasa.ac.at/SspDb/dsd?Action=htmlpage&page=welcome>

Ethnic Power Relations dataset (EPR)

<https://icr.ethz.ch/data/epr/>

DEFINITIONS AND MODELING SET-UP

Types of violence

The ViEWS forecasts take the form of monthly probabilistic assessments of the risk and likely severity of three forms of organized political violence occurring in a given month, as defined by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP):

- **State-based (sb) violence:** the use of armed violence over either government or territory between armed actors, in which at least one is a government of a state;
- **Non-state (ns) violence:** the use of armed force between two organized armed groups, neither of which is a government of a state, and;
- **One-sided (os) violence:** the deliberate use of armed force by the government of a state, or by a formally organized group, against civilians.

Levels of analysis

The results are presented at two levels of analysis using the calendar month as the temporal unit of analysis:

- The country-month (*cm*) level, which follows the country outline determined by CShapes (Weidmann, Kuse, and Gleditsch, 2010), and;
- The PRIO-GRID-month (*pgm*) level, which is outlined by fine-grained geographical locations known as PRIO-GRID-cells, a global quadratic grid structure with cells measuring 0.5 x 0.5 degrees in longitude and latitude, spanning approximately 55 km^2 along the equator (Tollefsen, 2012, <https://grid.prio.org/#/>).

Model descriptions

The forecasting system consists of a suite of forecasting models, each of which has been trained to capture the effects of a particular theme of conflict-inducing factors.

At the national level, the system gives particular weight to structural, slow-moving features and patterns

that often characterize countries over a longer period of time, such as the stability of political institutions, democracy indices, and socio-economic factors. It also relies heavily on a number of conflict and protest history models that capture not only the long-term trends in each country and region, but also the most recent developments in each country. Changes to the ViEWS projections are nevertheless most often informed by the latter, more specifically by data updates from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP, <http://ucdp.uu.se>) and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset (ACLED, <http://acleddata.com>).

While the national level forecasts do inform the local forecasts—and vice versa—the forecasting models employed at the two levels of analysis differ from each other. While models informing the national level forecasts, for instance, bring valuable structural and historical factors to the table, models tailored to the sub-national level excel in accentuating effects from local compound risks. This includes—but is not limited to—heightened risks related to local demography, terrain, proximity to natural resources, local precipitation levels, droughts, and conflict history in neighbouring areas. The two sets of forecasts should therefore be seen as separate assessments, which nevertheless are best interpreted in conjunction with each other.

The full suite of forecasting models are described in detail in Appendix B and C to our forthcoming article in *Journal of Peace Research*, available at <https://pcr.uu.se/research/views/publications/>

Steps *s* ahead

In some figures, you may see a reference to a particular step *s*. This refers to the internal ViEWS notation for what number of months ahead (1-36) a given forecast is produced. In any given run of the forecasting system, *s* = 1 refers to the first calendar month following the last month of available data. In this report, the last month of available data was February 2021). Forecasts for *s* = 1 would thus effectively have referred to forecasts for last month, *s* = 2 to the 'nowcast' for the month of writing, *s* = 3 to the forecasts for the following calendar month, and so forth.

FUNDING

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**COLLABORATIONS**

ViEWS has an active interaction with other projects, including CLIMSEC, CAVE and CROP at PRIO (<https://prio.org/>), the MISTRA Geopolitics project, and most importantly the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (<https://ucdp.uu.se/>) at Uppsala University.

CODEBASE & PUBLICATIONS

ViEWS' codebase is available at:


[https://github.com/
UppsalaConflictDataProgram/
OpenViEWS2](https://github.com/UppsalaConflictDataProgram/OpenViEWS2)

The full list of publications are accessible at:


[https://pcr.uu.se/research/
views/publications/](https://pcr.uu.se/research/views/publications/)