

Middle East

The turmoil and conflict in the Middle East, following Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, has been the most visible and concerning shift in the region. This attack sparked widespread Israeli assaults on Palestinians and the people of Gaza. Subsequently, in Lebanon, Hezbollah re-engaged with Israel, intensifying the violence. Israel targeted many resistance leaders and launched attacks on southern Lebanon from September to October 2024, further escalating tensions between Iran and Israel.

At the end of the year, armed groups attacked Damascus and removed Syria from the rule of the Assad family, highlighting that the Middle East witnessed more conflict and strife than almost any other region in the world this year.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine entered its third year. Beyond Ukraine, Russia has also maintained active forces in Africa. However, following the collapse of the Wagner Group (a Russian state-funded private military company (PMC) and the death of its leader, Evgeny Prigozhin, in August 2023, Russia increased its direct intervention in Sub-Saharan Africa through the Africa Battalion, which is under the control of the Russian Ministry of Defense. Moscow deepened its ties with military rulers in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger and intensified its security cooperation with these countries.



During a funeral ceremony in Irpin, the Kyiv region of Ukraine, on Nov. 21, serviceman Roman bids farewell to a comrade from the 47th Brigade-- Serhii Soloviyov -- who was killed during fighting with Russian Forces in Kursk on Nov. 12, 2024. **EVGENIY MALOLETKA/AP**

Sub-Saharan Africa

Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have been profoundly impacted by various global conflicts this year, with 14 of the 49 nations in the region caught in war-

fare. In this geographical area, 28 internal conflicts—whether with or without foreign intervention—were recorded last year, marking the highest number since 1991.

Wars in Sub-Saharan Africa, with their potential nuclear ramifications, the friction between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda, and between Ethiopia and Somalia, as well as the

standoff between Niger (alongside Mali and Burkina Faso) and the Economic Community of West African States, particularly Nigeria, all pose significant risks for the escalation of interstate conflicts.

Global Peace Outlook

Experts say: "The global outlook for peace remains unclear, given the rise in intractable conflicts driven by an increasing number of parties, overlapping and diverse factors, and the intensification and geopolitical dispersion of tensions. Meanwhile, the severity and human casualties of armed conflicts, with a 37% increase, underscore the gravity of the issue."

The world is experiencing an unprecedented number of conflicts that, due to the growing involvement of internal and external actors, a complex array of underlying drivers, and the intensification of geopolitical tensions, appear increasingly intractable and concerning.

The past two years, marked by the rising importance of geopolitical issues and their human impact, have been the most eventful since World War II, with conflict and armed dispute trends continuing to escalate across the globe. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) report, fatalities from violent incidents during the review period (July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024) saw a 37% increase in armed conflict in 2024, reaching nearly 200,000 people worldwide. While deaths decreased slightly in the Americas (-9%) and

Asia (-3%), they surged by 315% in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

This increase was largely due to ongoing conflicts and violence in Palestine, where fatalities from violent incidents rose from 321 the previous year to nearly 40,000. Additionally, the overall fatality rate per armed conflict increased by almost 17%, indicating the growing intensity and deadliness of these conflicts.

This disheartening situation is particularly evident when the resources available to affected governments and international actors for addressing unprecedented reconstruction and humanitarian needs stemming from ongoing armed violence are increasingly under pressure.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) has estimated in its latest report that:

1. More than 290 million people worldwide have been in need of humanitarian assistance in 2024.
2. \$7.3 billion in humanitarian funding had been raised by the end of April 2024, which represents a 36 percent decrease compared to the previous year. In other words, while conflicts have increased, the level of humanitarian aid has decreased.

3. The financial gap, exacerbated by consecutive external shocks in recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war, has led to heightened threats to food and energy security.

4. These factors, along with the acceleration of the climate crisis, have also intensified the root causes of conflict. The financial resources needed for the reconstruction of Ukraine and Gaza are prime examples of these challenges.

The World Bank estimates that the reconstruction and revival of Ukraine will cost nearly \$486 billion over the next decade, while the direct damage to Gaza's infrastructure exceeds \$18.5 billion, equivalent to 97% of the total GDP of the Palestinian territories in 2022.

Experts have pinned the primary reasons for the weakening foundations of peace on the world on the United Nations and the Security Council, as this council has so far failed to prevent wars or end disputes around the world using international tools. This shortcoming was particularly evident in Israel's repeated attacks on Palestine last year.

The inability of the international system and global powers to broker cease-fires in conflicts such as those in Gaza and Sudan, or to

mediate in both internal and international disputes, including the conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, Ethiopia and Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, has been starkly apparent.

Meanwhile, some emerging powers have not only failed to deliver successful mediation efforts but also played a role in stoking conflicts as external factors contributing to the outbreak of disputes.

Another crucial point is that international humanitarian laws, which have taken years to establish, have come under increasing attack, particularly from warmongers. For instance, conflicts in Sudan and Gaza have seen widespread violations and war crimes, as well as the sidelining of humanitarian laws during disputes. In all these conflicts, a blatant disregard for civilian lives has been evident, leading to an increase in displacement, including 90% of Gaza and the registration of 7.7 million internally displaced persons in Sudan.

The blocking of humanitarian aid, the creation of food and medicine insecurity, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and educational centers have starkly revealed the warmongers' true nature and their inhumane behavior.

Concluding

According to reports from international institutions, the geography of conflict in the world has intensified by two-thirds over the past three years. International observers, in light of this reality and given the increasing intensity and number of wars globally, have warned about the widespread impact of these international anomalies on global economic growth and food security.

These reports indicate that the Conflict Intensity Index (CII) has shown that Ukraine, Myanmar, the Middle East, and

certain regions of Africa have been the main hotspots of disputes and unrest, particularly over the past three years, where the intensity of conflict has been high.

The Guardian reported in this context: "Now, 4.6% of the world's land area is affected by conflict and war, compared to 2.8% in 2021. The conflict mortality rate has also increased by 29%."

Angela Rosales, the Director of the Human Rights Group at SOS Children's Villages International, states, "470 million children worldwide are affected by

wars, including those in Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza, and Lebanon, with impacts that go far beyond death and injury."

Given that conflicts have historically been one of the primary causes of the destruction of human, economic, and environmental resources, as well as the rise of hunger and poverty, it is essential for peace advocates worldwide—whether they are governments, nations, or international organizations—to intensify their efforts more than ever to ensure that the white flag of peace flies in all conflict-ridden ar-

reas globally.

Overall, it is crucial for all nations, governments, and business leaders to amplify their efforts to resolve minor conflicts before they escalate into larger crises. Now, 80 years have passed since the end of World War II, and current crises highlight the urgent need for substantial and impactful investment to address conflicts.

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By the end of April 2024, \$7.3 billion in humanitarian aid had been collected, a 36% decrease compared to the previous year. In other words, while conflicts have escalated, the amount of humanitarian aid has declined.



A crucial aspect of the conflicts that have emerged this year is that civil wars, which continue to be the primary form of conflict worldwide, are becoming more intertwined with the interventions of regional and global powers pursuing their strategic interests.



Nine-year-old Farzan is seen in the ruins of his house in Ghor Province, western Afghanistan on May 2024. **UNICEF**