Heidelberg, February 26, 2016. The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK) presents with the Conflict Barometer 2015 its current data and analyses on global conflict events of the year 2015. According to its methodology, the HIIK counted 409 conflicts in 2015, 223 of which were violent. The number of wars remained at 19 while the limited wars decreased to 24.

Compared to 2014, the HIIK registered three conflicts that escalated to a war. In Turkey, heavy fightings between the PKK and the government led to the ending of a two-year-long ceasefire. In the Philippines, heavy clashes between BIFF militants and the government erupted. Moreover, intercommunal violence over cattle and arable land in South Sudan also escalated to a war. Further 16 conflicts continued on war level.

Nearly a quarter of the world’s political conflicts were observed in Sub-Saharan Africa. Boko Haram conducted a significantly higher number of attacks in neighboring countries of Nigeria, changing its tactics. In total, more than 12,000 conflict-related deaths and 2.4 million IDPs and refugees were reported. Further five wars were registered in Sudan and South Sudan. Heavy clashes also occurred between the conflict parties in the Central African Republic and in Somalia. Besides its activities in Somalia, the Islamist group al-Shabaab significantly increased its attacks in Kenya. In the Middle East and Maghreb, in addition to the wars in Syria and Iraq, the HIIK further observed highly violent conflicts in Afghanistan, Turkey, Yemen, and Libya.

The governments of Syria, Iraq and several other countries were supported by an international coalition in the fight against the so-called Islamic State (IS). However, the group extended the scope of its influence in 2015 by conducting attacks for instance in Afghanistan, France, and Bangladesh, among others, and consolidating its control over areas in most states of the Maghreb.

In Asia and Oceania, more than 90 percent of the conflicts were carried out on a low-violent or non-violent level. In total, six highly violent conflicts were observed in Myanmar, the Philippines, and Pakistan. On the Korean Peninsula, tensions arose after two South Korean soldiers had been wounded in several landmine explosions south of the Demilitarized Zone. Besides the continuing war on drugs in Mexico, the Americas region witnessed in 2015 violent conflicts between governments, on the one hand, and opposition as well as indigenous groups, on the other.

In Europe, the number of conflicts rose in 2015 but most of them remained non-violent. The sole highly violent conflict in the region, namely the war in Ukraine over the control of the Donbas region between separatists and the government, continued with more than 4,000 fatalities.
In sum, seven new conflicts were registered in 2015, of which three reached the level of a violent crisis in both the Republic of Congo and Serbia concerning clashes between opposition and government, as well as in Nicaragua over the conflict between indigenous groups and the government.

In 2015, the HIJK counted 75 interstate, 280 intrastate, and 55 substate conflicts. Most of the conflicts between two or more states were conducted on a non-violent level. The countries most frequently engaged in interstate conflicts in 2015 were the US (12), Russia (8), Turkey (6), Iran (5), Japan (5), and the PRC (5).

Since 1991, the HIJK is dedicated to the research, documentation, and evaluation of intra- and interstate political conflicts worldwide. The annually published „Conflict Barometer“ contains an overview of the current developments of violent and non-violent conflicts. The latest edition can be downloaded free of charge at www.hiik.de/en (as of February 26, 2016 at 12 p.m.).

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