

# The number of armed conflicts increased strongly in 2011

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Last year, the number of armed conflicts in the world increased markedly, with the strongest increase taking place in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is the conclusion in a new report by researchers at the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), published in the Journal of Peace Research. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has presented the statistics to the UN General Assembly in his report on international mediation.

The conflict data stems from the internationally recognized conflict data program at the University of Uppsala (UCDP). For almost 10 years, UCDP has published an annual [conflict](#) update in [collaboration](#) with the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and PRIOs Journal of Peace Research.

Following a year (2010) that signaled hope for a more peaceful development, the number of conflicts increased by nearly 20 percent, from 31 to 37. Last year's jump in conflicts deviates from the long-term trend line, which shows that the world is gradually becoming more peaceful.

"It should be pointed out, however, that even though we have now witnessed the largest increase between any two years since 1990, the number of conflicts is still far below the peak levels of the early 1990s," says Professor Peter Wallensteen, head of the UCDP. At the peak 53 armed conflicts were active.

2011 also saw an increase in the most severe conflicts. Six conflicts were categorized as wars, passing the level of at least 1,000 battle-related deaths. This is up from four in 2010. While the wars in Afghanistan, Libya, Pakistan, and Somalia have received much media attention, the intense conflicts in Sudan and Yemen have been less covered.

"The increase in the category of the most deadly conflicts is disquieting," says Lotta Themnér, project leader at UCDP.

The growth in conflicts is not primarily a reflection of the Arab Spring. Only in Libya and Syria did the unrest develop into organized armed conflicts. The strongest growth has happened in Sub-Saharan Africa, in the shade of the Arab Spring events. Armed conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa have increased by 50 % in only one year, from 10 in 2010 to 15 in 2011. – This is a grave development for a region that desperately needs stability and development, says Helge Holtermann, PRIO researcher and Managing Editor of the Journal of Peace Research.

The partition of Sudan has caused new conflicts, while former conflicts in Nigeria and Senegal have reemerged.

Adding to the bad news from 2011 is the fact that only one new peace agreement was signed. This is the lowest number since 1987.

"The period after the Cold War has until now been characterized by internationally driven peace processes and [peace](#) agreements. This trend could now be threatened," according to Wallensteen. Thus, he says, it is timely that the UN shows a new commitment to mediation by making a special report to the UN General Assembly on the topic. This in turns, stems from an initiative by Finland and Turkey, resulting in the first General Assembly resolution on mediation ever, last year.

**More information:** The full report is available for free [download](#).

The dataset is available for free [download](#).

The name of the UN report is:

Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution  
Report of the Secretary-General to the 66th General Assembly of the United Nations  
(A/66/811).

Provided by Uppsala University

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