

Chronology of Major Conflicts and Political Events

January 2009

In France Sarkozy announces cabinet reshuffle a week before the general strike. In Italy protests on the 52-km² island of Lampedusa against the Identification and Expulsion Centre, set up to deal with asylum seekers, create problems for the Interior Minister Roberto Maroni. In Greece outbreaks of violence follow the death of a teenage during a demonstration in Athens in December. In Turkey more people are arrested over the Ergenekon case. In Algeria Bouteflika confirms he will run for another presidential term, and Mauritania announces elections after the coup d'état in August 2008. In the EU the Russian-Ukraine "gas war" leaves half the Union without gas in the middle of winter, and the Czech EU Presidency opens with the challenge for the Eurosceptic government of the Civic Democratic Party to accompany the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty, yet to be endorsed by the President Vaclav Klaus. The announcement of two simultaneous Arab League summits underscores the division among its members over the Gaza crisis.

Spain

- On 8 January the trial begins at the Superior Court of Justice for the Basque Country against *lehendakari* Juan Jose Ibarretxe, the socialist party leaders Patxi Lopez and Rodolfo Ares, and members of the abertzale left who participated in peace talks during the ceasefire of the terrorist organisation Euzkadi and Freedom (ETA) in 2006. On 19 January the Court dismisses the case.
- On 28 January the Bank of Spain announces that the country has officially entered into recession with a 1.1%

decline in the last quarter, the largest since 1960.

- On 29 January the Constitutional Court rules in favour of the Supreme Court's decision on 17 September 2008 to outlaw and dissolve Basque Nationalist Action (ANV), the platform used by Batasuna in an attempt to run in the 2007 local elections.

France

- On 15 January Nicolas Sarkozy announces a cabinet reshuffle in the run up to the European parliamentary elections. The most significant changes are the replacement of Labour and Social Affairs Minister Xavier Bertrand with Brice Hortefeux, the current Immigration Minister, while Eric Besson replaces Hortefeux as Immigration Minister. Besson's position as Secretary of State and Prospective Development of the Digital Economy is handed to the Secretary of State for Ecology, Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet.
- On 25 January Windstorm Klaus subsidises after leading the authorities to declare a state of emergency in nine districts in the South-eastern regions, leaving four dead and a million and a half homes without electricity.
- On 29 January a general strike is called in protest against the government's poor handling of the financial crisis days after the strike called by teachers and students to defend public education. Despite the protests and the socialist opposition, the National Assembly approves the general budget for 2009 on the same day.

Italy

- On 1 January Italy takes over the rotating G8 presidency from Japan, and

faces the challenge of tackling the global economic crisis and the perspectives of the group's enlargement.

- On 19 January Italian police arrest 23 members of the Madonia clan, days after the arrests of the Camorra bosses Giuseppe Setola and Salvatore Zazo.
- On 23 January after a mass arrival of immigrants, the people of Lampedusa protest against the Identification and Expulsion Centre (IEC). On 24 January 1,300 immigrants escape from the detention centre and demonstrate. On 27 January the Lampedusa mayor calls a general strike fearing that the new IEC will ruin the island's much needed tourist industry.

Malta

- On 11 January a cargo ship from the Marshall Islands rescues 162 immigrants 52 miles off the coast of Malta.

Croatia

- On 17 January the deputy Security Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina Vjekoslav Vukovic is arrested by Croatian police on suspicion of supplying explosives to two individuals for a bomb attack in Rijeka. Vukovic, who has Croatian and Bosnian nationality, was responsible for combating organised crime.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 18 and 26 January the leaders of Bosnia's ruling parties, Milorad Dodik (SNSD), Sulejman Tihic (SDA) and Dragan Covic (HDZ) and the President of the Republika Srpska Rajko Kuzmanovic meet in Banja Luka to further the developments in the implementation of the Prud process, signed in November

2008, which sets out a plan for a constitutional reform to stabilise the country.

Montenegro

- On 5 January the President Filip Vujanovic demands that Kosovo recognise its Montenegrin minority and guarantee the security measures needed for the return to Kosovo of Albanian citizens displaced to Montenegro, as a requisite to initiating diplomatic ties.

Serbia

- On 8 January Hungary and Germany start supplying gas to Serbia, which has run out of supplies following the conflict between Russia and Ukraine over the gas supply to the rest of Europe.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 3-4 January violent clashes in Mitrovica are reported after an explosion in the Serbian sector of the city destroys several vehicles.
- On 21 January the government of Kosovo announces the creation of its own army, the Kosovo Security Force, comprised of 2,500 soldiers. Serbia submits a formal protest to the UN and NATO.

Albania

- On 8 January the International Monetary Fund mission in Albania comes to an end after 17 years in operation.

Greece

- On 1 January radical groups attack several establishments and vehicles in Athens and Salonica. The disturbances are caused by death of a boy who was shot on 6 December 2008 by police during a demonstration in Athens for workers' rights. New clashes and attacks against the police are reported on 5, 7 and 9 January which result in 70 arrests.
- On 7 January the Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis, shaken by the economic crisis and the violent incidents against the government, announces a cabinet reshuffle in which Christos Markogiannakis is appointed deputy Interior Minister responsible for Public

Order and the Education Minister Evi-ridis Stylianidis and Economy and Finance Minister Giorgos Alogoskoufis are removed from their positions.

- On 20 January 8,000 farmers block main roads and the border with Bulgaria demanding measures to counteract the fall in agricultural commodity prices. The farmers lift the blockade on 29 January after the government agrees to a 500 million euro aid package.

Turkey

- On 1 January the new Kurdish language 24-hour television channel TRT6 officially starts broadcasting with a message from Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who addresses viewers in Kurdish.
- On 13 January 40 people are arrested for their involvement in the Ergenekon network, accused in October 2008 of plotting a military coup to overthrow the Government of the Justice and Development Party (AKP).
- On 21 January Turkey announces its intention to demand 15% of the gas flowing through the future Nabucco gas pipeline when this is put into operation in 2013. The EU describes the claim as "unacceptable".

Cyprus

- On 23 January Cyprus files a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights for Turkey to clarify the disappearance of 1,500 people during the island's invasion in 1974. On 28 January the Istanbul public prosecutor Ali Cakir decides to open an investigation.
- On 29 January the Cypriot authorities inspect the cargo of the Cypriot-flagged Russian ship *Monchegorsk* in Limassol port. The ship is suspected of transporting arms from Iran to Gaza and Lebanon through Syria, violating the UN resolutions regarding the Iranian arms programme.

Syria

- On 11 January an Israeli army patrol is attacked from Syrian territory while it carries out maintenance works close to the border in the Golan Heights.
- On 27 January the Syrian government accepts the appointment of Michel al-Khoury as the first Lebanese ambassador to Syria.

Lebanon

- On 8 January Israel is hit by three rockets launched from southern Lebanon. The Israeli army responds by launching five missiles. On 14 January a fresh rocket attack from southern Lebanon hits the Galilean town of Kiryat Shmona.
- On 26 January the fourth round of national Lebanese talks begin, led by the President Michel Suleiman, to study the national defence strategy and Hezbollah's role in this.

Egypt

- On 12 January Egypt opens the border with Gaza, for the first time since the start of Operation Cast Lead, to allow the entry of medical and humanitarian aid. Egypt has maintained the Rafah border crossing closed since Hamas expelled representatives of Gaza's Palestinian National Authority in 2007.

Tunisia

- On 19 January 26 Tunisian immigrants attempting to reach Italy disappear off the coast of Tunisia when their boat sinks. Rescue teams find nine survivors.

Algeria

- On 10 January Algerian Minister of Energy and Mines Chakib Khelil announces that Algeria will increase its gas supplies to Europe, and that Sonatrach, the state-owned gas company, wants a stake in a refinery in Rotterdam to increase the gas supply from 62,000 to 85,000 cubic metres per year in 2012.
- On 18 January Abdelaziz Belkhadem, Secretary General of the National Liberation Front (FLN), confirms that the current President Abdelaziz Bouteflika will run in the presidential elections in April. The reform to the constitution, approved by Parliament in October 2008, allows the President to serve more than the previously legal limit of two terms.
- On 30 January around thirty people are injured in the town of Berriane, in the Mزاب, during violent clashes between the Mozabite (Berber) and Malekite (Arab) communities.

Morocco

- On 1 January a sub-Saharan immigrant is killed when Moroccan police open fire on a group of 80 immigrants as they try to cross the border with Melilla.
- On 29 January the public prosecutor of the Casablanca Appeal Court confirms the arrest of 69 members of the army and two lawyers, charged with forming part of a drug trafficking network.

Mauritania

- On 23 January General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, Mauritania's President since the coup on 6 August 2008, announces that presidential elections will be held on 6 June. The overthrown President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi agrees to participate on the condition that the military definitively relinquish power.

European Union

- On 1 January the Czech Republic assumes the six-month presidency of the EU.
- On 1 January Slovakia adopts the euro as its official currency, making it the sixteenth member of the Eurozone.
- On 10 January the EU and Russia sign an agreement to guarantee gas supplies after Russia agrees to European observers going into Kiev on 9 January to monitor the gas flows through Ukraine. The supplies were cut by Russia at the beginning of the month as a pressure tactic, following accusations that Ukraine has been stealing Russian gas destined for the EU. On 17 January, after talks and threats from the EU, Yulia Timoshenko and Vladimir Putin sign a definitive agreement. On 20 January Russia resumes the supply through Ukraine.
- On 26 January the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) fails to reach a common agreement for receiving Guantanamo prisoners and decides that each country should bilaterally negotiate its agreements with Washington.

Arab League

- On 19 and 20 January the Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit

takes place in Kuwait. A special Foreign Ministers meeting is held in connection with the summit to overcome the internal division over the Gaza crisis. The meeting follows the League's condemnation on 4 January of the UN Security Council's failure to adopt a resolution that demands the immediate cessation of Israeli hostilities. Consequently, the League adopts the joint request of an international reconstruction programme, which includes a two billion euro aid fund. On the same day Qatar holds a meeting for the Arab League Heads of State in Doha to deal with the Gaza issue, which is attended by just 13 countries. The fact that the meetings in Kuwait – attended by Fatah – and Doha – by Hamas – are held simultaneously underscores the deep divisions within the League regarding the Gaza conflict.

February 2009

Judges in Spain go on strike for the first time in the country's history, causing the Justice Minister to resign. Italy approves the controversial Security bill, which takes a hardliner approach to immigration. Kosovo celebrates its first year of self-proclaimed independence with 40% unemployment and persistent problems in its political stability. Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) find traces of uranium in Syria, raising suspicions over the possible development of a nuclear reactor. Jordan reshuffles its cabinet as part of its free market reform plan. The Egyptian government releases Ayman Nur, the opposition party leader. Muammar Gaddafi is appointed as Chairman of the African Union. In Algeria fighting continues between the army and al-Qaeda terrorists.

Portugal

- On 13 February Statistics Portugal confirms the country's entry into recession after publishing figures that show a 2.1% decline in GDP in the last quarter of 2008, the sharpest since 1984.

Spain

- On 6 February the National Court opens the Gurtel case enquiry, a corruption network scandal linked with the

main opposition People's Party (PP). The investigation causes various PP members to tender their resignations. On 19 February the court investigation implicates the President of the Valencian Community Francisco Camps in the plot. On 25 February the judge charges the People's Party Euro MP Gerardo Galeote.

▪ On 8 February the Supreme Court outlaws the abertzale electoral platform Democracy 3 Million (D3M). On 10 February Askatasuna and D3M appeal against the ruling before the Constitutional Court.

▪ On 18 February Spain's first ever judges strike takes place, which leads to the resignation of the Justice Minister Mariano Fernandez Bermejo on 23 February. Bermejo is replaced by Francisco Caamano, previously the Secretary of State for Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs.

France

▪ On 2 February a snow storm hits the northern half of the country blocking entries to Paris and the airports, and leaving 500,000 homes without electricity. On 9 February the authorities declare a state of emergency in 58 regions in response to the approach of another storm.

▪ On 9 February Nicolas Sarkozy confirms 6.5 billion euro loans for the French car giants Renault and PSA Peugeot Citroën, in exchange for pledges to keep their French plants open and avoid redundancies.

▪ On 18 February Nicolas Sarkozy announces a 2.6 billion euro package to tackle the effects of the crisis in low-income households. The decision comes after the French unions threaten to go on general strike in March.

Italy

▪ On 3 February the Italian Senate approves the agreement signed with Tripoli in August 2008, by which Italy pledges to invest 5 billion dollars in Libya over the next 25 years. In return, Libya will crack down on illegal immigration to Italian shores.

▪ On 4 February the Senate approves the controversial Security bill, known as the Maroni Law. Under to the new law obtaining a residency permit will carry

an 80 to 100 euro tax, all homeless will go on file, hospital staff will have to report all patients without papers –which led to a strike on 2 February–, the 'citizen patrols' are legalised and all expelled immigrants that do not leave the country will face imprisonment.

- On 18 February the Democratic Party leader Walter Veltroni steps down after nine consecutive defeats for his party. Veltroni recognises that his failure to resolve internal conflicts has prevented the party from being a strong opposition to the government.
- On 24 February the 27th Franco-Italian summit in Rome concludes with a cooperation agreement on the joint production of nuclear energy, marking Italy's return to this energy resource, which it has not used since 1987.

Malta

- On 18 February 230 immigrants are picked up by a Maltese ship and transferred to detention centres in Safi and Hal Far. This group is added to a further 260 immigrants found days before by the Maltese authorities.

Slovenia

- On 20 February the Slovenian media reports a court ruling to compensate an initial group of the 25,671 Slovenian citizens from other former Yugoslav republics who were erased from the public registry when unable to obtain Slovenian nationality after the country became independent in 1991.
- On 24 February the meeting between the Slovenian and Croatian Prime Ministers Borut Pahor and Ivo Sanader in Mokrice ends in a deadlock in negotiations over the ongoing border dispute between both states regarding territorial waters in the Adriatic. Slovenia requests an extension of the waters in Piran Bay, its only access to the sea, and a corridor that connects it directly with international waters without having to cross Croatian waters. To put pressure on Zagreb, Ljubljana upholds its veto on Croatia's entry to the EU and NATO.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 21 February the Prime Minister of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik with-

draws from negotiations on Bosnia's constitutional reform in protest against the public prosecutor's announcement to bring corruption charges against him.

Montenegro

- On 20 February the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) releases the former Montenegrin General Pavle Strugar after serving three quarters of his sentence for crimes against humanity in Dubrovnik since 1991.

Serbia

- On 16 February two grenades explode in the majority Albanian town of Presevo, highlighting tensions in the region, which hopes to be joined with Kosovo.
- On 26 February the ICTY clears the former Serbian President Milan Milutinovic of war crimes in Kosovo, but sentences Slobodan Milosevic's right-hand man Nikola Sainovic to 22 years' imprisonment.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 17 February Kosovo celebrates the first anniversary of its independence with 40% unemployment. In summary of this first year, the EU representative in Kosovo Pieter Feith highlights the growing Kosovo Albanian rejection of the EU and the persistent tension in the north of the country with the Serb minority.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- On 23 February the deputy Prime Minister Ivica Bocevski in charge of EU integration and the EU representative in Skopje Erwan Fouere sign three implementation agreements of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), which provide for a 40-million-euro investment.

Albania

- On 16 February the Constitutional Court suspends the law approved in December 2008 that allows files to be opened from Enver Hoxa's Sigurimi secret police force, pending a decision

from the Venice Commission. One of the aims of the law is to purge communist-era employees and Sigurimi collaborators from the administration. The Socialist Party claims that the law is a move by Sali Berisha to prevent public prosecutors from investigating the Prime Minister's possible involvement in corruption cases.

Greece

- On 3 February the Sect of Revolutionaries group attacks police officers in front of a station in Athens' Korydallos district.
- On 25 February the civil servants trade union ADEDY initiates a general 24-hour strike in protest against poor standards in healthcare and education, low pensions, the retirement age and plans to privatise various state-owned companies.

Turkey

- On 15 February clashes between security forces and Kurdish protesters mark the 10th anniversary of separatist leader Abdullah Ocalan's arrest. Eight demonstrators and 17 police officers are injured in the protests, which were banned by Ankara.
- On 26 February a military court issues the first ruling in the Ergenekon case, sentencing a former army chief to 20 years' imprisonment.

Cyprus

- On 13 February after twice inspecting the Cypriot-flagged Russian ship *Monchegorsk* the Cypriot authorities seize its cargo. The Defence Minister Costas Papacostas announces that no arms have been found but they did find material for manufacturing munitions. On 18 February the authorities release the ship.

Syria

- On 19 February inspectors from the IAEA find traces of graphite and uranium in the al-Kibar military base, destroyed by Israel in 2007. Israel and the US claim that Syria had been developing a nuclear reactor. Syria maintains that the material came with munitions used by Israel during the attack. The IAEA con-

siders this unlikely and urges Syria to cooperate to clarify the origin of the radioactive material.

- On 21 February Senator John Kerry meets with the President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus. Three US parliamentary delegations have visited the country in less than three weeks displaying the Obama administration's intention to review its stance on Damascus.

Lebanon

- On 21 February a rocket launched from the southern region of Nakura explodes in Galilee causing one death. Israel responds by firing seven shells into the Tiro region.
- On 25 February the media reports that the Lebanese representative to the UN Nawaf Salam has presented a letter from the Prime Minister Fouad Siniora to the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, in which he requests compensation from Israel for the war between both countries in 2006 and condemns Tel Aviv's violations of Resolution 1701.

Jordan

- On 23 February 10 new members of Prime Minister Nader Dahabi's cabinet are sworn into office by Abdullah II. Nayef al-Qadi succeeds Eid al-Fayez as Interior Minister, who had upset Islamist parties and human rights organisations. Pro-reformist Labour Minister Bassem al-Salem is appointed Finance Minister in order to undertake the free market reforms requested by the International Monetary Fund.

Egypt

- On 6 February the Egyptian police arrest German-Egyptian activist Philip Rizk and blogger Diaa Eddin Gad without charges, during a protest in support of Gaza.
- On 18 February at the request of the US, Ayman Nur, leader of the secular liberal party el-Ghad and opposition to Mubarak's government, is released on health grounds after three years in prison.
- On 22 February a bomb blast in the vicinity of the Khan el-Khalili market and the Al-Hussein mosque in Cairo kills four people and leaves several seriously injured.

Libya

- On 2 February Muammar Gaddafi is sworn in as Chairman of the African Union in Addis Ababa.
- On 10 February the EU External Affairs Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner opens the second round of negotiations between the EU and Libya in Tripoli, regarding the framework agreement.

Algeria

- On 4 February the head of an al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) faction, known as Seraka, is killed in an army operation in Constantine during one of the many clashes between the army and Islamic cells that have taken place above all in Kabylie and the province of Tebessa, and which in February alone resulted in some fifty casualties.
- On 11 February fresh clashes are reported between the Berber and Arab communities in the Mزاب region.
- On 28 February Abdelaziz Bouteflika announces the total cancellation of farmers' debts, estimated at 41 billion dinars.

Morocco

- On 10 February security forces search the offices of the weekly *Al-Ayam*, in search of photographs of the mother and grandmother of Mohammed VI, Lalla Latifa and Lalla Abla, which the newspaper had asked to publish. The paper's director Nouredine Miftah and chief editor Maria Moukrim are arrested.
- On 18 February the activist Chakib al-Khayari is arrested in Nador accused of divulging "misleading" information regarding the involvement of high ranking Moroccan officials in drug trafficking in northern Morocco.
- On 18 February a court of appeal in Sale confirms the 10-year prison sentence of Hicham Ahmidan for his involvement in the 11-M bomb attacks in Madrid.
- On 21 February the border between Algeria and Morocco opens temporarily for the first time in 14 years to allow a British aid convoy destined for Gaza to pass. The Moroccan Communications Minister Khaled Naciri declares that Morocco is willing to "open a new chapter in its relations with Algeria."

Mauritania

- On 6 February the African Union (AU) announces the imposition of sanctions on Mauritania's military junta after its leader President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz announces that he will run in the June elections.

European Union

- On 13 February the EU officially enters recession after data from the European statistical office Eurostat reveals a 1.5% drop in GDP of the 27 member countries for the last quarter of 2008.
- On 26-27 February a special summit is held in Brussels, initially organised for countries of the Eurogroup but finally enlarged to include the 27 Member States of the EU, to consider emergency financial measures to be taken against the crisis.
- On 26-27 February the Interior Ministers Council discusses the creation of an EU asylum office, after calls from Europe's Mediterranean countries to deal with the immigration crisis.

Arab League

- On 18 February the Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa declares that Israeli demands to link the cessation of hostilities in Gaza to the release of Sergeant Gilad Shalit prevented a ceasefire.

March 2009

In Spain elections in the Basque Country bring about a change in the hitherto Basque Nationalist Party-led autonomous government. France has its second general strike of the year. In Italy the coalition government merges to form the People of Freedom Party. The border conflict over the demarcation of territorial waters between Slovenia and Croatia moves forward and Ljubljana raises the veto to allow Croatia entry to NATO. The Democratic Party of Socialists wins Montenegro's second election since independence. The Justice and Development Party retains the Istanbul and Ankara mayoralties in the Turkish local elections. Lebanon and Syria initiate diplomatic ties. The Arab League holds its 21st summit with

Egypt, Morocco and Algeria in attendance.

Portugal

- On 17 March Portugal signs an agreement with the state-owned Algerian company Sonatrach, which gives the company license to supply gas directly to the country. Algeria supplies 80% of the gas consumed by Portugal, under a 20-year agreement signed in 1993.

Spain

- On 1 March Galicia and the Basque Country hold regional elections. In Galicia the People's Party (PP) wins with 38 of the 75 seats. The Socialist Party (PSG) retains 25 seats. In the Basque Country the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) wins most votes, obtaining 30 of the 75 seats, but the Socialist Party – Euskadiko Ezkerra – PP coalition, appoints the leader of the PSE Patxi Lopez as the new *lehendakari* (President).

- On 5 March judge Garzon sends the Gurtel case to the Valencia High Court of Justice on finding circumstantial evidence of Valencian President Ricardo Costa's criminal responsibility. On 31 March the Madrid High Court of Justice also accepts the case when corruption evidence is uncovered against three representatives of the Madrid Assembly.

- On 23 March the judge Baltasar Garzon prosecutes 44 high ranking members of Batasuna, the Communist Party of the Basque Homelands (PCTV) and the Basque Nationalist Party (ANV) for forming part of ETA.

- On 29 March the Bank of Spain takes control of Caja Castilla-La Mancha due to an estimated 3 billion euro budget hole. The move constitutes the first government takeover of a major financial company since Banesto in 1993.

France

- On 5 March the government agrees to increase salaries and lower the cost of basic goods to end the 44-day strike in Guadeloupe, which is threatening to spread to other overseas regions like Guayana and Reunion. In Martinique protests continue for similar reasons.

- On 19 March a second mass general strike against reform plans an-

nounced by the government in February to combat the crisis demands an increase in the minimum wage, more benefits for the increasing number of unemployed, the abolition of the tax shield and an end to the widespread redundancies.

- On 24 March the Defence Minister Herve Morin announces an initial compensation package for those affected by nuclear testing carried out in Algeria and Polynesia between 1960 and 1996.

- On 30 March the French justice system sentences Ainhoa Garcia Montero, ETA's information chief until her 2003 arrest, to 14 years in prison.

Monaco

- On 26 March Monaco reveals that it will sign a tax cooperation agreement with the EU at the end of the year, after finalising talks with the OECD to meet the necessary transparency standards.

Italy

- On 13 March the Italian and Dutch police arrest mafia member Giovanni Strangio in Amsterdam, wanted for the Duisburg massacre in August 2007. On 20 March police arrest the head of the Brancaccio Mafia clan Ludovico Sansone in Palermo.

- On 17 March the police dismantle the Farina clan, one of the main groups in the Camorra, following the arrest of 24 people in the Caserta province.

- On 27 March Italy's governing coalition, formed by Forza Italia and National Alliance, merge to form The People of Freedom in the party's first parliamentary session. Berlusconi uses the occasion to request a constitutional reform that grants more powers to the Prime Minister.

Malta

- On 23 March rioting breaks out in the Safi detention centre involving around 500 illegal immigrants awaiting expulsion. The incident lasts for two hours.

Slovenia

- On 25 March the European Commissioner Olli Rehn presents the Slovenian Foreign Minister Samuel Zbogar and his

Croatian counterpart Gordan Jandrokovic with an agreement proposal over the demarcation of both countries' territorial waters. Two days later the Slovenian Parliament gives the green light to Croatia's NATO accession.

Croatia

- On 20 March the Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader visits Serbia to improve relations between Zagreb and Belgrade, regarding the return of Serb refugees that fled from Krajina during the Croatian offensive in 1995 and Croatia's recognition of Kosovo independence.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 13 March the Austrian Valentin Inzko is appointed High Representative for the International Peace Implementation Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina (PIC) replacing Miroslav Lajcak, who stepped down on 23 January to become Slovakia's Foreign Minister. Inzko was the first Austrian ambassador to Bosnia from 1996 to 1999.

- On 17 March the Appeals Chamber of the ICTY sentences the Bosnian Serb leader Momcilo Krajisnik to 20 years' imprisonment for crimes against humanity in Bosnia.

Montenegro

- On 29 March Coalition for European Montenegro, led by the Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic's Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), wins early elections with 51.5% of the votes.

Serbia

- On 9 March during an official visit to Spain, the Serbian President Boris Tadic receives Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero's commitment not to recognise the State of Kosovo.

- On 24 March seven people are injured and 28 arrested in Belgrade during an ultra-nationalist and anti-European rally to mark the 10th anniversary of the NATO bombing of Serbia.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 3 March in the first war crimes trial held under the auspices of the Eu-

European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), Kosovo citizen Gani Gashi is sentenced to 17 years in prison.

- On 19 March Spain announces its withdrawal of troops from Kosovo to NATO's Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who criticises the decision as "precipitated and unilateral." On 20 November Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero describes the decision as coherent with Spain's non-recognition of Kosovo independence. On 30 March De Hoop Scheffer is reported to be "satisfied" with the withdrawal plan presented by Spain.

Greece

- On 6 March a Greek businessman is seriously injured by a bomb planted in his car. On 9 March another device explodes in a bank in Athens. On 13 March hooded gangs destroy shop windows, vehicles and bank branches in Athens and Salonica.

Turkey

- On 8 March Hillary Clinton, speaking at a joint news conference in Istanbul with the Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, says that the US and Turkey are reaffirming their alliance, which had deteriorated during the Bush administration.
- From 16-22 March Istanbul hosts the 5th World Water Forum, which fails to back the proposal put forward by certain European and Latin American States for water to be considered a human right.
- On 23 March on a visit to Iraq the Turkish President Abdullah Gul together with his Iraqi counterpart Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUP), demands that the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), included in the European list of terrorist organisations, lay down its arms and leave Iraqi territory.
- On 26 March a helicopter carrying the President of the Great Union Party Muhsin Yazicioglu explodes in southern Turkey. On hearing the news, Recep Tayyip Erdogan suspends his electoral campaign for the local elections on 29 March.
- On 29 March the Justice and Development Party (AKP) wins local elections retaining power in Ankara and Istanbul, despite losing power in certain key cities such as Izmir or Diyarbakir.

Syria

- On 2 March the director general of the IAEA Mohamed ElBaradei criticises Syria for not collaborating with its inspectors to clarify the origin of the uranium found in al-Kibar. On 4 March the US also accuses Syria of obstructing the investigation.
- On 7 January the assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East Jeffrey Feltman and Dan Shapiro from the National Security Council arrive in Syria on the country's first visit from high ranking US officials since the Bush administration withdrew its ambassador in 2005, following the assassination of the Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

Lebanon

- On 1 March the International Tribunal is opened in The Hague to investigate the assassination of Rafiq Hariri.
- On 16 March the first Lebanese embassy in Syria opens as part of efforts to overcome decades of conflict. Michel al-Khoury, currently the ambassador to Cyprus, will head the embassy from April. On 24 March the Lebanese President accepts the appointment of Ali Abdel Karim as the first Syrian ambassador to Lebanon.
- On 23 March the Fatah head in Lebanon Kamal Medhat is killed in a bomb blast in the Mieh Mieh refugee camp. Fatah officials say that the attack was aimed at the PLO leader in Lebanon Abbas Zaki, who had left the camp minutes before. Lebanon and Iran accuse Israel of being behind the attack.

Egypt

- On 3 March the Egyptian police arrest blogger Rami al-Sweisy, member of the anti-government group April 6 Youth Movement. Al-Sweisy is released on the 6 March.
- On 25 March the Egyptian security forces arrest 14 members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the provinces of Sharqiya and Minufiya.

Libya

- On 22 March Italy delivers 350 immigrants to Libya, rescued the previous day by an Italian tug boat off the coast of Libya. On 31 March a small boat with

220 immigrants aboard sinks in Libyan waters. Rescue teams can only save 21 people.

Tunisia

- On 17 March the media reports that the Tunisian human rights activist Moncef Marzouki has accused the government of putting pressure on Lebanon to deny his entry visa to give a lecture on democracy in the Arab world in the Orient Institute in Beirut.

Algeria

- On 26 March the *El Khabar* newspaper reports a joint operation carried out by the Algerian and Libyan armies against a terrorist cell located on the border between the two countries. Continual clashes throughout the month between the Algerian security forces and the AQIM leave around 30 dead.
- On 29 March the Secretary General of the Islah (Movement for National Reform) Djahid Younsi, the only Islamist candidate in the April presidential elections, calls for a general amnesty that includes still-active armed groups. The government demands the laying down of arms as a requisite to any kind of negotiations.

Morocco

- On 6 March Morocco breaks diplomatic ties with Iran following statements made by Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri, advisor to the Ayatollah Khamenei, asserting that Iran has sovereignty over Bahrein.
- On 20 March Morocco calls Algeria to open the common border and normalise relations, which have been severed since 1994, in order to reactivate the Arab Maghreb Union and bilateral trade. Algeria announces that it will not contemplate any such action until the Saharan issue is resolved.
- On 22 March the Moroccan government announces that it will toughen up the legislation on the practice of Shiite Islam and homosexuality, in the belief that they are "attacks against the State's moral foundations and values."

Mauritania

- On 6 March Mauritania expels the Israeli ambassador in Nouakchott after

recalling its own ambassador from Tel Aviv on 5 January.

- On 11 March the main opposition party Rally of Democratic Forces rejects the electoral calendar proposed by the government despite mediating efforts by Libya, and demands the release of the political prisoners and the end of the regime's media campaign against the opposition.

European Union

- On 10 March the Economic and Finance Ministers Council adopts the 2009 economic and financial strategy document and decides on the EU's common priorities ahead of the March G20 summit in London.
- On 19-20 March the European Council and Heads of State and Government of the EU decide to double the emergency bailout fund for Central European States to 50 billion euros, in order to halt their economic decline and protect the rest of the EU.

Arab League

- On 30 March Doha hosts the 21st Summit of the Arab League. Egypt, Morocco and Algeria do not attend the summit due to differences of opinion with the other Member States over the crisis in Gaza. The summit concludes with a resolution in support of the Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity.

April 2009

April is marked by NATO and EU enlargement perspectives. The North Atlantic Alliance incorporates Croatia and Albania as new members and reincorporates France into its military structure, 43 years after De Gaulle decided to withdraw in protest at the United States' excessive influence. The Prague meeting of EU Heads of State approves Montenegro's membership application and welcomes Albania's application. In Malta the month begins with Gorg Abela's investiture as the country's eighth President. In Italy an earthquake in L'Aquila causes 293 deaths. General strikes take place in Greece and Monaco. George Ivanov wins in the sec-

ond round of the presidential elections in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Algeria also holds elections, in which Bouteflika's victory with over 90% of the vote provokes opposition accusations of electoral fraud. Elections in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus result in victory for the National Unity Party (UBP). Turkey urges the UBP to restrain its anti-European stance and cooperate towards the positive outcome of reunification negotiations, in a month in which Ankara announces a road map to normalise relations with Armenia and continues its Kurdish reform programme. The UN Security Council approves Resolution 1871 urging Rabat and the Polisario to resume peace talks.

Spain

- On 7 April the Spanish government announces its cabinet reshuffle. Among the most significant changes is the appointment of Elena Salgado, currently Public Administration Minister, as Economy and Finance Minister and second vice President of the government, replacing Pedro Solbes.
- On 10 April French police arrest the second in command of ETA's logistics section Ekaitz Sirvent Auzmendi. On 18 April French police arrest Jurdan Martitegui in Perpignan, believed to be the successor of Garikoitz Azpiazu and Aitzol Iriondo, both arrested in 2008, as ETA's military chief.
- On 29 April the Criminal Division of the Supreme Court informs the National Court that nine of the 47 convicted in the Ekin case for crimes linked with ETA are cleared of all charges.

France

- On 4 April the Strasbourg-Kehl NATO Summit ratifies the return of France to its integrated military command structure following its approval by the French National Assembly on 17 March.
- On 21 April UNESCO's Paris headquarters launches the World Digital Library, a website that offers the public over a billion documents translated into seven languages free of charge. The ambitious project, developed by the US Library of Congress, includes the participation of the Library of Alexandria

and 32 other institutions and libraries from around the world.

- On 29 April Nicolas Sarkozy unveils his futuristic, large-scale Greater Paris project, which aims to materialise the urban evolution and growth of 21st century Paris through multimillion-euro public and private investments in the ten winning urban redevelopment projects.

Monaco

- On 16 April Monaco's trade unions call a general strike to protest against job cuts in the hotel industry.

Italy

- On 6 April an earthquake measuring 6.7 on the Richter scale with its epicentre in L'Aquila kills 293 people, injures 1,500 and leaves 50,000 homeless. On 8 April a 5.3 aftershock causes another death.
- On 16 April a Turkish merchant ship rescues 145 immigrants in Maltese waters near Lampedusa. The boat remains anchored while Italy and Malta argue over which country is to take responsibility for the immigrants. On 19 April under pressure from the UNHCR, Italy agrees to accept them. On 18 April the Italian Coast Guard intercepts another small boat with 250 immigrants aboard and tows it to the Sicilian port of Pozzallo.

Malta

- On 1 April the Maltese Parliament unanimously elects the Labour leader Gorg Abela as the successor to Eddie Fenech Adami and eighth President of the Republic.

Slovenia

- On 27 April the EU Council of Ministers urges Slovenia to accept Commissioner Olli Rehn's proposed international mediation for Ljubljana and Zagreb, to allow an international arbitration commission to resolve the border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia.

Croatia

- On 1 April Croatia joins NATO after the Slovenian Parliament agrees to lift its veto.

- On 23 April the EU decides to postpone the intergovernmental EU-accession conference with Croatia planned for the 24 April, due to the failure to resolve the dispute between Croatia and Slovenia over the demarcation of their territorial waters.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 8 April the Interior Minister reports the kidnapping of Ante Jelavic, former Croat Bosnian member of the Bosnian government. Jelavic had fled from Croatia and was living in Zagreb after a trial in Bosnia found him guilty of abuse of office in relation with the Hercegovacka Bank.

Montenegro

- On 23 April the EU Council of Ministers approves Montenegro's membership application presented in December 2008, and invites the European Commission to prepare an opinion to open negotiations.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 16 April the Kosovo government announces that it will not allow the Serbian Prime Minister Boris Tadic's visit, planned for the following day, Orthodox Good Friday. On 17 April Pristina bows to EU and US pressure and Tadic visits the region for the first time since the country's split from Serbia.
- On 23 April Serbia's war crimes prosecutor sentences four Serbian former police officers to between 13 and 20 years in prison for the massacre of 48 Kosovo Albanians during the Kosovo war.
- On 27 April forces of the EU Mission in Kosovo, EULEX, have to intervene to disperse a Serb demonstration in Mitrovica against Kosovo Albanian refugees returning to the city.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- On 4 April the leader of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, Gjorge Ivanov wins the presidential elections. The elections take place without incident, fulfilling one of the EU's requirements to continue towards membership. Ivanov declares that his government's

priorities will be the opening of accession talks and the resolution of the dispute with Greece over the country's name.

Albania

- On 1 April Albania officially joins NATO.
- On 28 April the Prime Minister Sali Berisha submits Albania's EU accession application in Prague.

Greece

- On 2 April Greece is paralysed by a new general strike demanding urgent measures to be taken against the crisis in order to protect small and medium-size businesses and low-income groups.
- On 14 April the Greek ambassador to the US Alexandros Mallias reveals a position in favour of the UN envoy Matthew Nimetz's proposal to call the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the Northern Macedonian Republic. This is the first time a Greek representative has accepted the inclusion of the word "Macedonia" in the name of its northern neighbour.

Turkey

- On 4 April Turkey lifts its veto on Anders Fogh Rasmussen becoming NATO's Secretary General, after Barack Obama promises Recep Tayyip Erdogan vice presidency for Turkey. The veto dates back to the crisis over the cartoons of Mohammed published in the *Aftenbladet* newspaper in 2006 when Rasmussen was Prime Minister of Denmark.
- On 6 April Barack Obama attends the 2nd Forum of the Alliance of Civilisations in Istanbul, in which a cooperation agreement is signed between the Alliance and NATO. Obama reiterates his support for Turkey's EU accession, opposing the position taken by Paris and Berlin.
- On 13 April the Ergenekon case sees a new wave of arrests, including the head of Baskent University in Ankara.
- On 20 April the PKK declares a unilateral ceasefire until 1 June. On 29 April nine Turkish soldiers are killed by a mine planted by Kurdish militia in the province of Diyarbakir. On the same day the former Justice Minister Hikmet Sami

Turk escapes unharmed in a bomb attack at Bilkent University.

- On 22 April Swiss mediation leads to an agreement between Turkey and Armenia to establish a road map to normalise relations. The announcement may provoke reprisals from Azerbaijan, Turkey's historical ally in the dispute with Armenia over the control of High Karabakh, which may decide to redirect its proposed gas pipeline through Russia and not Turkey.

Cyprus

- On 19 April the National Unity Party (UBP) wins parliamentary elections in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus with 44% of the votes. Under pressure from Ankara, the UBP promises to support the reunification negotiations, expected to be finished before 2010, and restrains its anti-European position.
- On 28 April the European Court of Justice opens the way for Greek-Cypriots to recover property abandoned in the north of the island and resold illegally by Turkish Cypriots after the division of Cyprus in 1974.

Syria

- On 22 April Syria and Iraq sign a strategic cooperation agreement in various fields, including the rehabilitation of a joint project for the construction of an oil pipeline.
- On 27 April the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad insists that there can be no peace deal made with Israel if Tel Aviv does not return the Golan Heights. The statement comes in response to declarations made by the Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman dismissing the withdrawal from Golan as a requisite to initiating negotiations.

Lebanon

- On 13 April four Lebanese soldiers are killed in an attack on an army patrol in the town of Zahle. The attack appears to be linked to the killing of a Lebanese drug smuggler at a military checkpoint on 27 March.
- On 29 April Lebanon releases four generals arrested without charge over the assassination of the Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005. The pro-Syrian bloc celebrates the ruling.

Egypt

- On 8 April the Egyptian authorities accuse Hezbollah of setting up a terrorist cell to carry out attacks in Egypt. Relations between Cairo and Hezbollah deteriorated in January when Hezbollah accused Egypt of collaborating with Israel over the closure of the Rafah pass during Operation Cast Lead.
- On 29 April the Egyptian government orders the slaughter of the country's pigs – between 300,000 and 400,000 animals – as a precaution against the outbreak of the A/H1N1 flu virus.

Tunisia

- On 16 April the NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) submits a report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee stating that Tunisia continues to refuse to honour its commitment to allow independent observers full access to its prisons.
- On 23 April Tunisia signs a nuclear cooperation agreement with France during Nicolas Sarkozy's official visit to the country.

Algeria

- On 4 April the Algerian security forces report the death of 13 members of AQIM in various operations led by the Algerian security services in the provinces of Buiria and Bordj Buareridj. On 5 April elite units from the Algerian army begin a large-scale anti-terrorist operation in the Sidi Ali Bounab region.
- On 9 April Abdelaziz Buteflika wins the presidential elections with 90.2% of the votes in his third election victory. Turnout stands at 74.1% despite calls from the Rally for Culture and Democracy and the Socialist Forces Front to boycott the elections. Opposition leaders, among them the only female contender for the presidency, Louisa Hanoun, from the Workers' Party, accuse the government of electoral fraud.

Morocco

- On 23 April Amnesty International (AI) urges the Spanish authorities not to extradite Ali Aarrass and Mohamed el Bay to Morocco. The two men were arrested in Melilla on 1 April 2008 on the basis of international arrest warrants

requested by Morocco on 28 March 2008. They stand accused of participating in Abdelkader Belliraj's terrorist network. AI believes that they would run the risk of solitary confinement, torture or unfair trial.

Mauritania

- On 15 April Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz announces his resignation as president in order to stand as a candidate in the presidential elections on 6 June. His number two, General Mohamed Ould Cheikh Mohamed Ahmed, remains at the head of the Military Junta. The opposition announces that it will boycott the elections if Abdelaziz runs for president.

European Union

- On 5 April the EU-US Summit reveals a desire to increase Euro-Atlantic cooperation on the subject of regional and energy security, climate change and measures to combat the crisis, following the European Parliament's approval on 26 March of the creation of a new Euro-Atlantic framework that will materialise in a transatlantic political Council as an advisory and coordinating body.
- On 17 April the European Commission approves 225 million euros in aid to developing countries to combat terrorism and arms trafficking; key priorities are Sahel, Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- On 27-28 April the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) adopts a joint declaration with the Commission and Parliament over the European economic relaunch plan, set at 5 billion euros, and approves procedures against France, Spain, Greece and Ireland for excessive deficits.

Arab League

- On 11 April six members of the Arab League – Jordan, the Palestinian National Authority, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Lebanon – withdraw their support for the peace plan presented by Saudi Arabia at the Arab League Summit in Beirut in 2002, in favour of exchanging peace for territory.
- On 23 April the Arab League and the Vatican sign a political and cultural cooperation agreement to contribute to

regional and international stability and security, as well as religious dialogue.

May 2009

May sees new disputes between Malta and Italy over which of the two countries should take responsibility for the immigrants intercepted in border waters. The Slovenian government presents a series of amendments to the plan proposed by Olli Rehn to settle the dispute with Croatia over the demarcation of their territorial waters. In Turkey the month begins with the announcement of major changes in the government. The US announces that it will extend sanctions on Syria for a further year, accusing Damascus of playing an ambiguous role in the Middle East, despite Washington's attempts to improve relations. In Egypt the government's decision to slaughter the country's pigs to protect against the A/H1N1 flu virus leads to violent clashes between police and Coptic Christians, who declare the decision to be an act of discrimination. The UN Security Council decides to extend the peace mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for a further six months due to the difficulties in the reunification negotiations. In the EU the Eastern Partnership is born and the EU-China and EU-Russia summits are held, with varying results.

Spain

- On 20 May the National Police arrest 17 suspected members of a drug-trafficking, credit card forgery and theft network, which was allegedly financing AQIM.
- On 21 May the Constitutional Court rules that the Internationalist Initiative (II) can run in the European elections after the Supreme Court banned the party on 16 May based on some of the candidates' alleged connections with Batasuna.
- On 25 May Iker Esparza, member of the political wing of ETA, is arrested during a routine police check in Paris while he was driving a stolen car under the influence of alcohol.
- On 25 May a 200-strong stampeding crowd leaves 12 injured and two women dead at the Tarajal border pass, which separates Ceuta and Morocco.

France

- On 15 May the National Institute for Statistics (INSEE) reveals a 1.2% drop in the French GDP in the first quarter of the year, marking the country's official entry into recession after six consecutive months of economic decline.
- On 20 May the family of ETA member Jon Anza reports him missing to the Bayonne public prosecutor. The French police open an investigation.
- On 26 May Nicolas Sarkozy inaugurates the first French naval base in the Persian Gulf, in the United Arab Emirates.
- On 28 May French customs seize a consignment of 684 kilos of cocaine on a British lorry travelling from Spain.

Italy

- On 19 May police arrest the Casalesi clan leader Franco Letizia of the Camorra crime syndicate along with a hundred members of the Secessionists clan, headed by Raffaele Amato, who was arrested on 16 May in Marbella. On 27 May around 30 members of the Camorra are arrested, including several members of the Sarno clan.
- On 6 May three boats coming from Libya containing 227 immigrants are stopped around sixty miles from Lampedusa. The boats await rescue as a new dispute opens between Italy and Malta over who should take responsibility. Finally Italy picks up the immigrants and returns them to Libya.
- On 19 May the Milan Court gives details of its ruling on 17 February under which British lawyer David Mills was sentenced to four and a half years in prison for accepting bribes and committing perjury in the Fininvest and All Iberian trials against Silvio Berlusconi.

Malta

- On 13 May the European Commission warns Malta of the need to urgently reduce its public deficit from 4.7%, to meet the common goal of below 3% of the GDP.

Slovenia

- On 15 May Slovenia presents amendments to the EU's proposal to resolve the border dispute with Croatia.

Croatia

- On 5 May Croatia officially accepts European Commissioner Olli Rehn's mediation proposal to resolve the territorial dispute with Slovenia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 12 May the remains of 33 casualties of the Bosnian war are buried at a funeral in Bratunac.
- On 19 May the US vice President Joe Biden urges the different parties of the Bosnian Parliament to work towards the success of the constitutional reform, and warns that the country runs the risk of returning to violence if an agreement is not reached.

Serbia

- On 18 May Boris Tadic receives the Macedonian President Filip Vujanovic in Belgrade. The visit settles the crisis between both states after Podgorica's recognition of Kosovo's independence, which led Belgrade to declare the Macedonian ambassador a persona non grata.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 5 May the International Monetary Fund approves Kosovo's membership.
- On 10 May around twenty police officers and two protesters are injured in the southeast of Kosovo following violent clashes provoked by the Kosovo electric company's decision to cut off electricity for Serbs in the area who have said they will pay a Serbian electric company instead.
- On 21 May a day after his visit to Serbia, Joe Biden travels to Pristina and reiterates Washington's support of Kosovo's territorial integrity and multiethnic character.

Albania

- On 2 May the opposition socialist party MP Fatmir Xhindi is gunned down in the town of Roskovec weeks before the Albanian legislative elections.

Greece

- On 12 May a bomb explodes in a bank in the Athenian district of Argy-

roupolis. On 19 May the organisation Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei carries out attacks on two police stations in Athens and Salonica.

- On 22 May hundreds of Muslims clash with police during a demonstration in Athens over an alleged case of police abuse against a member of its community. On 23 May a building used by Muslims for prayer is set on fire in the Athenian district of Agios Panteleimonas.

Turkey

- On 1 May the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan reshuffles the government in preparation for the 2011 legislative elections. Erdogan's chief advisor Ahmet Davutoglu replaces Ali Babacan as Foreign Minister, who becomes Economy Minister. Vecdi Gonul remains as Defence Minister and the former President of the Parliament Bulent Arinc will be the new deputy Prime Minister.
- On 4 May masked gunmen armed with machine guns burst into a wedding in the town of Bilge and kill 45 people. The authorities suspect clan revenge as the reason for the massacre.
- On 9 May five people are killed after a mine explodes under a truck in the province of Sirnak, in an attack attributed to the PKK. On 27 May the Turkish authorities report the death of eight Kurdish militants in various military operations in the regions of Diyarbakir and Siirt. On 28 May six soldiers are killed by a PKK mine.

Cyprus

- On 29 May the UN Security Council decides to extend the mandate of its peace mission in Cyprus, UNFICYP, until 15 December 2009, while the parties continue to negotiate the island's reunification.

Syria

- On 8 May the US announces its decision to extend sanctions on Syria by another year. The announcement comes a day after Jeffrey Feltman and Daniel Shapiro's second visit to Damascus, which fails to dispel concerns over Syria's role in Iraq and its connections with Hamas and Hezbollah, and following Bashar al-Assad's declaration on 5 May

in a meeting with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that Syria and Iran will continue to support the resistance against Israel.

- On 11 May Bashar al-Assad receives King Abdullah II of Jordan and resumes talks initiated in April in Amman to re-launch the Middle East peace process, which includes Syria as part of the US peace plan. Jordan is one of the region's foremost proponents of the plan.

Lebanon

- On 22 May Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah calls for the execution of anyone discovered spying for Israel. Two days later *Der Spiegel* publishes an article that accuses Nasrallah, and not the Syrian secret service, for the assassination of Hariri. Nasrallah denies the accusations, while the Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman demands that Nasrallah be arrested and put on trial.

Jordan

- On 9 May Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad, Religious Adviser to Abdullah II, receives Pope Benedict XVI, who is on an official visit as part of his tour of the Middle East, and thanks the Pope for his message of reconciliation and forgiveness regarding his controversial speech at the University of Regensburg in 2006.

Egypt

- On 3 May the Egyptian authorities initiate the slaughter of the country's pigs as a precaution against the A/H1N1 flu virus, despite protests from mostly Coptic Christian pig farmers, who describe the measure as an act of discrimination. Violent clashes break out between the farmers and security forces in Cairo.
- On 21 May a court in Bab al-Luq sentences senator and high ranking official of the Egyptian government Siham Talaat Moustafa to death for instigating the murder in Dubai in July 2008 of the Lebanese singer Suzanne Tamim, with whom he had been romantically involved.

Libya

- From 15-23 May a delegation from Amnesty International visits Libya for the first time in five years to assess the country's human rights situation.

Tunisia

- On 26 May Tunisian Justice Minister Bechir Tekkari announces that Tunisia is ready to accept 10 prisoners from Guantanamo.

Algeria

- On 9 May an appeal is published in the Algerian press from the former Salafist leader Amari Saifi, in which he urges AQIM to lay down their arms. In April similar statements were issued by Hassan Hattab, founder of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, and former AQIM propaganda chief Ben Messaoud Abdelkader.
- On 13 May, 11 soldiers are killed in an operation against AQIM in the Ikmuden mountains. On 21 May an attack on a patrol in Tizi Ouzou causes two deaths. On 22 May a Legitimate Defence Group member is shot dead in Leghata, in the province of Boumerdes. On 25 May nine members of a parachute unit are killed in an ambush in the province of Biskra.
- On 31 May Algeria announces its intention to increase the capacity of the Transmed gas pipeline by 7 billion cubic metres. The pipeline supplies gas to Western Europe through Tunisia and Italy.

Morocco

- On 20 May official sources report that the examining magistrate responsible for terrorism cases at the Sale Appeal Court has remanded Moroccan Mohamed Belhadj to custody. Belhadj was extradited by Syria for his alleged involvement in the bomb attacks on 11 March 2004 in Madrid.

Mauritania

- On 21 May the electoral campaign begins for the 6 June presidential elections amid opposition protests that lead to clashes with security forces. On 25 May a demonstration is staged against the government.

European Union

- On 7 May the Czech Presidency of the European Commission launches the Eastern Partnership between the EU

and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldavia and Ukraine.

- On 20 May the EU-China summit is held in Prague, after China had postponed the summit originally planned during the French Presidency in protest at the Dalai Lama's visit to Paris. The meeting ends with Beijing's commitment to open its doors to European exports in exchange for the removal of barriers to Chinese high tech products and the end of the arms embargo.
- On 21-22 May the EU-Russia summit, held in the Russian town of Khabarovsk, highlights the disagreement between Brussels and Moscow regarding energy security and the constitution of the Eastern Partnership.
- On 25 May the European Council approves the Blue Card, a work permit for highly qualified immigrants aimed at making the European labour market more attractive as of 2011.

Arab League

- On 29 May the Secretary General of the Arab League Amr Moussa calls Israel to halt the construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

June 2009

France begins the month with the tragedy of the Air France flight that crashed on its way from Rio de Janeiro to Paris. Sarkozy announces new changes in the government. In Spain ETA assassinates police inspector Eduardo Puelles, and the European Court of Human Rights supports the illegalisation of Batasuna. In the Balkans NATO approves the withdrawal of 5,000 of its 15,000 troops due to the country's progressive stability and Sali Berisha renews his term of office in elections that the opposition claim are irregular. In Cyprus the opening of the new Limnitis crossing point comes after a new episode of friction caused by a joint Turkish-Turkish Cypriot military exercise. In Lebanon the March 14 Alliance wins the legislative elections. In Egypt the US President Barack Obama makes what is considered to be an historic speech with regards to relations between the US and the Arab world. Morocco holds local elections, which are won by the Authenticity and Modernity Party. In Mauritania

the Military Junta and the opposition agree on a transitional government and to hold elections in July. The EU holds elections to the European Parliament in which the European People's Party gains the majority of votes.

Portugal

- On 4 June Portugalia airline staff begins a 12-day strike, following the four-day strike in April in a pay dispute.

Spain

- On 19 June ETA assassinates national police inspector Eduardo Puelles, who led the fight against ETA in Arrigorriaga and was involved in the dismantling of the Vizcaya command unit in 2004.
- On 23 June in Usurbil, Guipuzcoa police arrest Olatz Lasagabaster, Ainara Vazquez and Patxi Uranga, in connection with the ETA bomb attacks on the Basque High-Speed Train project. On 25 June French police and the Spanish Civil Guard arrest ETA information chiefs Javier Arruabarrena and Ohiana Garmendia in Paris.
- On 25 June the Parliament approves the new asylum law, which establishes more protection guarantees for women, children, the disabled and homosexuals, but excludes citizens residing in other EC countries. The text outlines an "emergency" procedure that includes "the same guarantees" as the standard procedure and allows the UNHCR to submit a second report in the case of asylum request denials.
- On 30 June the European Court of Human Rights rules unanimously in favour of the Spanish government's illegalisation of Batasuna. The group lodges an appeal against the Supreme and Constitutional Court rulings.

France

- On 1 June the Rio de Janeiro to Paris flight AF 447 crashes into the Atlantic Ocean. All 216 passengers and 12 crew members are killed in the worst accident in Air France's history.
- On 13 June French trade unions lead fresh strikes in protest against the insufficient measures adopted by the government to mitigate the crisis.
- On 23 June Sarkozy announces new changes in the French government to

tackle the "end of the economic crisis." The changes include the appointment of Social Affairs Minister Brice Hortefeux as Interior Minister, to replace Michele Alliot-Marie, who is moved to the Justice Ministry.

- On 26 June Nicolas Sarkozy decides to hold a referendum on greater autonomy for Martinique following recent protests on the island, but rules out any possibility of independence.

Italy

- On 10 June Muammar Gaddafi arrives in Rome on his first official visit to normalise relations between Tripoli and Rome, amid criticisms from the opposition and various human rights movements.

Slovenia

- On 15 June EU-mediated negotiations between Slovenia and Croatia to resolve the Piran Bay border dispute are brought to a halt after failure to reach an agreement over Ljubljana's amendments to Commissioner Olli Rehn's proposal.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 5 June the media reports that the Bosnian ambassador to Switzerland and leader of the Bosnian Jewish community Dervo Sejdic has filed a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights regarding the Dayton Peace Agreement, which establishes that only members of the Serbian and Croatian Muslim communities can run for President. Sejdic asserts that the agreement violates the European Convention on Human Rights.
- On 12 June a Bosnian court sentences Bosnian Serb commander Novak to 25 years in prison for ordering an attack on a town in northern Bosnia that killed 71 people in 1995.
- On 19 June the High Representative for Bosnia Valentin Inzko invokes special legal powers after the Bosnian Serb authorities approve various laws that undermine the Dayton Agreement.
- On 23 June Bosnian courts deny Croatia's request to extradite MP Branimir Glavas, who is wanted for war crimes in Eastern Slovenia, claiming he cannot be extradited under Bosnian law because he has Bosnian nationality.

Glavas fled to Bosnia on 10 May last year.

Montenegro

- On 10 June the Montenegrin Parliament approves the new government of Milo Dukanovic, winner of the general elections held in March. Djukanovic announces that his government's priorities will be entry to the EU and NATO.

Serbia

- On 10 June footage shown on Bosnian television of Bosnian Serb army chief Ratko Mladic, who has been missing since 1996 and is wanted by the ICTY, has provoked a dispute between the two countries. Belgrade insists that the most recent scenes are from eight years ago and not from 2008, as the broadcaster is suggesting, and condemns the filtration of the video as an attempt to hinder Serbia's accession to the EU.
- On 12 June in a decision described as "historic", Serbia's war crimes prosecutor opens an investigation into the Serbian media's role in stoking war crimes during the Croatian-Bosnian wars.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 4 June Kosovo is given accession approval by the World Bank, which is made official on 29 June. In May 2009 Kosovo became a member of the International Monetary Fund.
- On 11 June NATO's Defence Ministers announces plans to withdraw 5,000 troops from Kosovo by January 2010, reducing the force to 10,000 troops.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- On 22 June, after a four-month election moratorium in both countries, Athens and Skopje resume negotiations in Geneva to find a solution to the name dispute of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Albania

- On 28 June Sali Berisha's Democratic Party (PD) is reelected after narrowly winning the parliamentary elec-

tions with 46% of the votes. Berisha announces that he intends to form a coalition with the Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI). The Socialist Party (PS) reports irregularities in the vote count. Observers from the OSCE confirm the irregularities although they praise the peaceful character of the elections.

Greece

- On 4-5 June extreme left-wing groups in Athens carry out fresh attacks with molotov cocktails on banks, a police station and the tax office. On 17 June a police officer is killed whilst guarding a witness who had testified against members of the organisation People's Revolutionary Struggle (ELA), dismantled in 2003. The police believe the Revolutionary Sect group is behind the attack.
- On 25 June the air-traffic controllers' strike over improvements in air-traffic security, forces the Greek airline Olympic to cancel its connections with the major European capitals.

Turkey

- On 17 June the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Chief of the General Staff Ilker Basbug meet after tensions mount between the government and the army over a military plot to overthrow the government is published in the newspaper *Taraf*, fueling the current crisis caused by the Ergenekon case. The alleged plot included the murder of Fethullah Gulen, leader of Turkey's majority Muslim religious community.
- On 30 June the EU-Turkey ministerial conference opens negotiations on the taxation chapter. Until now, Turkey has only closed the chapter on science and research. Eight chapters have been frozen by the EU since 2006 as a consequence of Ankara's refusal to open its ports to Greek Cypriot ships, while France has blocked five.

Cyprus

- On 16 June the Turkish army initiates a military exercise opposite the Karpasia peninsula with Turkish Cypriot participation, provoking protests in Nicosia before the EU and UN. Demonstrators

accuse Turkey of invading Cyprus' aerial space and territorial waters.

- On 26 June the Presidents Demetris Christofias and Mehmet Ali Talat agree to open the Limnitis crossing point in the northeast of the island, which is added to the existing six.

Syria

- On 5 June the IAEA again condemns Syria's lack of cooperation to determine the nature of the al-Kibar military complex and reports a new unexplained find of Uranium particles at a nuclear installation in Damascus.
- On 24 June *The Washington Post* publishes Barack Obama's decision to appoint a US ambassador in Syria after an absence of more than four years.

Lebanon

- On 7 June the March 14 Alliance, headed by Saad Hariri, wins the legislative elections, held peacefully and described as transparent in the EU Observation Mission report. On 27 June the President Michel Suleiman asks Hariri to form the new cabinet. On 29 June Hariri begins consultations with the different parliamentary blocs to form a coalition government.
- On 25 June the leader of the Shiite Amal movement Nabih Berri is reelected as Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament for a fifth consecutive term.

Egypt

- On 4 June Barack Obama makes a speech in the Egyptian University in Cairo described as "historic" for US-Arab relations, in which he praises the achievements of the Islamic civilisation, delivers a message of reconciliation and criticises the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, thus confirming a radical change in North America's foreign policy towards the region.

Libya

- On 17 June Abdelaziz Bouteflika arrives in Tripoli on an unannounced visit to meet with Muammar Gaddafi. Official sources state that the meeting is being held to allow "consultations between both countries" in preparation for the African Union (UA) Summit on 1 July in

Libya. Relations between both countries are marked by points of friction, such as Libya's unkept promise to extradite more than 60 Algerians or Libya's controversial role as mediator in the conflict between the Algerian government and the Tuaregs from the Kidal region.

Algeria

- On 3 June an Islamist attack in Taouint Tessemat kills 11 people. On 17 June 24 police officers are killed in an AQIM ambush in Bordj Bou Arreridj province. On 22 June five communal guards are killed in an attack in Khenchela province.

Morocco

- On 12 June the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) wins local elections in its first nationwide electoral campaign with 21.7% of the votes. The party, founded by Fouad Ali el Himma, obtains the most votes in rural areas, while the Justice and Development Party wins in the major cities.
- On 29 June the newspapers *Al-Jarida Al-Oula*, *Al-Ahdath Al-Maghribiya* and *Al-Massae*, are ordered to pay 270,000 euros between them as a fine for attacking the "dignity of a Head of State", after publishing critical articles on Muammar Gaddafi. On 30 June the monthly *Economie & Entreprises* is fined 531,000 euros for defamation of the Primarios group, a holding company owned by the royal family.

Mauritania

- On 2 June the military junta behind the coup signs the Dakar Agreement with the opposition, which includes the formation of a transitional national unity government, the resignation of ousted President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi and an election date set for 18 July.

European Union

- From 4-7 June the European Parliament elections are held. The European People's Party (EPP) is victorious in almost all the Member States winning 265 seats, followed by the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (PES), which obtains 184 seats.

- On 10 June the European Commission proposes a common visa system for all countries in the EU.
- On 18-19 June the European Council approves EC President Jose Manuel Durao Barroso's second term and accepts the guarantees demanded by Ireland to hold a new Lisbon Treaty referendum, regarding neutrality, fiscal sovereignty, abortion and protection of workers' rights.
- On 22 June thousands of European farmers demonstrate during the European Council of Agriculture meeting demanding increased price protection for agriculture commodities and in protest against the measures taken to liberalise the sector.

Arab League

- On 24 June the Arab League announces that it will collaborate with the new US administration after holding an emergency meeting to reassess its stance following Obama's speech in Cairo. The meeting was attended by representatives of just 10 of the 22 Member States.
- On 30 June the League praises America's intention to withdraw troops from Iraq.

July 2009

In Spain on 29 July an ETA attack in Burgos injures 66 people while another in Mallorca kills two civil guards. Italy begins the month with the controversial approval of the Maroni Law, which outlines strong restrictive measures against immigration. In Croatia Ivo Sanader resigns as Prime Minister; the Family Minister Jadranka Kosor takes over the post. Turkey's plans to play a key role in Europe's gas supply advance with the signing of a participation deal for the Nabucco gas pipeline. The PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and the Turkish government both unveil road maps to resolve the Kurdish conflict. In Lebanon the explosion of a secret arms depot leads Israel to accuse Hezbollah of violating UN Resolution 1701. In Algeria a police operation ends with the arrests of 70 people involved in terrorist attacks in June. In Morocco Mohammed VI announces a plan for autonomy for the Sahara during the Throne speech. In

Mauritania coup leader General Mohammed Ould Abdelaziz wins the elections, reported to be irregular by the opposition. Sweden takes over the EU Presidency faced with the challenges of adopting measures to combat the crisis, achieving a common position for the December summit on climate change and finalising the Lisbon Treaty.

Portugal

- On 31 July the Constitutional Court rules that same-sex marriage is against the constitution; a major setback for the Socialist Party, which has included legalisation of gay marriage in its electoral programme two months ahead of the general elections.

Spain

- On 2 July the head of the National Intelligence Centre (CNI) Alberto Saiz resigns amid allegations of nepotism and corruption. Former Military Chief of Staff for Defence General Felix Sanz Roldan takes his place.
- On 29 July a van with 200 kilos of explosives blows up in front of the Civil Guard barracks in Burgos leaving 66 people injured. On 30 July ETA kills two civil guards in a bomb blast in the Mallorcan town of Palma Nova.

France

- On 23 July a fire that had already destroyed 1,100 hectares of land and was threatening Marseille is brought under control by firefighters. On 28 July firefighters stop blazes which began on 23 July in Corsica and ravaged 6,000 hectares of forest and brushland.
- On 29 July the government approves reforms to constituencies in 45 regions to bring them into line with demographic changes. The Socialist Party announces that it will appeal the reform before the Constitutional Court, claiming that the new distribution favours the ruling Union for a Popular Movement party.

Italy

- From 8-10 July the town of L'Aquila hosts the annual G8 summit, which recognises that worldwide financial stability is still at risk, but agrees to wait until September before adopting concrete

measures. It also agrees to increase food aid to 20 billion dollars for the next three years and approves an agreement to curb the effects of climate change, which according to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is insufficient and vague. In reference to the six emerging economies, the G8 commits to working towards concluding the Doha Round in 2010 for the liberalisation of world trade.

- On 15 July police arrest 32 members of the Camorra's Casalesi clan in the Caserta and Modena provinces. On 16 July 57 members of the powerful Sarno and Casalesi clans are arrested in the Caserta and Naples provinces.

Malta

- On 1 July a Maltese court sentences 20 people to prison for sinking a boat trafficking illegal immigrants in 2006. 170 of the passengers were of Indian origin.

Croatia

- On 1 July the Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, leader of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), announces his resignation and his decision not to run in the presidential elections for personal reasons, following a second term marred by the impact of the crisis and the territorial dispute with Slovenia. On 4 July Jadranka Kosor is unanimously elected as the new Prime Minister.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 20 July the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) sentences Milan and Sredoje Lukic to life and 30 years' imprisonment respectively for the murder of 119 Bosnian Muslims in June 1992.

Montenegro

- On 31 July 12 people are sentenced to a total of 49 years in prison charged with plotting terrorist attacks against the State between 2004 and 2006, in attempts to establish a majority Albanian region in Montenegro.

Serbia

- On 9 July two police officers are injured in a grenade attack in Lucane in

the Presevo Valley, amid mounting tensions between the Albanian population and the Serbian authorities.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 14 July a mass grave is opened in the eastern town of Gnjilane containing 11 Kosovo Albanian bodies, victims of the war against Serbia.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- On 7 July the UN mediator in the name dispute Matthew Nimetz meets with government members in Skopje to present minor modifications, introduced following the June meeting, to the current proposal launched in October 2008, which include the possible use of the name "Northern Republic of Macedonia." The geographical qualifier ("northern") is a demand made by Athens to prevent Skopje claiming exclusive use of the word "Macedonia." On 8 July Nimetz travels to Athens to submit the proposal to the Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyanni.
- On 28 July the Parliament approves a bill to regulate the financing of political parties, one of three reform laws Brussels has demanded in the area of transparency to move the country closer to EU accession.

Albania

- On 30 July Sali Berisha announces that Albania will pass a law to legalise gay marriage. Representatives of the Muslim community condemn the move declaring that "homosexuality is an unacceptable and harmful vice that contradicts the laws of God."

Greece

- On 11 July a building housing 500 illegal immigrants is deliberately set on fire, masked gunmen shoot at foreign nationals in the centre of Athens and an anti-terrorist squad vehicle from the Greek police force is shot at.

Turkey

- On 13 July Turkey and the EU sign a transit agreement for the Nabucco gas pipeline to pass through Turkish terri-

tory and thereby lessen the EU's dependency on Russian energy. The pipeline will arrive in Erzurum (in Turkey) from Azerbaijan, and connect with the Baumgarten an der March gas terminal (in Austria) passing through Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary on the way.

- On 17 July the Turkish press reveals that Abdullah Ocalan is preparing a "road map" for the solution to the Kurdish conflict. On 29 July the Turkish government announces that it is also preparing a plan to resolve the Kurdish conflict and improves the PKK leader's prison conditions.
- On 20 July the second phase of the Ergenekon trial begins in the Silivri prison. Generals Sener Eruygur and Hursit Tolon, accused of directing the coup, are facing life imprisonment. The secular sectors fear the case may lead to the country's Islamisation.

Lebanon

- On 14 July there is a series of explosions in a secret weapons depot in the village of Khirbet Selim, within the jurisdiction of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Israel accuses Hezbollah of violating UN Resolution 1701, which calls for disarmament in southern Lebanon.

Jordan

- On 2 July Abdullah II of Jordan announces a royal decree designating his eldest son Prince Hussein as crown prince.
- On 13 July a military court sentences al-Qaeda member Mohammed Ahmed Youssef al-Jaghbeer to death for his involvement in the murder of US voluntary worker Laurence Foley in Amman in 2002.

Egypt

- On 9 July the Interior Ministry reports the arrest of an Islamist cell of 25 Egyptian citizens and a Palestinian charged with preparing terrorist attacks on pipelines and foreign boats in the Suez Canal.
- On 15-16 July Egypt hosts the 15th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Sharm el-Sheikh. The 118 participating delegations agree on the need to give greater political strength to the movement.

- On 27-28 July the 17th Nile Council of Ministers meeting is held in Alexandria to reach a Cooperative Framework Agreement that replaces the colonial agreements of 1929 and 1959, which benefit Egypt and Sudan to the detriment of the other states that border the river. Despite Cairo and Khartoum's reluctance to revise the quotas assigned by the current treaties, the meeting finalises with a move towards a common stance.

Tunisia

- On 6 July the Tunisian police arrest 9 people suspected of plotting terrorist attacks on US soldiers in the country for joint military exercises. Two of those arrested are officers from the Tunisian military base in Bizerte.

Algeria

- On 2 July the Algerian media reports that security forces have aborted a terrorist attack on the US ambassador in Algiers, arresting the alleged al-Qaeda-linked perpetrator. Another police operation that takes place around the same time ends with the arrest of 72 people linked with the June attacks. On 30 July 14 soldiers are killed in an ambush in the Tipasa province.

Morocco

- On 4 July Moroccan police report the arrest in the Tetuan region of a leading member of a drug smuggling ring identified by the authorities as the brother of Nadia Yassine, leader of the Islamist organisation Justice and Charity.
- On 28 July a Moroccan court gives life imprisonment to Islamist cell head Abdelkader Beliraj for plotting terrorist attacks on various government members and the Moroccan army.
- On 30 July in his traditional crown speech Mohammed VI announces the 10th anniversary of his coronation, a plan for autonomy in the Sahara and a pardon of 24,865 prisoners.

Mauritania

- On 1 July following a closed-door meeting in Sirte, currently hosting the 13th African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government, the Peace and

Security Council lifts sanctions imposed on Mauritania for the 2008 coup d'état, after the country's political forces reach an agreement to hold elections.

▪ On 18 July the coup leader General Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz wins the elections with more than 50% of the votes. On 19 July the opposition claims that the elections have been "a charade to legitimise the coup" and demands a recount, although international observers describe the voting as "transparent."

European Union

▪ On 1 July Sweden takes over the EU Presidency with the challenges of finalising the Lisbon Treaty, tackling the continuing economic crisis and preparing a common strategy for the UN Summit on Climate Change in December.

▪ On 14 July the Polish MP Jerzy Buzek, from the European People's Party, is elected President of the European Parliament for the next two and a half years, with the support of 555 votes.

▪ On 15 July the European Commission adopts a proposal for granting visa-free travel to Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro from 2010.

▪ On 16 July the government of Johanna Sigurdadottir receives the approval of the Icelandic Parliament with an absolute majority to apply for EU accession. On 27 July Iceland formally presents its membership application at the EU Foreign Ministers Summit in Stockholm.

August 2009

The Italian senate approves the so-called anti-crisis law, which includes a controversial tax amnesty to allow undeclared foreign assets to be repatriated. Greece fights to control forest fires that sweep across the country and threaten Athens. In Turkey the first meeting is held between Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Democratic Society Party (DTP) leader Ahmet Turk, to move forwards in the resolution of the Kurdish conflict. Also in August Turkey reestablishes diplomatic ties with Armenia and signs an agreement with Russia for the South Stream gas pipeline to pass through Turkish territory. In Cyprus the first round of negotiations begins for the

island's reunification. Syria collaborates with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) allowing the inspection of the al-Kibar complex, but new traces of uranium are found in an installation in Damascus. Relations between Syria and Iraq deteriorate after the attacks in Baghdad on 19 August, which lead the Iraqi capital to accuse Damascus of allowing terrorists to cross the border. In Jordan a secret meeting is held between high ranking Jordanian and Israeli officials to calm Amman's fears that Israel is planning to deport Palestinians with Jordanian Nationality to the Hashemite Kingdom. In Egypt more members of the Muslim Brotherhood are arrested. Libya gives the man convicted for the 1988 Lockerbie bombing Ali al-Megrahi a hero's welcome, after his controversial release in the UK.

Portugal

▪ On 7 August the Portuguese government announces that it will accept two prisoners of Syrian nationality from the Guantanamo military base.

▪ On 21 August a major fire is reported in the town of Sintra. On 23 August another fire threatens the district of Braganza reducing 1,000 hectares to ashes. According to Portugal's National Forest Authority (AFN), more than 21,000 hectares were razed in the country between January and July.

Spain

▪ On 3 August the Valencia High Court of Justice agrees to archive the case opened against Francisco Camps, Ricardo Costa, Victor Campos and Rafael Betoret in relation to the Gurtel case. The same day the vice President of the government Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega announces that the Director of Public Prosecutions will appeal the court's ruling.

▪ On 13 August three acts of solidarity for ETA prisoners organised in San Sebastian by Etxerat, the platform for ETA prisoners' relatives, are declared illegal by the National Court, which claims that they glorify and support terrorism. Etxerat affirms that it will go ahead with the demonstrations. On 14-15 August the autonomous Basque police force dissolves the Etxerat-organised marches.

▪ On 19 August a combined operation by French and Spanish police leads to the arrest of Aitzol Etxaburu, Andoni Sarasola and Alberto Machain Beraza, one of the six most wanted ETA members and suspected of perpetrating the bomb attack on 30 July in Palma Nova. The arrests help to locate a network of ETA hideouts in France used to store large amounts of explosives.

▪ On 21 August seven boats with 119 immigrants arrive in Almeria and another with 35 on board arrive in Granada.

France

▪ On 8 August Nicolas Sarkozy demands the immediate release of French citizen Clotilde Reiss, arrested on 1 July in Teheran and accused of espionage and inciting violence. Iran releases Reiss on 16 August.

▪ On 27 August Secretary General of the Socialist Party Martine Aubry announces primary elections to elect the socialist candidate for the 2012 general elections.

▪ On 31 August the French media reports the decision made by investigating judges Desset and Van Ruymbeke to try Jerome Kerviel before the Paris Correctional Court. Kerviel stands accused of rogue transactions that cost the French bank Société Générale 4.9 billion euros.

Italy

▪ On 1 August the Italian Senate approves the anti-crisis law with 166 votes in favour and 109 against. The law includes a tax amnesty for those repatriating foreign assets, incentives for companies investing profits in the country, postponement of bank debt repayments for small and medium size companies, an increase in the minimum retirement age to 65 for women working in public administration and measures to regulate domestic employees and people looking after children and the elderly.

▪ On 12 August the police and Italian army raid a meeting of the Camorra in Casal di Principe (Naples) and arrest Raffaele Maccariello, one of the heads of the Casalesi clan, and four others.

▪ On 30 August Silvio Berlusconi visits Libya a day before the anniversary of the 1969 Libyan revolution for the so-

called Libyan-Italian Friendship Day, during which he inaugurates the motorway financed by Italy as compensation for the damage caused by the country's colonial past. The Italian Prime Minister is criticised by the opposition and the general public for visiting a country ruled by a dictatorship.

Malta

- On 15 August 115 immigrants are intercepted by three Maltese patrols 20 miles south of Malta.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 17 August it is reported that Radovan Karadzic has filed an appeal to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) claiming that he signed an immunity pact with the US government at the end of the Bosnian war. Karadzic calls the Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, the then European mediator for the former Yugoslavia, to testify.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 13 August the new NATO Secretary General carries out his first official visit to Kosovo to meet with the commander in chief of the KFOR, Italian Giuseppe Emilio Gay, the Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and the President Fatmir Sejdiu.
- On 28 August supporters of Vetevendosje (Self-determination), a movement that opposes the international presence in Kosovo, destroy more than 20 EU Mission (EULEX) vehicles during a protest against Brussels and Belgrade's efforts to establish judicial co-operation mechanisms between EULEX and Serbia.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- On 18 August the Greek representative to the UN Adamantios Vassilakis informs the UN representative for the naming dispute of Macedonia Matthew Nimetz that Greece supports the name proposed by the latter: Republic of Northern Macedonia. On 20 August the Macedonian representative Zoran Jolevski meets with Nimetz to tell him that his country would be more willing

to accept the formula Northern Republic of Macedonia.

Greece

- On 21 August a massive wildfire is reported 40 kilometres to the north of Athens leading the government to declare a state of emergency. On 23 August the blaze arrives 200 metres from the gates of the city and 10,000 people are evacuated. This is one of 83 fires reported in Greece in 24 hours. The authorities call for international help and open an inquiry suspecting that the fires could have been deliberately started to clear the land for property development. On 26 August the fires are finally put out.

Turkey

- On 5 August Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan meets with the leader of the Democratic Society Party (DTP) Ahmet Turk for the first time to move forwards with the solution to the Kurdish conflict.
- On 6 August Turkey and Russia sign an agreement in Ankara to route the South Stream gas pipeline through Turkish territorial waters thus avoiding its traversing Ukraine and offering Turkey beneficial prices. The deal represents the consolidation of a competitive response to the Nabucco project, in which Turkey is also participating.
- On 14 August a bomb in the district of Gziosmanpasa (Istanbul) kills one person, on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the first attack on the Turkish State by the terrorist organisation the Kurdistan Workers' Party against. On 30 August four soldiers are killed in the Hakkari province after a PKK mine explodes.
- On 31 August Turkey and Armenia reestablish diplomatic ties under Swiss mediation and reopen the common border.

Cyprus

- On 6 August the first round of negotiations is concluded under the auspices of the UN, in which the leaders of the two communities, Mehmet Ali Talat and Dimitris Christofias, move forward on issues of citizenship, immigration and asylum but fail to reach an

agreement on the controversial property rights issue.

Syria

- On 19 August a bomb attack on the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance kills 95 people and injures 563 in Baghdad, a day after Bashar al-Assad offers the Iraqi President Nuri al Maliki his full commitment to controlling the Syrian-Iraqi border to prevent terrorists from crossing. On 31 August Iraq formally accuses Syria of failing to respect its commitment regarding border controls.
- On 28 August the IAEA indicates in its latest report on Syria that the government has allowed the inspection of the Damascus installations where traces of uranium were found in June, but refuses to collaborate in the investigation into the installations bombed by Israel in 2007.

Lebanon

- On 31 August the Lebanese police arrest Salah Ezzedine, accused of running a pyramid scheme which lost investors around a billion dollars. The close relationship between Ezzedine and Hezbollah, some of whose leaders are among those swindled, threatens to damage the party's image among the Shiite community. The media consider it to be the largest financial scandal in the country since the collapse of the Intra Bank in 1966.
- On 31 August the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament and head of the Shiite Amal Movement Nabih Berri accuses Muammar Gaddafi of being "at the head of organised crime" and urges international justice to prosecute him for the disappearance 31 years ago of Imam Musa Sadr, the Lebanese Shiite cleric who went missing in 1978 on a trip to Libya to raise support against Israel. The incident led to a break in relations between the two countries, and Lebanon has been demanding his release ever since.

Jordan

- On 4 August Jordan joins Saudi Arabia in rejecting US appeals to the Arab States to improve relations with Israel and encourage peace talks. On the

same day Abdullah II defends Palestinian refugees' "right of return."

- On 17 August the *Jerusalem Post* reports on a secret meeting between high ranking Jordanian and Israeli officials over Amman's fears that Israel could be planning to deport the many Palestinians with Jordanian nationality living in the West Bank to the Hachemite Kingdom. According to official Hebrew sources, Israel has assured Jordan that the rumours are unfounded and that Tel Aviv wishes to continue the cooperative relations it shares with Amman.

Egypt

- On 13 August Egypt announces its decision to suspend the sale of plane tickets to Mecca in order to avoid the risk of spreading the A/H1N1 flu virus.
- On 15 August Hosni Mubarak begins his first official visit to the US in five years to strengthen the alliance between both countries and attempt to advance Middle East peace talks.
- On 18 August the country's second political force, the Muslim Brotherhood, condemns the arrest of 34 of its members in the Suez province.

Libya

- On 20 August Abdelbaset Ali al-Megrahi, the only person convicted for the Lockerbie bombing in 1988, is given a hero's welcome in Tripoli after his controversial release by the Scottish Justice Secretary on compassionate grounds due to serious health problems.

Algeria

- On 4 August the Algerian army kills eight members of AQIM in the Batna province. An operation carried out at the same time in the Jijel province sees another armed splinter group dismantled.
- On 4 August a dispute between an Algerian shopkeeper and a Chinese motorist in the district of Bab Ezzouar in Algiers triggers violent clashes between around a hundred people in an unprecedented explosion of opposition to Chinese immigration. In Algeria the Chinese community amounts to 30,000 people.

Morocco

- On 1 August the Interior Minister orders the seizure of editions of the weeklies *Tel Quel* and *Nichane*, which include the results of a survey conducted by the French newspaper *Le Monde* on the monarchy. The Communications Minister Khaled Naciri declares that "the monarchy cannot be subjected to a survey, whatever the result."

Mauritania

- On 8 August a young man linked to al-Qaeda blows himself up in front of the French embassy in Nouakchott. On 16 August the Mauritanian government announces that it will mobilise 4,000 soldiers to capture the AQIM terrorists responsible for the country's recent terrorist attacks.
- On 11 August the President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz reappoints Mulye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf as Prime Minister, a position he occupied following the coup d'état in August 2008.

European Union

- On 21 August the EC Directive 2009/81/EC enters into force, which constitutes the foundations for establishing a truly European defence equipment market.
- On 29 August the EU signs a preferential trade agreement with four countries in southern Africa: Seychelles, Madagascar, Mauritius and Zimbabwe.

September 2009

The Socialist Party wins the elections in Portugal, retaining its mandate. In France the trial of the Clearstream case begins. The OECD removes Monaco from its list of tax havens. Slovenia and Croatia reach an agreement on the Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn's proposal to resolve the dispute over the territorial waters at Piran Bay. In Bosnia tensions mount between the international community's High Representative for Bosnia Valentin Inzko and the Republika Srpska, which is unwilling to accept his authority. In Greece Kostas Karamanlis calls early elections for 4 October. Cyprus initiates the second round of its reunification negotiations. In Lebanon the Prime

Minister Saad Hariri steps down from government after failing to close cabinet negotiations with the opposition, but is reappointed by Parliament to form the government. Algeria signs an anti-terrorism cooperation agreement with Mauritania, Mali and Niger. The European Parliament reelects Jose Manuel Durao Barroso as President of the Commission.

Portugal

- On 27 September the Socialist Party of Jose Socrates Carvalho wins in the legislative elections with 37% of the votes, but fails to repeat the absolute majority of the previous term. The Social Democratic Party is the second most voted party with 29% of the votes. On 28 September Socrates announces that he will not form a coalition government and will promptly pact with the other parties to govern.

Spain

- On 1 September the National Court judge Baltasar Garzon orders the capture of ETA member Maite Aranalde, extradited on 25 August by France and a fugitive since being granted conditional release on bail for 12,000 euros by the judge Eloy Velasco.
- On 7 September the National Court tries 13 leaders of the outlawed Askatasuna and Democracy 3 Million parties.
- On 24 September a police report from the Gurtel corruption case in Valencia reveals that the scheme illegally financed the Valencian People's Party. On 28 September the PSPV-PSOE appeals against the ruling of the Valencia High Court of Justice on 3 August to archive the case. On 29 September the Madrid High Court of Justice partially raises the gagging order on the trial that has already found 71 people guilty.
- On 27 September in a press release published by the newspaper *Gara* the terrorist organisation ETA states that it would not lay down its arms "while the enemies of Euskal Herria chose repression and denial." ETA displays its "absolute willingness to develop a democratic process that will lead to the self-determination" of the Basque Country.

France

- On 7 September Nicolas Sarkozy travels to join the President Luiz Inacio

Lula da Silva in defending the French Brazilian proposal to transform the G8 into the G14, thus including the emerging economies of Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Egypt, China and India.

- On 20 September the Clearstream trial opens, in which the former French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin stands accused against Nicolas Sarkozy as a civil plaintiff. On 24 September Villepin's lawyers take action against Sarkozy before the Court of High Instance in Paris for questioning the presumed innocence of the former minister.
- On 22 September French police destroy one of France's largest illegal immigrant camps known as the Calais Jungle and detain 276 of its occupants, who were attempting to cross the channel to the UK. On 29 September police dismantle another Afghani majority refugee camp in Calais.

Monaco

- On 8 September Monaco signs a 12-state tax cooperation agreement with the US to be removed from the OECD list of tax havens. On 23 September Monaco is taken off the list.

Italy

- On 3 September casualties from the strong rains that cause floods and landslides in Sicily rise into the 20s.
- On 13 September police arrest Carmelo Barbaro, a prominent leader of the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta in Reggio. On 16 September 23 members of the Cordi and Cataldo clan, of the 'Ndrangheta, are arrested. On 25 September police dismantle the Tornicchio clan, arresting 11 people in the Crotona province.
- On 20 September the Marche region registers an earthquake measuring 4.6 on the Richter scale.

Slovenia

- On 4 September the Slovenian media reports the government's decision in Ljubljana to back ecologists and oppose Italian plans to build a gas terminal in the Trieste Gulf.
- On 11 September the Prime Ministers of Slovenia and Croatia, Borut Pahor and Jadranka Kosor finally reach an agreement in Ljubljana to settle the dis-

pute over the ownership of the territorial waters in Piran Bay.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 18 September the international community's High Representative for Bosnia Valentin Inzko uses the Bonn powers to impose laws to guarantee the consolidation of the Bosnian power grid, a precondition for Bosnia's integration into the European power grid. The Republika Srpska opposes the measure, arguing that it is against their aspirations for an independent power grid, and threatens to withdraw its representatives from the federal government if the Office of the High Representative (OHR) "increases its impositions."

Montenegro

- On 17 September the Foreign Ministers of Montenegro and Israel, Milan Rocen and Avigdor Lieberman sign an agreement in Podgorica to allow visa-free travel for citizens of both countries.

Serbia

- On 17 September the Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn warns Serbia against applying for EU accession while the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, signed in April 2008, remains blocked by the Netherlands due to Belgrade's failure to hand over former military general Ratko Mladic.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 11 September the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) signs a protocol with Serbia's Interior Minister to cooperate in the fight against organised crime. The agreement raises criticisms among the Kosovo Albanian community, which sees the protocol as a threat to its sovereignty.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- On 10 September the Parliament approves the public sector reform law, which limits the power of political parties over public administration, regulates the work of civil servants and establishes European standards of professionalism. This reform constitutes one

of Brussels' central demands on Skopje to bringing the country closer to the EU.

- On 24 September President Gjorge Ivanov's speech before the UN General Assembly, in which he makes reference to his country by its constitutional name and not by that provisionally adopted by the Security Council in resolutions 817 and 845, gives rise to a formal complaint from Greece to the UN Secretary General. According to Ivanov, the matter, which remains blocked despite talks held during the year, should be submitted to the International Court of Justice. He is also in favour of holding a referendum and a double name formula. Athens prefers to negotiate with UN mediation only before deciding on a single and definitive name that reinforces the Hellenic character of the name "Macedonia" and its relation with Greece's territorial integrity.

Albania

- On 14 September the Albania Supreme Court suspends the trial against former Defence Minister Fatmir Mediu for the explosion of an ammunition depot that killed 26 people in March 2008. His reelection as MP in the recent legislative elections grants him parliamentary immunity.

Greece

- On 2 September a device explodes near the Athens Stock Exchange. The extreme left group Revolutionary Struggle claims responsibility for the attack. A second device, placed by the Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei, explodes minutes later in Salonica. On 23 September a bomb explodes in the home of the socialist MP Louka Katseli.
- On 2 September Kostas Karamanlis calls early elections for 4 October, two years before the end of his term of office.

Turkey

- On 1 September almost 20,000 people participate in a demonstration organised by the Democratic Society Party (DTP) in Diyarbakir to demand that Ankara initiate talks with the terrorist organisation PKK. The demonstrators also demand the official use of Kurdish.

Another similar demonstration unites 5,000 people in Istanbul.

- On 8 September seven soldiers are killed in various clashes with Kurdish terrorists in the southeast of the country. On 14 September a soldier and three rebels are killed in a military operation in Cukurca.

- On 9 September Turkey fines its largest media company Dogan Yayin 1.75 billion euros for tax evasion, constituting the biggest fine ever given to a Turkish company. Certain independent sectors believe this to be an act of revenge for the group's critical attitude towards the government. The EU and the OSCE are concerned about the measure.

- On 9 September torrential rains flood entire neighbourhoods of Istanbul, causing 31 deaths.

Cyprus

- On 10 September the second round of negotiations begins in Nicosia the island's reunification and power sharing. This second round, planned for the 3 September, was delayed due to problems with the Limnitis crossing, which arose when a group of Greek Cypriot pilgrims were denied access.

Syria

- On 23 September the President Bashar al-Assad travels to Saudi Arabia to restore bilateral ties, deteriorated following the 2003 Iraq invasion and broken after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri in 2005.

- On 30 September Syria accepts the creation of the new Amman Bank, headed by the Commercial Bank of Syria and the Saderat Bank of Iran.

Lebanon

- On 10 September Prime Minister Saad Hariri gives up attempts to form a government after two months of failed negotiations with the opposition. On 16 September the Lebanese Parliament reelects him with 73 of the 128 votes in favour. On 24 September Hariri initiates fresh talks with the political parties to form a government.

- On 11 September two rockets are launched from the southern Lebanese Klaila region into Galilee. Israel responds with artillery fire and accuses

Lebanon of failing to stop the attacks. UNIFIL and the Lebanese army deploy troops to prevent further incidents and open an investigation.

Egypt

- On 1 September Egyptian security agents discover a depot of almost two tons of explosives 100 metres from the Gaza border, probably waiting to be smuggled into Gaza through the Rafah tunnels.

- On 26 September the Egyptian police arrest 12 leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in the northern Beheira Province.

Libya

- On 1 September Libya commemorates the 40th anniversary of the fall of Idris I at the hands of a left-wing group of the army and the founding of the Revolutionary Command Council, led by Muammar Gaddafi. The Moroccan delegation withdraws from the celebrations because of the presence of representatives of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).

- On 7 September, in response to promises made by the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown to compensate IRA victims, Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi affirms that Libya will pay no compensation at all, regardless of whether or not it supplied the explosives, but will comply with an international judicial decision on the matter.

- On 8 September 32 Algerians imprisoned in Libya are released for Ramadan, thus fulfilling an agreement signed with Algeria.

Tunisia

- On 23 September a Tunisian news agency reports that floods in southern Tunisia over the previous week killed 17 people.

Algeria

- On 6 September Algeria signs an agreement with Mauritania, Mali and Niger to join in the fight against terrorism and cross-border organised crime in the Sahel.

- On 11 September a former member of the Movement of Society for Peace

(MSP) is killed and two police officers are injured in a bomb blast in the Boumerdes province.

Morocco

- On 23 September the Moroccan police force announces the arrest of 24 people linked with al-Qaeda in various cities around the country.

- On 28 September the Moroccan police force closes the offices of the *Akhbar al-Youm* newspaper because of the publication of a caricature of Moulay Ismail, cousin of Mohammed VI.

Mauritania

- On 25 September NATO resumes full cooperation with Mauritania after confirming progress has been made in the country's political normalisation. The EU and the World Bank also announce the restoration of ties with Mauritania.

- On 28 September the army arrests seven people linked with al-Qaeda in the northeast of the country.

European Union

- On 14-15 September the European Council on Foreign Relations revises energy agreements made with developing countries stating the obligation for Member States to maintain minimal reserves of crude oil for possible energy crises. Ministers also state their intentions to further the EU's association with its eastern neighbours.

- On 16 September the European Parliament reelects Jose Manuel Durao Barroso as President of the European Commission with 382 votes in favour, 219 against and 117 abstentions.

- On 17 September the European Council of Heads of State and Government agrees on a common position for the G20 summit in Pittsburgh. The 27 Heads of State decide to prioritise measures for social cohesion and the creation of employment. They also insist on the need to improve mechanisms for financial monitoring.

- On 22 September the Interior Ministers Council approves the Commission's proposal to create a common EU resettlement programme for refugees.

Arab League

- On 17 September Amr Moussa holds an emergency meeting in Istanbul with Foreign Ministers from Turkey, Syria and Iraq to guarantee stability for the region in view of recent tensions between Damascus and Baghdad regarding border security, and to create a strategic cooperation Council in the fight against terrorism.

October 2009

In Spain the National Court sentences Arnaldo Otegi to prison for attempting to reconstruct Batasuna. In France the former Interior Minister Charles Pasqua is charged in the Angolagate case, and Jacques Chirac is ordered to stand trial for corruption. Croatia closes five chapters of its accession negotiations and opens a further six. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia sets its border with Kosovo. In Albania the opposition demonstrates to demand a vote recount for the June presidential elections. In Greece the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) wins parliamentary elections. In Lebanon the explosion of a new arsenal and the discovery of two Israeli spy devices arouse tensions between Beirut and Tel Aviv. In Egypt the opposition launches a campaign against Hosni Mubarak's son, Gamal, taking over from his father. Similarly, in Libya, Gaddafi proposes that his son, Saif al-Islam, assume the functions of Head of State. In Tunisia Zin el Abidin Ben Ali is reelected as president for a fifth term of office. In the EU, after Ireland and Poland's ratification, only the Czech President remains to endorse the Lisbon Treaty.

Portugal

- On 10 October the Socialist Party receives most votes in the local elections despite losing councils. The party wins in 131 councils, including Lisbon. The Social Democratic Party wins in 138 districts and retains the mayoralty in Oporto.
- On 22 October Jose Socrates Carvalho announces the new cabinet, which includes changes in 10 of the 16 ministries to form a government with a

broad political base that will allow him to govern with a minority.

Spain

- On 5 October the public prosecutor appeals to the National Court to archive the investigation, in the absence of a defendant, into a tip-off on 4 May 2006 which allegedly alerted ETA of a police raid on the Faisan Bar in Irun.
- On 13 October Judge Baltasar Garzon orders the arrest of Arnaldo Otegi and another nine leaders of the left-wing *abertzale*, accused of attempting to reconstruct Batasuna. On 17 October the Basque nationalist trade unions organise a protest which is joined by the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV). On 21 October the newspaper *Gara* reports a decision made by Batasuna's leaders to open an internal debate that could lead to a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Basque Country.
- On 19 October Aitor Elizaran and Oighiana San Vicente are arrested in Britain. The Spanish authorities believe that Elizaran has been the political head of ETA since the 2008 arrest of Francisco Javier Lopez Pena, alias Thierry.

France

- On 16 October French farmers demonstrate in Paris to demand a price increase for their products. On 28 October Nicolas Sarkozy announces a 1.65 billion-euro aid package to help the sector, which amounts to 80% of what farmers have demanded.
- On 27 October the Paris Correctional Court issues a verdict in the Angolagate case, an investigation into illegal arms sales to the Angolan government between 1993 and 1998. Among the accused are Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, advisor on African affairs during the government of his father, François Mitterrand, and the former Interior Minister Charles Pasqua.
- On 27 October the French Court of Auditors publishes the expenses report for the French Presidency of the EU which amounts to 171 million euros, the highest in history.
- On 30 October the Paris Correctional Court finds Jacques Chirac guilty of embezzling funds between 1977 and 1995 while he was mayor of Paris.

Italy

- On 2 October the Italian Chamber of Deputies approves the controversial law decree that extends tax amnesty to holders of undeclared foreign assets with 270 votes in favour and 250 against. The new law is part of a package of anti-crisis measures that came into force in August, despite fierce criticism from the opposition. The measure, known as a "tax shield", allows undeclared assets to return to Italy without their owners having to answer to the judicial system.
- On 3 October a large-scale demonstration takes place in Rome led by the National Federation of the Italian Press and left-wing groups to condemn the persecution of journalists and the media that criticise the government of Silvio Berlusconi.
- On 7 October the Constitutional Court declares that the Alfano Law, which grants judicial immunity to high ranking members of the government, is unconstitutional. This allows the possibility of various blocked legal proceedings against Berlusconi to be reopened.
- On 15 October *L'Espresso* publishes documents that prove that the State negotiated with the Mafia during the government of Andreotti to end the chain of attacks in 1992, which claimed the lives of Judges Falcone and Borsellino. On 18 October the national anti-mafia prosecutor Piero Grasso recognises that these deals took place.
- On 25 October the Democratic Party elects Pier Luigi Bersani as its new Secretary General, following Walter Veltroni's resignation in February.

Malta

- On 14 October the EU-Arab League liaison office opens in Malta with the aim of strengthening cooperation dialogue.

Slovenia

- On 20 October the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) announces its opposition to the appointment of Doku Zavgajev as the new Russian ambassador to Slovenia. Zavgajev is the former pro-Russian President of Chechnya, and has been accused of war crimes in the conflict between Moscow and the Caucasus Republic.

Croatia

- On 2 October the eighth meeting in Brussels of the EU-Croatia Intergovernmental Conference closes five chapters and opens a further six in Croatia's accession negotiations. Its EU entry date is set for 2011.
- On 30 October the Croatian deputy Prime Minister Damir Polancec resigns after acknowledging his connection with a corruption scandal involving the illegal appropriation of shares from Podravka, the country's biggest food company.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 9 October the main Bosnian political parties meet with EU and US representatives in the Butmir military base in an unsuccessful attempt to move forward in the constitutional reform process. On 14 October, on behalf of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik requests both to remain outside of the process and the right to separate from Bosnia. On 20-21 October two more unsuccessful meetings are held. A group of European and US experts will continue to work towards resuming talks.
- On 13 October the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) rejects Radovan Karadzic's latest two appeals. On 15 October the Court denies Karadzic's request to postpone the trial to give him time to prepare the hearing. On 26 October the trial begins without Karadzic.
- On 15 October Bosnia and Herzegovina is elected non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.
- On 27 October the Swedish government releases the former President of Republika Srpska Biljana Plavsic after he has served two thirds of his sentence, passed in 2003 by the International Court of The Hague for crimes in the Bosnian war. The decision causes the Croatian member of the Bosnian Presidency Zeljko Komsic to cancel his official visit to Sweden.

Montenegro

- On 26 October the Montenegrin and Croatian governments announce their decision to refer information to the International Court of Justice in order to come to a ruling over the border dispute on the Prevlaka peninsula.

Serbia

- On 9 October the Belgrade Court for war crimes sentences Bosnian soldier Ilija Jurisic to 12 years in prison for the 1992 attack on a Yugoslav army brigade while it was withdrawing peacefully from Tuzla, which resulted in more than 50 deaths.
- On 21 October Serbia receives its first official visit by a Russian President. Dimitri Medvedev's visit ends with the signing of six cooperation agreements and Belgrade's announcement to back the Russian initiative of a European Security Treaty to take over from NATO.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 17 October the Kosovo Foreign Minister Skender Hyseni, and his Macedonian counterpart Antonio Milososki decide to establish diplomatic ties and conclude negotiations to set a common border. On 18 October the Parliaments of Skopje and Pristina ratify the agreement.
- On 17 October the Italian ambassador to Kosovo, Michael Giffoni, is appointed as the new EU envoy for northern Kosovo.

Albania

- On 10 October the opposition parties initiate days of protest outside the Prime Minister's residence to demand a vote recount for last June's presidential elections, won by Sali Berisha's Democratic Party.
- On 12 October in the city of Durres the Albanian authorities arrest the head of the country's Salafist networks, Imam Artan Kristo, charged with inciting terrorism through an Internet website set up by the Imam in which he called for Jihad.

Greece

- On 4 October the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), led by George Papandreou, wins the parliamentary elections with an absolute majority, obtaining 43.9% of the votes and ousting the New Democracy of Kostas Karamanlis, which obtains 33.9%. Karamanlis announces his resignation as President of the centre-right group. On

8 October Papandreou announces that he will also serve as Foreign Minister prioritising improved relations with Turkey, a resolution to the naming dispute of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and progress in reunification negotiations for Cyprus.

- On 28 October six police officers are injured near a police station in the Athenian district of Agia Paraskevi in an attack by the Organization for the Protection of the People's Struggle (OPLA). On 30 October various devices explode in attacks on a Spanish consulate in Salonica and the residence of a conservative Euro MP in Athens.

Turkey

- On 6-7 October Istanbul hosts the World Bank annual meeting. Demonstrators linked with Turkish trade unions and left-wing movements protest against the repercussions that policies applied to Turkey by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have had on the country's economic crisis.
- On 10 October Turkey and Armenia sign a protocol of mutual understanding. On 14 October Turkey receives the first official visit from the Armenian President Serj Sarkissian. On the same day Recep Tayyip Erdogan receives a delegation from the Azeri Parliament, which opposes this process.
- On 19 October 34 members of the PKK cross the Iraqi border and surrender to the Turkish authorities in the town of Silopi as a goodwill gesture in response to reforms initiated by Ankara. On 20 October the Turkish government releases them without charge.
- On 26 October during his official visit to Iran, Recep Tayyip Erdogan confirms strong ties with Teheran, in clear contrast to the lack of understanding between Ankara and Tel Aviv. Erdogan defends Iran's right to have access to nuclear technology.

Cyprus

- On 9 October the European Commission appoints Leopold Maurer as an envoy to assist in the UN-brokered Cyprus reunification talks. Maurer led the EU's negotiation team for Cyprus' accession.
- On 16 October Turkey tells the EU it will open its doors to Cyprus if in ex-

change the EU agrees to initiate direct trade with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

- On 27 October a new round of talks begins for the reunification of Cyprus, focussing on the powers that the federal government will have. The round is concluded on 29 October without the parties arriving at any relevant agreements.

Syria

- On 8 October on the occasion of the King of Saudi Arabia Abdullah bin Abdul Asis' State visit to Syria, both countries announce their commitment to reach an agreement to end the political instability in Lebanon caused by clashes between the pro-Western and pro-Syrian blocs.

- On 13 October Aleppo hosts a bilateral meeting for Syrian and Turkish Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Agriculture, Economy, Oil, Electricity, Health and the Interior to study strategies for closer cooperation in these areas, following the agreement on 16 September to allow visa-free travel between both countries.

- On 14 October Syria announces that it needs to carefully examine the Association Agreement between the EU and Syria, signed on 8 October by the EU Member States after being frozen since 2004. Moallem does not rule out postponing the signing until 2010. On 27 October the EU Foreign Ministers Council adopts a favourable decision over the signing of the agreement.

- On 26 October the Iraqi government again accuses Syria of harbouring terrorists and failing to control their entry into Iraq from Syrian territory. The accusation follows a fresh al-Qaeda attack which killed 155 people in Baghdad the previous day. After the announcements, both countries recall their ambassadors.

Lebanon

- On 12 October an explosion in an ammunition depot in the town of Tayr Fils, inside UNIFIL's area of operations, sparks accusations from Israel and the US that Hezbollah has violated the UN-decreed weapons embargo. On 14 October the UN Security Council, at Israel's request, discusses the incident during its monthly meeting on the Middle East.

- On 14 October France hands over the content of recorded telephone conversations to the Lebanese Internal Security Forces in connection with the investigation into the assassination of Rafiq Hariri. The recordings reveal an extensive network of pro-Israeli spies operating in Lebanon.

- On 15 October Lebanon is elected as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

- On 17-18 October the Israeli army detonates two spy devices in the towns of Houla and Meis al-Jabal, in southern Lebanon, after being detected by the Lebanese army, which responds by shooting at Israeli military planes flying in Lebanese airspace. The investigation opened by UNIFIL indicates that the devices could have been planted during the war in 2006. Hezbollah declares that the finding represents a violation of Resolution 1701.

- On 27 October a missile launched from Wadi al-Jamal, in southern Lebanon, explodes in the Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona. Israel responds by bombing the area around Wadi al-Jamal. On 28 October Lebanese and UNIFIL soldiers deactivate rockets ready to be launched in the area.

Egypt

- On 14 October the opposition parties, led by Ayman Nour, launch a campaign against the suspected intentions of the 81-year-old President Hosni Mubarak to prepare his son Gamal to take over the presidency.

Libya

- On 14 October at a secret meeting in the town of Sebha, Muhammad Gaddafi proposes to the country's popular and social leaders that his son Saif al-Islam carry out certain duties of the Head of State.

- On 15 October the Libyan government releases 88 prisoners belonging to Islamist organisations, accused of attempting to overthrow the Gaddafi government in the nineties.

- On 22 October the Swiss Foreign Minister Michelle Calmy-Rey accuses Libya of kidnapping two Swiss citizens who have been missing since 18 September. The incident was retaliation for the arrest in July 2008 of one of Gadd-

afi's sons, accused of mistreating two hotel employees in Geneva. The Minister uses the Schengen agreement to threaten to halt or slow down the circulation of Libyan residents.

Tunisia

- On 6 October the Tunisian government bans this year's Hajj, or journey to Mecca, as it is impossible to vaccinate the pilgrims in time to prevent the mass spreading of the A/H1N1 flu virus.

- On 25 October Zin el Abidin Ben Ali is reelected as President of Tunisia for a fifth term of office with 89.6% of the votes. Groups that are critical of the regime denounce Ben Ali's monopolisation of the electoral campaign space. The government supporters, Mohamed Bouchiha, from the Party of People's Unity, and Ahmed Inoubli, from the Unionist Democratic Union, obtain 5% and 3.8% of votes respectively.

Algeria

- On 20 October a riot breaks out in the El-Madania and Diar Echams districts in Algiers. Residents demonstrate against the government over their growing social exclusion, the destruction of numerous homes and the slow application of the last five-year plan, which provided for the construction of a million new homes. On 22 October the Interior Minister Noureddine Yazid Zerhouni assures that the State will rehouse those affected and calls for calm.

- On 22 October seven security guards are killed and another two injured in an ambush in Kabylie by the terrorist organisation AQIM.

Morocco

- On 22 October the publication of a caricature by Jean Plantu, considered by the Moroccan government as disrespectful of the royal family, leads to the banning in Morocco of the 22 and 23 October editions of *Le Monde*. On 25 October Morocco bans the circulation of *El Pais* because it features Plantu and Gueddar's caricatures, published by *Akhbar al-Youm*.

European Union

- On 2 October Ireland ratifies the Lisbon Treaty in a second referendum with

67% of the votes. Ireland's Yes vote increases the pressure on the Presidents of Poland and the Czech Republic, Lech Kaczynski and Vaclav Klaus, who stated that they would sign the treaty if the result of the referendum in Ireland was positive. On 8 October the Czech President announces that he will only sign the treaty after the Brno Constitutional Court pronounces itself regarding the appeal lodged against the treaty by 17 Czech senators in September. On 10 October the Polish President Lech Kaczynski ratifies the Lisbon Treaty. On 12 October Vaclav Klaus announces the amendment needed for its ratification of the treaty: a clause that exempts the Czech Republic from the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights, thus upholding the Benes Decrees, which prevent German claims on properties expropriated in the Sudetes after the Second World War. On 13 October the Commission warns Prague that it may lose the power to appoint a commissioner. On 16 October the Irish President Mary McAleese signs the treaty. On 31 October at the EU Summit of Heads of State and Government, Vaclav Klaus commits to signing the treaty after the clause demanded by Prague is incorporated.

- On 14 October the European Commission presents its annual report on the enlargement process and announces that negotiations with Croatia could be concluded in 2010 and that Iceland could form part of the European Bloc along with Croatia. The report recommends that negotiations begin with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and supports the liberalisation of visas in the Balkan countries. In reference to Turkey, the commission criticises the persistent shortcomings regarding freedom of expression and the press, union rights and the role of women, although it praises the advances in relations with the Kurdish and Armenian nations.

- On 20 October after the Commission launches deficit procedures against 21 Member States, the Economic and Financial Affairs Council concludes by agreeing to apply measures to reduce budget deficits, which in these states has exceeded the authorised limit of 3% of the GDP.

- On 20 October the meeting of the European Economic and Financial Af-

fairs Council is unable to agree on financial aid for developing countries to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, set at 5-7 billion euros per year for 2010-2012 and 100 billion as of 2020. On 21 October the European Environment Council adopts a common position in relation to the UN Summit on Climate Change, agreeing to reduce emissions with respect to 1990 by 80-95% by 2050. On 29 October the Summit of Heads of State and Government finds a common position based on accepting the economic costs of climate change, but without specifying the amount that must be contributed or how it will be distributed.

- On 22 October the European Parliament approves the EU's annual budgets, which are set at 127.5 billion euros, by 437 votes in favour, 182 against and four abstentions. The budgets include specific funds outside of the multiyear financial framework to relaunch the economy and a specific package of nearly 300 million euros for the farming and dairy sectors, after arduous negotiations between the Commission and a common bloc of 21 Member States.

November 2009

November begins in France with the government's controversial launch of a debate on national identity. In Italy the Constitutional Court annuls the Maroni Law, Berlusconi proposes a law to reduce the length of time trials can last. Slovenia and Croatia finally sign an agreement to accept EU arbitration to resolve the border dispute. Vojvodina obtains a statute of autonomy from Serbia. The Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) wins the country's first general elections. The European Council approves Albania's application for EU accession. In Lebanon Saad Hariri succeeds in forming a coalition government. Jordan calls early elections. A classifying football match for the South African World Cup arouses tensions between Egypt and Algeria. In the EU, the Czech Republic finally ratifies the Lisbon Treaty, Herman van Rompuy is elected as President of the EU and Catherine Ashton as High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Portugal

- On 5 November the Finance Minister Fernando Teixeira dos Santos orders various semi-public companies in Portugal suspected of being involved in a major corruption scheme and abuse of power that could involve members of the government itself, to be audited.

- On 23 November the Portuguese Minister of Public Works, Transport and Communications Antonio Mendonca, and his Spanish counterpart Jose Blanco agree in Lisbon on a definitive plan for the high-speed railway lines that will join Madrid and Lisbon in 2013, and Oporto and Vigo in 2015.

Spain

- On 2 November the authorities report a total of 11 boats with 195 immigrants have been intercepted over the weekend as they were trying to reach the coasts of Granada, Almeria, Murcia and Alicante.

- On 18 November the general prosecutor of the State Candido Conde-Pumpido discloses 616 cases of corruption that involve the different Spanish political parties before the Congress of Deputies. 264 involve the Socialist Party and 200 the People's Party.

- On 20 November farmers stage a general strike demanding that the government take urgent measures against the alarming drop in gate prices. On 21 November the Environmental, Rural and Marine Affairs Minister Elena Espinosa commits to defending the sector's demands.

- On 23 November a combined operation by the National Police and the Civil Guard in the Basque Country and Navarra leads to the arrest of 34 members of SEGI, the youth movement of the terrorist group ETA. On 26 November the judge Grande-Marlaska gives prison sentences to 11 of those arrested.

France

- On 2 November the Interior Minister Eric Besson launches a national debate over the principles and values of French identity and its relationship with the integration policies being discussed by members of the National Assembly, senators and French members of the European Parliament.

Italy

- On 1 November one of the most important clans of the Camorra the Russo clan, falls in Avellino. In the previous 18 months the authorities arrested 3,600 mafia members and seized goods to the value of 5.6 billion euros.
- On 11 November the Under-Secretary for Economy and Finance Nicola Cosentino is accused by the Naples public prosecutor of collaborating with the Camorra in exchange for electoral support.
- On 14 November Silvio Berlusconi's party, The People of Freedom, presents the senate with a law proposal to reduce the maximum time limit allowed for a judge to pass sentence. The proposal provokes fierce criticism from the opposition coming shortly after the Constitutional Court's annulment of the controversial Alfano Law, which would allow cases against Berlusconi to be reopened.
- On 14 November the Italian General Federation of Labour (CGIL) union stages a demonstration in Rome involving more than 100,000 people to demand that the government take effective measures against the crisis.

Malta

- On 25 November the Maltese government announces the UK's decision to join Malta, Portugal, Luxemburg, Slovakia, Slovenia and France in a European pilot programme to relocate refugees that enter Europe via Malta.

Slovenia

- On 4 November Slovenia and Croatia agree in Stockholm to accept EU arbitration to end the border dispute in the Adriatic Sea. Under the agreement, Zagreb accepts Slovenia's access to international waters in exchange for Ljubljana lifting its veto on Croatia's EU accession negotiations.
- On 14 November Slovenia signs a participation agreement with Russia for the Italian-Russian South Stream gas pipeline project.
- On 28 November the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (ZSSS) calls for a general strike in Ljubljana to demand an increase in the minimum wage and against the increase in the

retirement age, which is awaiting government approval.

Croatia

- On 20 November the Croatian Parliament ratifies the agreement signed by Croatia and Slovenia for international arbitration in the dispute over the territorial waters in Piran Bay.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 3 November Radovan Karadzic finally stands before the International Court of The Hague, after boycotting the trial for a week. On 5 November the Court decides to appoint a lawyer to represent Karadzic and adjourns his trial until 1 March 2010.
- On 22 November the President of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik announces his intention to call a popular referendum to come to a decision over the presence of officials and judges from the UN Office of High Representatives on Bosnian Serb territory.

Serbia

- On 5 November the Serbian Parliament approves the text of Voivodina's statute of autonomy. On 7 November the Voivodina Assembly endorses the text with votes from the Democratic Party and the Hungarian minority.
- On 20 November the media reports the Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic's pledge to support Greece in the dispute with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In protest, the Macedonian Prime Minister Gjorge Ivanov decides not to attend the reception given in Belgrade for the recently deceased head of the Serbian orthodox church, Patriarch Pavle.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 30 November the EU Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) announces the arrest of Nazim Billaca, accused of murder and organised crime, who belonged to a unit set up to execute members of the Serbian secret service. Billaca claims to be a former agent of the Kosovo Information Service (SHIK), which has links to the Kosovo Democratic Party, led by Hashim Thaci.

Albania

- On 16 November the European Council for Foreign Relations approves Albania's application for EU accession and sends it to the European Commission to announce the opening of negotiations.
- On 20 November opposition party demonstrations begin in Albania to demand a recount of the votes from the parliamentary elections held in June, which were won by Sali Berisha's Democratic Party.

Greece

- On 3 November dockers at the Piraeus Port launch a two-day strike to demand job guarantees from the government after the new Greek cabinet attempted to renegotiate with Cosco, the Chinese state-owned company that has won the concession of the port's container facilities. In October, under Karanlis' government, an initial 16-day strike was organised for the same reason.

Turkey

- On 3 November Turkey and Israel resume joint military exercises in Ankara, which had been cancelled due to the diplomatic crisis over the Gaza Strip conflict.
- On 13 November Recep Tayyip Erdogan outlines a proposal before the Parliament for the "Kurdish opening" that would authorise the use of the Kurdish language. Erdogan also announces the creation of independent commissions to prevent discrimination and torture. The project does not please the Kemalist and ultra-nationalist opposition, or the PKK, which describes it as "superficial."

Cyprus

- On 11 November the UN announces that the UK has told the UN envoy for Cyprus, Alexander Downer, it will hand over part of its sovereign territory, currently used for military bases, to a reunified Cyprus.

Syria

- On 15 November the penal Court of Damascus sentences the Kurdish lead-

ers Mustafa Jomaa Bakr, Mohamed Said Hussein Omar and Saadoun Mahmoud Cheikho to three years' imprisonment for "undermining the dignity of the State, weakening national sentiment and inciting radical behaviour."

Lebanon

- On 6 November the leading Lebanese political parties, including Hezbollah, sign an agreement to form a new national unity government. On 9 November Saad Hariri presents the new cabinet list, which includes two women in the Finance and Foreign Ministries. Hezbollah holds the Agriculture Ministry and State Ministry for Administrative Reform.
- On 19 November Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah, is reelected as Secretary General of the party during its General Congress.

Jordan

- On 16 November the eighth meeting of the EU-Jordan Association Council confirms the progress made by Amman in its relations with the EU and looks favourably towards advanced status relations with the Hachemite Kingdom.
- On 23 November Abdullah II calls early elections two years before the end of the current term of office. The decision arises from the persistent accusations of fraud in the results of the 2007 elections and from the numerous cases of corruption published by the press.

Egypt

- On 12 November the Supreme State Security Court accepts the case filed by two Egyptian lawyers of the Hezbollah Secretary General, Hassan Nasrallah, and others accused of creating the terrorist cell that was dismantled in April.
- On 17 November the Egyptian government calls in the Algerian ambassador following signs of aggression towards the Egyptian community in Algeria arising from the football match (classifier for the South Africa World Cup 2010) played in Cairo on 14 November between both countries' selections.

Tunisia

- On 4 November 68 prisoners are released by the government after more

than a year in prison for participating in protests in 2008 against unemployment and high prices in the Gafsa region.

- On 7 November a court in Tunisia sentences eight people to between three and 12 years' imprisonment for belonging to an Islamist terrorist cell.

Morocco

- On 2 November a Casablanca court sentences Taoufiq Bouachrine, director of the newspaper *Akhbar al-Youm*, and the caricature artist Khalid Gueddar to a year in prison and a 9,000-euro fine for publishing a caricature that attacked the national emblem.
- On 14 November the newspaper *Al-Michael* is closed by the Moroccan judiciary until a new director is appointed for the weekly. Its previous director Id-riss Chahtan was sentenced in October to a year in prison and a 900-euro fine for speculating over the health of Mohammed VI.

Mauritania

- On 29 November three voluntary workers at the NGO Barcelona Acció Solidària are kidnapped by al-Qaeda in Chelkhatt Legtouta, 170 kilometres north of Nouakchott. This kidnapping is added to that of the French citizen, Pierre Camat, taken by AQIM in Mali on 26 November.

European Union

- On 3 November the Czech President Vaclav Klaus signs the Lisbon Treaty hours after the Czech Constitutional Court rules that the treaty is not unconstitutional.
- On 19 November a special summit is called by the Swedish Presidency to elect the top EU officials as established in the Lisbon Treaty. After lengthy negotiations, the Belgian Prime Minister Herman van Rompuy is elected as President of the EU, and the European Trade Commissioner, British Baroness Catherine Ashton, as new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. On 27 November the definitive portfolio distribution is revealed for the new Barroso Commission.

Arab League

- On 24 November the Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa urges the President of the African Union Muammar Gaddafi to mediate the crisis between Algeria and Egypt following the football match played between both countries, which provoked attacks against Egyptian and Algerian minorities.

December 2009

December closes the year with the first round of Croatian presidential elections, won by the opposition socialist candidate Ivo Josipovic. In neighbouring Bosnia, tension remains between the Republika Srpska and the international community's High Representative after the latter decides to extend the mandate of international judges investigating war crimes. Serbia submits its EU accession application and Montenegro is invited to join NATO. Both countries, together with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, sign agreements for visa-free travel within the Schengen Area. In Greece violence continues a year after a young demonstrator was shot dead by the police, while the soaring public deficit is cause for alarm in the Eurozone. The EU is also concerned for the backward step in the normalisation of relations between Turkey and Armenia and Ankara's outlawing of the Democratic Society Party (DTP). In the Middle East, relations between Syria and Lebanon show promising advances, while in Jordan, Abdullah II appoints a new Prime Minister. Egypt sees an especially intense month marked by debates over the 2011 presidential elections and Mubarak's successor, the growing tensions in the south between Muslims and Copts and the radicalisation of the Muslim Brotherhood. In Algeria and Mauritania efforts are stepped up in the fight against al-Qaeda and Morocco signs a favourable free trade agreement with the EU. For the EU, the year ends with the Lisbon Treaty entering into force after a year of problems in gaining approval.

Portugal

- On 17 December an earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale with

its epicentre 100 kilometres south of Cape São Vicente shakes southern Portugal and is also felt in the west of Andalusia. No damages are reported.

Spain

- On 14 December the Fourth Meeting of Autonomous Community Presidents, which addresses economic recovery and employment, fails after 12 hours of talks. Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero fails to reach an agreement over his programme of measures despite having accepted eight of the 10 points proposed by the People's Party (PP).
- On 19 December thousands of people, including representatives of all the Basque political groups, with the exception of the PSE-EE and the PP, demonstrate in Bilbao demanding that the National Court acquit five executives from the closed Basque daily *Egunkaria*, on trial for belonging to ETA.
- On 22 December the Minister for Public Works withdraws the license from Air Comet. The airline, following the embargo of its fleet ordered by a British judge, had been declared insolvent and had cancelled all its flights, leaving 7,000 passengers grounded.

France

- On 21 December the French energy provider RTE announces that two million people have been left without power in Provence because of a technical power cut in the town of Tavel, close to Avignon, carried out to avoid a total blackout in the region of five million inhabitants.
- On 29 December the Constitutional Council vetoes the so-called "carbon tax" describing it as "unfair and ineffective." The tax was meant to be applied indirectly to the consumption of fossil fuels from 1 January 2010.

Italy

- On 3 December the former Mafia member and collaborator with the Italian judiciary Gaspare Spatuzza testifies before the Turin Court in the trial of senator Marcello Dell'Utri, a confidant of Silvio Berlusconi, and implicates both in the attacks carried out by the Cosa Nostra in 1993, which included those committed against the judges Falcone and Borsellino.

- On 12 December Silvio Berlusconi is attacked after a speech in Milan by a man with a history of mental illness, who throws a miniature model of the Milanese Duomo at his face, causing bruising. The incident increases the debate on the political tension that reigns in Italy.

Slovenia

- On 3 December Doku Zavgayev presents his credentials to the President Danilo Turk as the new ambassador of Russia in Ljubljana, despite strong, open opposition in Slovenia due to suspicions of Zavgayev's violation of Human Rights as President of Chechnya.

Croatia

- On 17 December the EU decides to close two new chapters of accession negotiations on Freedom to Provide Services and Social Policy and Employment. Slovenia continues to hinder the opening of three new chapters: on the Environment, Fisheries and Foreign Security and Defence Policy. The negotiations, which could be closed in 2010 allowing entry in 2011, are also held up by shortfalls in the Croatian judiciary system and public administration.
- On 27 December Ivo Josipovic the Social Democratic Party (SDP) candidate, wins with 32.7% of votes in the first round of the presidential elections. The second round is slated for 10 January 2010.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 4 December the Austrian general Bernhard Bair assumes the command of the EU Forces in Bosnia (EUFOR). Bair replaces the Italian general Stefano Castagnotto.
- On 19 December after 14 months of difficult negotiations, Mostar, the largest city in Herzegovina, divided between Croats and Muslims, succeeds in electing a mayor thanks to the electoral reform law introduced by the High Representative Valentin Inzko, under which the Croatian Ljubo Beslic did not require an absolute majority to win.
- On 15 December the High Representative for Bosnia Valentin Inzko extends the mandate of two international judges investigating war crimes in Bos-

nia to December 2012, despite the Bosnian Parliament having rejected this possibility in October. On 28 December the Parliament of Republika Srpska opposes the measure and declares that it will call a referendum regarding the continuation of a High Representative from the international community.

- On 22 December the European Court of Human Rights condemns Bosnia for banning Jews and Gypsies from running in the country's electoral processes. The complaint was filed by the Jewish Bosnian ambassador to Switzerland Jakob Finci and the leader of the Bosnian Roma community Dervo Sejdic.

Montenegro

- On 4 December NATO Foreign Ministers formally invite Montenegro to start accession talks, offering the country the chance to participate in the Membership Action Plan (MAP).

Serbia

- On 7 December the EU reactivates the free trade agreement with Serbia after the Netherlands lifted its veto in light of Serbia's cooperation with the ICTY. On 22 December Serbia submits its long-awaited official EU accession application in Stockholm.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 13 December the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) wins in the second round of local elections in Kosovo, giving it control in Pristina and six other towns, from a total of 36. The Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) wins in 15 councils, among them the conflictive Mitrovica, divided between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. The results, according to the European Commission, present irregularities in several councils and trigger protests and clashes.
- On 16 December seven people are detained on an arrest warrant issued by EULEX for trafficking Kosovo immigrants across the Tizsa river, which borders Serbia and Hungary. This arrest is added to others made in October and demonstrates the dramatic increase in the flow of illegal Kosovo immigrants attempting to reach the EU, fleeing from the severe economic crisis.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- On 8 December the EU decides to postpone the start of accession talks with Skopje, due to the break in negotiations with Greece to agree on a definitive name for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Greece

- On 1-2 December Athens hosts the OSCE Ministerial Summit, chaired this year by Greece. The meeting adopts a strategy for the Corfu Process regarding a common European security system, agreed upon in the informal meeting in June, as well as decisions concerning energy security, police cooperation and increased security, especially in southern Caucasus and Moldavia.
- On 6 December new violent clashes are reported in the streets of Athens. This coincides with the first anniversary of the death of a boy during a protest demonstration against the economic and labour policies of the government of Kostas Karamanlis. The disturbances take place in the context of a severe economic crisis that threatens to bankrupt the country. Brussels and Frankfurt fear possible repercussions in the stability of the Eurozone, to which Greece was incorporated in 2001.
- On 10 December the Greek cargo ship *Ariana*, hijacked in May by Somali pirates, is released after the ship's owner announces that he will pay the ransom. Another Greek ship, the *Maran Centauros*, has been missing since 29 November.
- On 15 December the government meets with party leaders to discuss the fight against corruption and tax fraud, after the country's public deficit soars to 113.4% of the GDP. On the same day the European Commission announces that it will be looking closely at the progress made by Papandreou's cabinet.
- On 28 December a bomb planted by the terrorist organisation Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei explodes in the centre of Athens causing serious material damage in a public building.

Turkey

- On 1 December the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu announces at

the OSCE summit in Athens that Turkey will not ratify the protocols signed with Armenia to establish diplomatic ties until the Karabakh dispute is resolved and Yerevan's troops leave the region. In parallel to this Davutoglu invites the Azerbaijani chancellor to make an official visit to Turkey. On 24 December the Armenian Parliament refuses to ratify the protocols signed between the Turkish and Armenian governments if the Turkish government does not do so first, setting April 2010 as the deadline.

- On 2 December the government urges Turkish investors to withdraw their money from Swiss companies and banks after a popular referendum leads to Swiss opposition to the construction of minarets in Switzerland.
- On 10 December a massive methane gas explosion in a carbon mine in Mustafakemalpaşa, southeast of Bursa, kills 19 workers.
- On 11 December the Constitutional Court unanimously rules to outlaw the Democratic Society Party (DTP), the largest Kurdish party and the only one with parliamentary representation, due to alleged links with the outlawed PKK terrorist organisation. The EU shows its concern for the measure, while in Istanbul and Diyarbakir demonstrations are organised to condemn the decision.
- On 21 December the Swedish EU presidency announces the opening of the Environment chapter in Turkey's accession negotiations.

Cyprus

- On 21 December the Greek and Turkish Cypriot Presidents Dimitris Christofias and Mehmet Ali Talat meet in Nicosia to continue reunification negotiations under the auspices of the UN, which, at the beginning of the month decided to extend the UNFICYP mandate again until June 2010. According to the UN envoy to Cyprus, Alexander Downer, the positions are coming closer together and 2010 may be the decisive year for putting an end to the island's division.

Syria

- On 20 December Bashar al-Assad and Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri meet in Damascus and agree on the foundations for opening "new horizons"

which will definitively enhance bilateral cooperation.

Lebanon

- On 21 December a bus with Syrian workers onboard is shot at in northern Lebanon killing one of the passengers. The incident comes a day after the meeting between Bashar al-Assad and Saad Hariri to normalise Syrian-Lebanese relations after five years of hostility.
- On 26 December on the eve of the Day of Ashura a bomb blast near the Hamas headquarters in the Haret Hreik district in southern Beirut kills two of its militants.

Jordan

- On 9 December Abdullah II appoints Samir Rifai as the new Prime Minister after having dissolved Parliament in November. Rifai will have to lead a new transitional government before the next elections slated for 2010.

Egypt

- On 5 December, 10 leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood are arrested in the Nile Delta region.
- On 8 December at the Nile Basin Initiative meeting held in Dar es Salaam, Egypt announces to the eight member countries that it needs more time to sign the treaty that replaces the colonial agreements regarding the use of the river's water resources. The treaty will establish a permanent body, the Nile Basin Commission, that will oversee the fair use of the river basin.
- On 10 December in an interview with the newspaper *Al Masry Al Yom* the former director of the AEIA, Mohamed ElBaradei describes the current constitution as "illegitimate" and commits to making efforts to change it ahead of the 2011 presidential elections. Baradei says he is willing to run in the elections, an idea which is increasingly popular among sectors that oppose Mubarak.
- On 21 December the Muslim Brotherhood announces the initial appointments to renew its party leadership. The changes reveal a deep divide between its conservative and moderate factions, which threatens to weaken the party for the 2010 parliamentary elections, as well as the party's move towards a more

conservative position. The process will also select a successor to Mohammed Mahdi Akef, whose term ends in January 2010.

- On 22 December Egypt refuses to allow any kind of demonstration to commemorate the first anniversary of Operation Cast Lead. The announcement comes in response to the request from various pro-Palestinian groups to organise a march of solidarity with Gaza. On 31 December Egypt allows a pro-Palestinian demonstration in Cairo in protest against the government's refusal to allow them to cross the Rafah border crossing to join the "Freedom March", an initiative to condemn the Gaza blockade.

Algeria

- On 14 December the Algerian security forces arrest four suspected AQIM members in the Setif region. On the same day, the authorities report the arrest of six people accused of blackmail to finance the terrorist organisation.
- On 19 December a European Commission delegation visits Algiers to analyse a joint EU-Algerian strategy to increase security in the Sahel.

Morocco

- On 17 December Morocco signs a Free Trade Agreement with the EU that will allow the Kingdom of Morocco a substantial increase in agricultural exports to European markets. The agreement fuels protests in the European farming sector, which has been badly affected by the crisis, particularly in France and Spain.

Mauritania

- On 15 December the government approves a new anti-terrorism law that gives police greater powers in order to tackle the escalating AQIM activity in the country. On 30 December the creation of a special court is announced to deal with terrorism and internal security.
- On 18 December an Italian couple on holiday in Mauritania are kidnapped in Kobeny by the AQIM terrorist organisation. On 21 December the Mauritanian police arrest a Malian citizen suspected of being involved in the kidnapping.

European Union

- On 1 December the Lisbon Treaty comes into force.
- On 17 December the European Parliament approves the EU budget for 2010, which is set at 264 billion euros. The established priorities are energy security, the creation of employment, research funding, professional training, aid for the farming and dairy sectors and tackling climate change and the economic crisis.
- On 19 December visa-free travel in the Schengen Area for Serbia, Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia comes into force.
- On 19 December the UN Summit on Climate Change in Copenhagen closes with the aim of approving a replacement for the Kyoto protocol, which expires in 2012. After 12 days of tense negotiations, the EU signs just a minimal agreement with the US, China, India, South Africa and Brazil, adopted by the entire Assembly. The non-binding text does not set aims to reduce emissions, although it does establish an aid package to the value of 10 billion dollars for the period 2010 to 2012, and 100 billion a year from 2020 for the most vulnerable countries.
- On 22 December the media reports that 80 people have died as a result of the EU's first cold wave. A large area of France and Spain remains on orange alert as temperatures drop to -29°C in northern Italy and -33°C in Germany. The bad weather forces some of the Union's major airports to close, partially or completely, and services through the Channel tunnel are stopped for four days, leaving 2,500 passengers stranded in the tunnel for 16 hours on 19 December.

Western Sahara

- On 7 January the US diplomat Christopher Ross is appointed as the new UN special envoy for Western Sahara. Ross replaces Peter van Walsum, who had to step down from the position after losing the trust of the Polisario Front following his statement that independence for Western Sahara was "unrealistic."
- On 2 April RASD TV begins satellite broadcasts from refugee camps in Algeria. This is the first Sahrawi television

station and represents a response in Hassaniya, an Arabic dialect in the southeast of the Maghreb, to the regional channel TV Laayoune, set up by Morocco but without State funding since 2007.

- On 10 April during a demonstration in support of Western Sahara's self-determination, a group of Sahrawis crosses the fence that surrounds the Morocco-controlled border wall in Sahrawi territory, setting off a mine that leaves several people injured. The Moroccan Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri tells the UN Security Council that the demonstration organised by the Polisario violates the ceasefire that has been in force for 18 years, and demands that the UN take action. On 13 April the Polisario's UN representative Ahmed Bujari ensures the Security Council that the demonstration was peaceful and posed no violation to the ceasefire.
- On 30 April the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1871 to encourage the start of a new round of negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario, frozen since the last unsuccessful meeting in Manhasset (New York), in March 2008. The resolution also extends the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to the 30 April 2010. On 1 May France successfully opposes the proposal outlined in Resolution 1871 for the Security Council to give MINURSO greater powers.
- On 10 August Morocco and the Polisario resume negotiations concerning the future of Western Sahara in the Austrian town of Durnstein. The meeting, under the auspices of the UN, is the fruit of visits to the region made by the UN envoy Christopher Ross. The round concludes with a single agreement to allow family visits supervised by the UN between the Sahara and the refugee camps in Algeria. Both Morocco and the Polisario commit to continuing negotiations.
- On 12 September after a five-day visit to Algeria and Morocco, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres says that the proposal for a direct, straight-line land corridor between Tindouf and El Ayoun, designed to permit family visits has been accepted by both countries.
- On 30 September during the traditional King's Speech Mohammed VI an-

nounces the creation of an Advisory Committee to develop plans to establish autonomy in the Sahara. Some experts believe that the monarch's decision is a strategy to strengthen Morocco's position in the negotiations with the Polisario.

- On 8 October the Egyptian diplomat Hany Abdel-Aziz is appointed the new head of MINURSO and the UN Secretary General's special representative to replace Briton Julian Harston. Abdel Aziz is currently head of the UN Peace-Keeping Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

- On 8 October, seven Sahrawis, among them well known activists Brahim Dahane and Ali Salem Tamek, are arrested at Casablanca airport when returning from Algeria, accused of collaborating with hostile parties and high treason. On 15 October both appear before a magistrate in Casablanca, who declares himself incompetent and refers them to the Rabat Military Court. Morocco begins a large-scale police deployment in the Sahara to avoid demonstrations of support for the arrested and tight border controls to stop more pro-independence campaigners from leaving.

- On 6 November in a speech on the 34th anniversary of the Green March, Mohammed VI issues a warning to separatist leaders assuring that any attempt to break Morocco's territorial unity and destabilise Rabat's autonomy project for the Sahara will be countered, and that "Morocco will not give up as much as a grain of sand from the Sahara."

- On 16 November the Sahrawi activist Aminatou Haidar begins an unlimited hunger strike in Lanzarote airport in protest against the Moroccan and Spanish governments. Two days earlier the Moroccan government denied her entry into the country, confiscated her passport and returned her to Spanish soil, where Haidar has a resident's card. Haidar, who demands to be allowed to return to El Ayoun and is receiving growing support for her cause, refuses Madrid's offer of Spanish nationality and Rabat's offer to allow her to apply for another passport. On 17 December Nicolas Sarkozy, having met two days

earlier with the Moroccan Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi-Fihri, asks Morocco to allow Haidar back into the country and return her passport. Mohammed VI agrees to the request because of France's support of Rabat's proposal to grant the Sahara "extensive autonomy" under the auspices of the UN. On 17 December a Spanish plane transports Haidar to El Ayoun.

Gibraltar

- On 4 March Princess Anne of England travels to Gibraltar and inaugurates a hospital located on the isthmus that links Gibraltar with Spanish territory and which Spain considers to be illegally occupied by the UK. The visit causes annoyance in Madrid, which claims that it could endanger the Tripartite Forum between Spain, the UK and Gibraltar.

- On 31 March Gibraltar and the UK sign a Tax Information Exchange Agreement with the US. On 28 April Gibraltar offers the Spanish government a similar agreement, which forms part of the colony's strategy to be removed from the OECD list of tax havens.

- On 6 May the government of Gibraltar lodges an appeal against the European Commission's decision to designate the Mediterranean biogeographical region a site of Community importance, in waters that the colony considers to be its own.

- On 9 June Spain reiterates its position before the UN against Gibraltar being removed from the list of territories undergoing decolonisation, as requested by the UK, and argues that the future of the Rock should be negotiated exclusively between London and Madrid.

- On 21 July the Tripartite Forum of Dialogue takes place in Gibraltar, which leads to the first visit from a Spanish Foreign Minister to the British colony. During the Forum Miguel Angel Moratinos, the Spanish Foreign Minister, declares that Spanish sovereignty is "inalienable", but insists on the importance of maintaining cooperation and dialogue with London and Gibraltar.

- On 16 November the Spanish government officially informs the British

authorities, that, with regard to Gibraltar's jurisdictional waters, "it does not recognise as having ceded any spaces other than those included in the Treaty of Utrecht." The statement is issued in response to a complaint filed by the British embassy in Spain on 18 September, in which London declares a series of Civil Guard raids in waters close to the Rock but with Spanish sovereignty as "attacks on British sovereignty that endanger the Tripartite Dialogue."

- On 7 December the Gibraltar police detain four civil guards who entered the waters of Gibraltar's port in pursuit of drug smugglers. Hours later the civil guards are released. The Interior Minister Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba apologises to Gibraltar for the incident. On 10 December Gibraltar hands the drug smugglers, arrested by the Gibraltar police, over to Spain.

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