

General Chronology of the Mediterranean

January 2006

On 21st January, the President of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, passes away at the age of 61. Anibal Cavaco Silva becomes the first centre-right wing Portuguese president since the end of the dictatorship. The first outbreaks of the H5N1 avian influenza virus are detected in Europe (Cyprus and Turkey), killing 4 people in Turkey. Turkey presents a new initiative for reconciliation with Cyprus, poorly received by the Greek part of the island. In France, the President announces the end of the state of emergency imposed after the rioting in November. In Tunisia, the opponents of the regime headed by President Ben Ali organise and establish the "Democratic Coalition." Austria takes up the revolving Presidency of the European Union for the first semester of 2006, whereas the President of the European Commission presents a project to re-launch the Lisbon Strategy.

Portugal

- On 22nd January, Anibal Cavaco Silva, the candidate for the Social Democratic Party (PSD), the centre-right wing opposition party, wins the first round of the presidential elections. He becomes the first centre-right president to govern the country since the establishment of democracy in 1974. He engages in controlling the deficit and reviving the economy and advocates cooperation with the Socialist Part (PS) to ensure political stability.

Spain

- On 10th January, 20 presumed Islamists, suspected of recruiting radical

Muslims for the insurrection in Iraq and raising funds to finance Al-Qaeda, are arrested. Omar Nakhcha, the leader of the group, is arrested on 12th January.

- On 17th January, the Supreme Court prohibits a meeting of Batasuna, the political wing of the organisation, Euskadi ta Askatasuna, i.e. "Euskadi and Freedom" (ETA), and prolongs a court order prohibiting the party from being active for a period of two years. On 18th January, the Supreme Court orders the leader of Batasuna, Arnaldo Otegi, to be retried because it considers that the judge sentencing him in 2004 was not impartial.

France

- On 4th January, President Jacques Chirac announces the end of the state of emergency imposed in November 2005 following riots in the suburbs.

- On 9th and 12th January, Nizar Sassi and Mourad Banchellali, two French citizens who had been handed over to the French authorities in July 2004 after being held at the US military base in Guantánamo, are released by the French authorities.

- On 19th January, President Chirac announces that France is willing to use its nuclear weapons against States attempting to use "terrorist means" or weapons of mass destruction against France. "The new French nuclear strategy" is strongly criticised by the left-wing and the Greens in France.

- On 26th January, the European Commission gives France one month to justify a decree passed on 31st December 2005 aiming to protect strategic French industries from acquisition by non-EU companies.

Italy

- On 14th January, thousands of Italians take to the streets to protest against government plans – backed by the Catholic Church – to amend a 1978 law legalising abortion in the first three months of pregnancy and against the growing interference of the Catholic Church in government affairs.

- On 16th January, Mario Draghi is appointed the new Governor of the Bank of Italy, succeeding Antonio Fazio, who resigned after being accused of favouritism in a public takeover bid for a bank, which had tarnished Italy's image.

Slovenia

- On 5th January, the Slovenian government passes a decree including the entire Bay of Piran (in the northern Adriatic) in its fishing zones, thus reopening the territorial dispute between Slovenia and Croatia, which qualifies the Slovenian decree as violating the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Croatia

- On 13th January, the Minister of Home Affairs, Ivica Kirin, signs a strategic and operational cooperation agreement with Europol.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 5th January, during an operation by the EU-led Forces (EUFOR) to arrest Dragomir Abazovic, sought by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for war crimes, the wife of Dragomir Abazovic is killed and he and his son are wounded.

- On 11th January, an Argentine judge approves the extradition of Milan Lukic, a member of the paramilitary group, "White Eagles," convicted in absence to 20 years of prison by the ICTY in September 2003.
- On 26th January, the parliament of the Republika Srpska (Serb Republic) shows a loss of confidence in the administration of Prime Minister Pero Bukejlovic, of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), in a vote on his economic policies.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 21st January, the President of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, dies of cancer. Negotiations on the final status of Kosovo – a United Nations initiative – that were to begin on 25th January are postponed to the month of February. On 30th January, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) appoints Fatmir Sejdiu to succeed Rugova.

Albania

- On 27th January, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approves several three-year agreements with Albania within the framework of its Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) and its Extended Fund Facility with a view to providing support for the government's economic reform and poverty reduction programmes.

Greece

- On 30th January, Georgios Papanandreou, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and leader of the Greek Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) party (in the opposition), is elected President of the Socialist International (SI).

Cyprus

- On 24th January, the EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn, receives the new Turkish initiative to reunify the island positively, as opposed to the Greek Cypriot President. The initiative consists of opening Turkish ports and airports to Greek Cypriot boats and planes in exchange for a lightening of commercial restrictions on the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).
- On 29th January, the authorities an-

nounce the detection of an outbreak of the H5N1 avian influenza virus on the island.

Turkey

- On 2nd January, prosecutors initiate legal proceedings against 9 people, including journalists and human rights activists accused of fostering the cause of Kurdish separatists.
- On 4th January, Turkey announces the decease of its first human victim of the H5N1 avian influenza virus. Two sisters of the first victim die several days later, followed by another child in the same village, Dogubayazit, in the eastern area of the country. On 8th January, the death of three people in Ankara is announced. By the end of the month, 21 people have caught the virus.
- On 23rd January, a court of first instance in Istanbul discontinues proceedings against the novelist, Orhan Pamuk, being tried for having insulted the "Turkish identity" (Article 301 of the Penal Code). The court allegedly suspends proceedings after having received a letter from the Ministry of Justice declaring that it lacks the jurisdiction for intervening. This trial serves as a test to verify Turkey's commitment to European norms in the sphere of human rights and freedom of expression, essential criteria for accession to the EU.

Syria

- On 16th January, the government announces that a law allowing opposition parties to challenge the Ba'ath Party, which monopolizes power, will be adopted in February.
- On 18th January, Mamun al-Homsi and Riyad Sayf, 2 eminent Members of Parliament arrested in September 2001, are released. Three activists opposing the regime are likewise released.

Lebanon

- On 2nd January, the United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri announces that it wishes to question the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, and his former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fourak al-Shara. On 13th Janu-

ary, the Syrian Information Minister declares that the Commission will not be authorised to meet with the President for inquiry purposes.

- On 11th January, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, officially appoints the Belgian, Serge Brammertz as Commissioner of the Inquiry Commission, Detlev Mehlis not wishing to extend his term for the next 6 months.
- On 13th January, the television network, Al-Jazeera, declares that the military court has decided to institute proceedings against 13 prisoners suspected of belonging to Al-Qaeda and planning terrorist attacks against Iraq and Israel.

Jordan

- On 5th January, the National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) publishes a report asserting that a third of the incarcerated population of Jordan was never formally charged with any crime nor tried, and it denounces the poor quality of prison medical facilities and overpopulation of prisons. The report reveals a decrease in the accusations of 'torture and inhumane treatment' made by prisoners.

Egypt

- On 18th January, the United States announces that it suspends negotiations with Egypt on a trade agreement in response to the imprisonment of Ayman Nur, an important politician of the opposition party, Al Ghad.

Libya

- On 17th January, Libya purchases 10 Agusta helicopters from the Italian firm, Finmeccanica, for non-military surveillance of Libyan borders. The contract is the first obtained by a Western defence and aerospace group since the international sanctions against Libya were lifted two years ago.
- On 25th January, Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a report on Libya entitled "Libya: Words to Deeds – The Urgent Need for Human Rights Reform". HRW commends the significant progress made in Libya in the sphere of human rights, while appeal-

ing to the authorities to do more to reach international standards. The report denounces, among other things, the imprisonment of 86 members of the Muslim Brotherhood organisation, the violation of the right to a fair trial and the lack of freedom of expression.

Tunisia

- On 2nd January, law enforcement officers attempt to block a meeting by the "18th of October Movement" – forming after the hunger strike carried out for over a month by opposition figures – which was to be held at the premises of the Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties (Forum démocratique pour les libertés et le travail, or FDLT). Altercations take place between a number of participants and the police forces, among them the lawyer, Ayachi Hammami, president of the support committee for the imprisoned dissident lawyer, Mohamed Abbou, as well as Hama Hammami, the spokesperson for the Tunisian Workers' Communist Party (POCT, not recognised) and Lotfi Hajji, President of the Union of Tunisian Journalists (SJT, not recognised).
- On 4th January, Tunisian political figures in opposition to the regime of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali announce the creation of a new "democratic coalition" advocating "radical reform" of the current political system, while denying any association with Islamist groups.

Algeria

- On 31st January, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) announces that Ahmed Abou al-Baraa (whose real name is Ahmed Zerabib), spiritual leader and one of the founders of the GSPC, has been killed by Algerian government forces in the region of Bedjaïa, 300 km east of Algiers.

Morocco

- On 6th January, King Mohammed VI invites the families of victims of serious human rights violations committed during the reign of his father, Hassan II, to the Royal Palace in Rabat.

European Union

- On 1st January, Austria takes up the Presidency of the European Union. Among the priorities of the Austrian Presidency are the adoption of the 2007-2013 budget by the European Parliament and the establishment of a new agenda for the adoption of the European Constitution, rejected by the populations of France and Netherlands in 2005. On 9th January, the Chancellor Wolfgang Schäussel expresses support for a German proposal to add an annex to the European Constitution dealing with the EU's social values.
- On 18th January, the European Parliament rejects the draft directive put forth by the European Commission concerning the liberalisation of port services.
- On 25th January, the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, presents his annual report on the progress made in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, which seeks to make the EU the most competitive economy in the world. Barroso appeals to Member States to concentrate on two key objectives of the Lisbon Agenda: allocate 3% of its GDP to research and development, and attain an overall employment rate of 70%.

February 2006

The H5N1 avian influenza virus spreads through the Mediterranean region, with outbreaks in France, Italy and Egypt. The publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in European journals inflames Arab and Turkish public opinion, giving rise to protests and attacks against European embassies, resulting in several casualties in Lebanon and Libya. Fatmir Sejdiu becomes the new President of the Province of Kosovo and negotiations on the future status of Kosovo begin. A terrorist attack in Turkey, for which the organisation, Kurdistan Freedom Falcons, has claimed responsibility, causes one death. In Lebanon, the Ministers of Hezbollah and Amal decide to return to government after seven weeks of boycott. The European Parliament adopts a 'soft' version of the Bolkenstein Directive.

Spain

- On 14th, 17th and 22nd February, the organisation, Euskadi ta Askatasuna, i.e. "Euskadi and Freedom" (ETA) sets off three bombs in the towns of Urdazubi/Urdaiz, Barakaldo and Bilbao, respectively, only causing material damage. On 19th February, the Spanish government and main political parties reject ETA's request to relaunch peace negotiations with a view to arriving at a permanent cease-fire, insisting that the cease-fire must be a prerequisite for starting negotiations. On 25th February, over 100,000 people participate in a protest in Madrid organised by the Association of Victims of Terrorism, which is against a peace agreement between the government and ETA.
- On 15th February, the London Court of Appeal authorises the extradition to Spain of Hedi ben Youseff Boudhiba, accused of having assisted in the kamikaze terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001 in the United States.

France

- On 1st February, the newspaper France-Soir publishes the 12 caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed that had initially appeared in the Danish newspaper, Jyllands-posten. On 8th February, the French newspaper Charlie Hebdo also publishes the caricatures. The immediate dismissal of the France-Soir editor, Jacques Lefranc, by the newspaper's French-Egyptian owner, Raymond Lakah, revives the debate on freedom of expression. On 8th February, President Jacques Chirac condemns any open provocation that could inflame the situation.
- On 2nd February, in the face of accusations of protectionism made, among others, by the European Union, the French Minister of Economy, Finance and Industry, Thierry Breton, denies that racist and protectionist considerations motivated the government's opposition to the take-over of Arcelor (primarily French-owned) by Mittal Steel, based in the UK and the Netherlands and presided by Lakshmi Mittal, of Indian ethnicity.
- On 9th February, the government discloses the new immigration law that it had committed to pass after the riots of late 2005. It imposes harsher condi-

tions for immigration by non-qualified individuals and for family reunification. New immigrants will likewise have to sign an 'integration contract' upon arrival stipulating that they agree to learn French, respect the principles of the French Republic and actively seek work.

- On 27th February, the companies Gaz de France (approximately 80% public) and Suez agree to merge, thus becoming the second largest energy group of Europe. The Italian Ministers condemn this merger, adducing that it aims to prevent a potential offer by Enel.
- Over the course of February, several outbreaks of H5N1 avian influenza virus are detected. By the end of February, 20 countries have banned imports of French poultry and by-products.

Italy

- On 11th February, the Italian Parliament is dissolved, marking the start of the election campaign in which Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi will go up against Romano Prodi, leader of the centre-left opposition coalition, which groups together 11 parties.
- On 11th February, the Minister of Health, Francesco Storace, announces the detection of an outbreak of H5N1 avian influenza virus in the south.
- On 17th February, the Minister of Reform and Devolution, Roberto Calderoli, appears on television wearing a t-shirt with the caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed, leading to deadly riots in the Libyan city of Benghazi. On the next day, the minister resigns, at the request of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

Croatia

- On 9th February, Prime Minister Ivo Sanader relieves Vesna Skare-Ozbolt of his post as Minister of Justice for having criticised the government. On 10th February, the Chamber of Representatives (lower house) accepts the appointment of Ana Lovrin to this post.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 4th February, the President of the Republika Srpska (Serb Republic), Dragan Cavic, appoints Milorad Dodik, of the opposition party, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD)

to the post of Prime Minister. On 28th February, the National Assembly approves his appointment as well as the new administration.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 10th February, Fatmir Sejdiu becomes the President of the Province of Kosovo.
- On 20th and 21st February, the first round of negotiations on the final status of Kosovo is held, under the supervision of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoyé, Martti Ahtisaari. Lutfi Haziri, representative of the Kosovo delegation and Slobodan Samardzic, representative of the Serbian delegation opposed to the independence of Kosovo, take part in the negotiations.
- On 20th February, a new party emerges in Montenegro, the Bosnian Party (BS), resulting from the merger of various Muslim parties. Rafet Husovic is the president.
- On 27th February, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) begins the first trial accusing a State of genocide. On this day, Bosnia-Herzegovina accuses Serbia-Montenegro of having tried to massacre the Muslim population of Bosnia during the Yugoslav Wars from 1992-1995.

Greece

- On 14th February, Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis begins a process of cabinet reshuffle following the affair of the illegal interception of a hundred or so Greek politicians' telephone calls, including the Prime Minister, in June 2004, before the Olympic Games in Athens (held in March 2005).

Cyprus

- On 9th February, the Greek Cypriot Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giorgos Iakovou condemns the statement made by the UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Jack Straw, before the House of Commons (the lower house). Straw had declared that the approach of the Greek Cypriot government went against the reunification of the island.

- On 11th February, Huseyin Ozgurgun is elected head of the National Unity Party (UBP), the main opposition party in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).

Turkey

- On 6th February, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the President of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, issue a joint declaration condemning the caricatures of Mohammed and declaring that the freedom of expression should respect different beliefs. They likewise call for restraint in Arab countries. On 12th February, thousands of people in Turkey protested against the caricatures.
- On 7th February, the EU Chair of the Joint Parliamentary Committee with Turkey, Joost Lagendijk, warns Turkey that its accession to the EU could be at risk if five journalists, accused of having insulted the nation's courts by criticising the decision of a court to prohibit a conference in September 2005 on the death of over half a million Armenians between 1915 and 1923, are sentenced to prison. The trial, which was to begin on 7th February, is finally adjourned to 11th April after two nationalist lawyers who had demanded the hearing openly criticised the presence of observers from the European Parliament.
- On 9th February, a bombing in a cybercafé near a police station in Istanbul causes one fatality and 16 wounded. Responsibility for the bombing is claimed by the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), presumably having close ties to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Fifteen people are wounded in another attack in Istanbul on 13th February.

Syria

- On 4th February, protests break out in Damascus against the publication of the caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper, leading to assaults against several Nordic embassies, acts condemned by the Grand Mufti of Syria, Sheikh Ahmad Badruddin Hassoun, and the Minister of Religious Affairs, Al-Ayyubi. On 8th February, the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice accuses the Syrian and Iranian governments of inciting vi-

olence against Westerners and inflaming public opinion to serve their own interests.

- On 11 February, President Bashar al-Assad reshuffles his cabinet, appointing the former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Farouk al-Sharaa, to the office of Vice-President, where he takes charge of implementing foreign and public relations policies.
- On 15th February, Prime Minister al-Litri signs a decree ordering the government bodies and the public sector to substitute the euro for the dollar as currency.

Lebanon

- In early February, Hezbollah and its Shiite coalition partner, Amal, announce that their ministers are returning to office after seven weeks of boycott.
- On 3rd February, Israel attacks Hezbollah positions near the Shebaa Farms area in retaliation for rockets fired by Hezbollah following the assassination of a 17-year-old man from Shebaa. The UN peacekeeping forces declare that the young man was killed on Lebanese territory, contradicting the Israeli version.
- On 5th February, the Sunni religious authorities and the Sunni conservative party, Islamiyaa, organise a demonstration to protest against the 2005 publication of caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper. Protesters set fire to the Danish embassy, killing one person and wounding 28 others. Large crowds flood Christian quarters of Beirut and attack churches. These violent riots lead the Minister of Home Affairs, Hassan Akif al-Sab, to resign.
- On 6th February, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary General of Hezbollah, a pro-Syrian Shiite movement, and General Michel Aoun, the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement party, sign a ten-point compact.
- On 14th February, some 800,000 people gather at Martyrs' Square in Beirut to commemorate the first anniversary of the assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rafiq Hariri. Numerous demonstrators demand the resignation of President Emile Lahoud, ally to Syria.
- On 23rd February, the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, makes a surprise visit to Beirut, where she

meets with the leader of the Druze community, Walid Jumblatt, Saad Hariri, son of the deceased Rafiq Hariri, Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, the Maronite Patriarch of Lebanon, Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir, and the pro-Syrian speaker of parliament, Nabi Berri. Rice does not meet with President Lahoud, suggesting that Lebanon needs a president who will defend its sovereignty.

Jordan

- On 2nd February, Jihad al-Momani is dismissed from his post as Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper, Shihan, for having published the caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed originally appearing in the Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*. On 4th February, the Public Prosecutor, Sabri Rawashdesh, announces that Momani and Hisham al-Khalidi, the Editor-in-Chief of *Al Mahwar*, who had also published the caricatures, will be arrested and tried.
- On 15th February, the State Security Court imposes the death sentence on Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a native Jordanian and leader of the "Al-Qaeda in Iraq" organization, along with 8 of his collaborators. They are accused of having plotted a series of chemical attacks against Jordan in 2004. This is the third death penalty imposed on al-Zarqawi by the Court.

Egypt

- On 3rd February 2006, the Egyptian ferry, Al-Salam, sinks in the Red Sea, with a resulting death toll of 1,016.
- On 14th February, the People's Assembly (bicameral) approves the government's decision to postpone elections for local council officials for two years. The Muslim Brotherhood condemns this decision, as it seeks to reduce their influence after their success in the legislative elections of 2005.
- On 17th February, an outbreak of H5N1 avian influenza virus is detected.

Libya

- On 17th February, in reaction to the behaviour of the Italian Minister, Roberto Calderoli, violent protests break out in the city of Benghazi, causing 11 casualties and 35 wounded. Protesters

set fire to the Italian Consulate. The General People's Congress (legislative assembly) condemns the attack against the Italian Consulate and dismisses the Minister of Home Affairs, Nasser al-Mabrouk Abdallah, for his poor handling of the situation.

Tunisia

- On 1st February, the former Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Habib Ben Yahia, becomes the new Secretary General of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA). He is to serve a three-year term.

Algeria

- On 12th February, the US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, meets with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika during a three-day visit to North Africa. Rumsfeld declares that the United States hopes to strengthen military cooperation with Algeria as well as cooperation on the struggle against terrorism.

Morocco

- On 15th February, King Mohammed VI appoints his supporter, Chakib Benmoussa, to the office of Minister of Home Affairs, left vacant by Mustapha Sahel, who was appointed to the post of Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations.

European Union

- On 8th February, the European Commission (EC) publishes a report showing that Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom, the three countries that had authorised free movement of workers from the 10 new Member States since their accession (2004) demonstrate better economic performance than the 12 Member States imposing provisional restrictions.
- From 15th to 19th February, José Manuel Barroso becomes the first President of the EC to travel throughout the entire Balkan region, accompanied by the EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn.
- On 16th February, the European Parliament (EP) adopts a highly amended version of the EC's draft directive on the liberalisation of the services sector in Eu-

rope (Bolkenstein Directive), with 394 votes in favour, 215 against and 33 abstentions. Among the most important amendments is the rejection of the "principle of country of origin" and the exclusion of a number of sectors, among them public healthcare, social services and public transport. The directive likewise allows countries to object to services provided by a foreign company on grounds of such "public policy" as national security or environmental protection.

March 2006

On 11th March, former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic dies from a heart attack in his cell at the detention centre of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. After 38 years of armed struggle, ETA announces a permanent cease-fire. In France, students flood the streets to protest against the government's bill on "first employment contracts." Bomb attacks in Turkey cause three deaths. For the first time, a radio station and two television stations broadcast programmes in Kurdish throughout Turkey. For the first time in Syrian history, a woman, Najah al-Attar, is appointed to the office of Vice President. The exiled opposition to the regime of Syrian President al-Assad organises, establishing the National Salvation Front. The H5N1 virus, which has spread throughout the Mediterranean region, causes its first victim in Egypt. The first legal environmentalist party is established in Tunisia. With the 50th anniversary of the independence of Tunisia drawing near, the President pardons over a thousand prisoners, among them, for the first time, Islamists. In Algeria, Islamists are released as part of the "Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation."

Portugal

- On 9th March, Anibal Cavaco Silva officially takes up office as the new president of Portugal.

Spain

- On 21st March, Judge Fernando Grande-Marlaska institutes legal proceedings against 32 radical Islamists

suspected of being involved in a terrorist organisation and having planned a terrorist attack against the Parliament in Madrid in 2004.

- On 22nd March, the organisation, Euskadi ta Askatasuna, i.e. "Euskadi and Freedom" (ETA), announces a permanent cease-fire, putting an end to 38 years of armed combat for the independence of the Basque Country. The relinquishment of violence was the Spanish government's sine qua non condition for engaging in peace negotiations with ETA.

- On 30th March, the Congress of Deputies (lower house) approves a new Statute for Catalonia, lending it greater autonomy.

France

- On 6th March, Khaled Ben Mustapha, former prisoner of the Guantanamo Penitentiary Centre handed over to the French Authorities in March of 2005, is released, becoming the third French citizen to have been detained in Guantanamo and subsequently released.

- On 7th March, demonstrations against the first employment contract (CPE) are organised throughout the country and continue over the following days. On 18th March, a demonstration in Paris degenerates into confrontations with the police and several cars are burned. On 8th and 9th March, both the National Assembly and the Senate pass the CPE bill into law. On 28th March, a general strike takes place. Despite the protests, the Prime Minister, Dominique de Villepin, upholds this law, which aims to create greater flexibility in the labour market and decrease unemployment among the under 26 age group and among ethnic minorities.

Italy

- On 10th March, Public Prosecutors of Milan demand that Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and his former English lawyer, David Mills, be investigated for corruption. Berlusconi allegedly bribed Mills to bear false witness in corruption affairs dating back to 1997 and 1998. Berlusconi, who claims innocence, denounces the political interest behind the trial, only a month before the legislative elections.

- On 27th March, Berlusconi declares that he does not want Italy to become a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country. His statements are applauded by the former Minister for Administrative Reform and Devolution, Roberto Calderoli.

Malta

- On 6th March, some sixty illegal immigrants, primarily Africans, escape a detention centre in Safi and go to the island's airport to protest against their arrest. On 24th March, seventy illegal immigrants escape from a detention centre near La Valletta during a protest against the conditions of their detention.

- On 12th March, the National Party (NP) in power in Malta suffers a serious setback in partial local elections, to the benefit of the Malta Labour Party (MLP).

Slovenia

- On 21st March, the Minister of Development, Joze P. Damijan, resigns, alleging personal grounds.

Croatia

- On 5th March, the former Serbo-Croatian leader, Milan Babic, commits suicide in his cell at the detention centre of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which had sentenced him in June of 2004 to 13 years of prison for ethnic cleansing of Croats living in Serb-occupied zones of Croatia from 1991-1992.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 15th March, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) sentences General Enver Hadzihanovic, commander of the 3rd Corps of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Colonel Amir Kubura, commander of the 7th Brigade of the same army corps, to 5 and 30 months of prison, respectively. The ICTY holds them responsible for the crimes committed by their subordinates.

- On 18th March, the leaders of Serbian and Croatian Muslim communities of Bosnia agree on a series of constitutional reforms seeking to strengthen the central government, among them,

the replacement of the three-party presidency with the post of president and two vice presidents.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 1st March, the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Bajram Kosumi, resigns. On 10th March, the Kosovo Assembly appoints Lieutenant General, Agim Ceku, former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK or KLA), to the vacant post.
- On 11th March, former Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic, dies of a heart attack in his cell at the detention centre of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). On 14th March, the ICTY officially closes the trial against Milosevic, who is accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. On 18th March, over 80,000 people attend his funeral in Belgrade.

Macedonia

- On 29th March, the Sobranje (unicameral legislative body), under European pressure, approves a series of reforms of the electoral law, including the appointment of a member of an opposition party as President of the Electoral Commission.

Greece

- On 15th March, Greek trade unions in the public and private sectors launch a twenty-four-hour strike in protest against the government's economic reforms, paralysing the majority of the country. The reforms in question seek to liberalise the labour market and reduce the deficit in order to avoid sanctions by the European Union.

Turkey

- On 9th March, a bomb explodes near a supermarket in Van, causing 3 deaths and 18 wounded. Another bomb explodes in front of the HSBC bank in Diyarbakir, injuring one person.
- On 23rd March, radio Medya FM and the television stations, Gun TV and Soz TV in the south-east of Anatolia, broadcast programmes in the Kurdish language in full legality, for the first time in Turkey.

- On 25th March, 14 members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) die in struggles against police forces. At the funerals of these 14 individuals on 28th March in Diyarbakir, confrontations break out, causing seven more dead. In all, seven soldiers and one police officer die this month in confrontations with Kurdish separatists.

- On 25th March, President Ahmet Necdet rejects the nomination of Adnan Buyukdeniz by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to the post of Director of the Central Bank. The President declares that Buyukdeniz, CEO of an Islamic bank, is an "inappropriate" choice.
- From 28th to 31st March, 9 people die and 360 are wounded during protests at Diyarbakir, in the south-east, the majority of them children.

Syria

- On 17th and 18th March, exiled opponents of the al-Assad regime, among them Ali Sadreddine al-Bayanuni, the Comptroller General of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the former Vice President, Abdel Halim Khaddam, who had resigned in June 2005 after having accused President al-Assad of being involved in the assassination of the former Lebanese president, Rafiq Hariri, meet in Brussels, where they announce the formation of a new National Salvation Front.
- On 23rd March, President Bashar al-Assad appoints Najah al-Attar to the post of Vice President for Cultural Affairs. It is the first time a woman occupies this post in Syria.

Lebanon

- On 3rd March, the leaders of the main political forces in Lebanon meet at a "Conference for National Dialogue" to reach agreement on the main issues of national interest, such as the Rafiq Hariri affair, Resolution 1559 of the Security Council and relations with Syria. The participants express consent with the government policy of creating a court "of an international nature" to judge those responsible for the assassination of Hariri and extending the prerogatives of the International Independent Investigation Commission to other attacks committed since October 2004.

- On 14th March, Serge Brammertz, the Commissioner of the International Independent Investigation Commission into the Assassination of Former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafiq Hariri, publishes his report on the progress of the inquiry. It states that the Syrian government has stepped up cooperation with the inquiry and confirms that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has accepted to meet with investigators. On 29th March, the United Nations Security Council adopts Resolution 1664 (2006) demanding the establishment of an international court to try those responsible for Hariri's assassination.

Jordan

- On 14th March, the Prosecutor for State Security finds Abu Misab Zarqawi and 10 accomplices guilty of participating in a series of suicide attacks against hotels in Amman in November 2005 that caused 60 casualties.

Egypt

- On 17th March, the H5N1 avian influenza virus takes its first human victim in Egypt, in the Province of Qaliubiya, near Cairo.

Libya

- On 3rd March, the Arab newspaper Al-Hayat announces the release of 130 political prisoners, the majority of whom are members of the Muslim Brotherhood.
- On 5th March, the General People's Congress (GPC, the legislative body) reshuffles the General People's Committee (the cabinet) and appoints Al-Baghdadi Ali al-Mahmudi to the post of Prime Minister.

Tunisia

- On 2nd March, in an amnesty before the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Independence, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali decides to release 1,259 prisoners and grant conditional discharge to 359 detainees. Nothing similar had occurred in over ten years, the Head of State even allowing 70 Islamists, members of the banned movement Ennahda, including Hamadi Jebali, Direc-

tor of the newspaper *Al Fajr* (Dawn), to benefit from it. On 6th March, six more prisoners, members of a group called the "Internauts of Zarzis," after the name of a village in southern Tunisia, are also freed.

- On 3rd March, the Tunisian authorities legalise the Greens for Progress Party (PVP), the first environmentalist party to emerge in Tunisia. Mongi Khamassi is the founder.

- On 20th March, Tunisia commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of its independence. In his speech, President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali announces his strategic goals for the future, among them, to double the per capita income over the next ten years and significantly decrease unemployment over the next few years.

Algeria

- On 4th March, within the framework of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, the first group of Islamic militants is released. The Minister of Justice had announced the pardon of 2,100 suspected or convicted militant Islamists.

- On 10th March, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamed Bedjaoui, and his Russian counterpart sign an agreement cancelling Algeria's debt to Russia in exchange, according to the Russian media, for the purchase of Russian military material.

Morocco

- On 18th March, the *Journal Hebdomadaire* publishes the results of a poll in which 47% of Moroccans declare that they intend to vote for the (Islamist) Justice and Development Party (PJD) in the forthcoming legislative elections in 2007.

European Union

- The month of March is marked by criticism of the European Commission's reaction to the protectionist tendencies of certain Member States, such as France and Spain. On 3rd March, the European Commission gives France 15 days to justify its support of the merger of Gaz de France and Suez, and on 6th March, Spain receives the same notice to justify the rejection of the takeover of Endesa by the German company, E.ON.

- On 22nd March, the European Commission adopts a black list of unsafe airline companies.

- On 23rd and 24th March, the heads of state and government at the European Economic Summit in Brussels focus debate on the Lisbon Strategy, which aims to make the EU the most competitive economic area in the world. The 25 also agree on the need to forge a European energy policy in the face of growing dependence on imports, supply uncertainty, elevated, volatile prices, increasing global demand and the threat of climate change. The majority of Member States advocate nuclear energy as the solution.

Arab League

- On 28th and 29th March, the Arab League holds its 18th Summit in Khartoum. The Summit is marked by the absence of a number of key leaders, among them the President of Egypt and the King of Saudi Arabia. The Member States approve the concept of creating a Peace and Security Council to help settle conflicts among Member States, following the model of the African Union's Peace and Security Council. The ministers likewise approve a new voting method to strengthen the weight of League's decisions. Amr Mohammed Musa is reinstated for a second, five-year term as Secretary General of the organisation.

April 2006

On 24th April, the Egyptian resort town of Dahab suffers three successive terrorist attacks causing 21 dead and over 85 wounded. In Italy, Romano Prodi's centre-left coalition, the Union, wins the legislative elections by a narrow margin. Turkey continues to face growing tension in the southeast, a primarily Kurdish area. The former Syrian Vice President, Abdul-Halim Khaddam, in exile in Paris, is convicted by the Syrian military court, accused of having encouraged a foreign attack against Syria and having conspired in order to take power. The Syrian president meets with the International Investigation Commission into the Assassination of Former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafiq

Hariri, as part of the inquiry. In France, the students win their battle against the government's bill on "first employment contracts," forcing it to relinquish the plan. The European institutions reach an agreement on the European Budget for 2007-2013.

Spain

- On 1st April, thousands of Basques take to the streets in Bilbao to demand the start of negotiations between the Spanish government and the organisation Euskadi ta Askatasuna, i.e. "Euskadi and Freedom" (ETA) and the return of Basque prisoners to the Basque Country, as well as self-determination for the region.

- On 7th April, the Minister of Defence, José Bono, resigns and is replaced by the former Minister of Home Affairs, José Antonio Alonso.

- On 25th April, the Popular Party (PP), in the opposition, submits a petition with 4 million signatures to the Congress of Deputies demanding a national referendum on the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia. On 29th April, the Army Chief of Staff, General José Antonio García González is replaced by General Carlos Vilar Turrau, after the former declared that the army would be authorised to intervene should Catalonia become independent.

France

- On 10th April, after several weeks of student and trade union demonstrations throughout the country, President Jacques Chirac announced the repeal of the government's bill on the "first employment contract" (CPE), which aimed to foster employment among young people by allowing employers to dismiss them more easily.

Italy

- On 9th and 10th April, Romano Prodi's centre-left coalition, the Union, takes the legislative elections, with 49.8% of votes in favour and 49.7% in favour of the centre-right coalition headed by the outgoing Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, House of Freedoms. For the first time, Italian expatriates can vote from abroad. On 11th April, Berlusconi denounces voting irregularities and demands that the votes be recounted. On

19th April, the Court of Cassation confirms the victory of the Union.

- On 11th April, the Sicilian Mafia leader, Bernardo Provenzano, is arrested after being sought by the police for 42 years.

Malta

- On 6th April, the European Parliament (EP) votes in favour of a non-binding resolution criticising “the unacceptable living condition of migrants and asylum-seekers at administrative detention centres” in Malta. The EP likewise challenges an underlying principle of the European Regulation entitled 'Dublin II', according to which the first country reached by an asylum-seeker must take charge of said individual, and it demands greater distribution of responsibilities among all European Union Member States.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 7th April, Bosnia's War Crimes Chamber delivers its first verdict since its creation in March 2005. Nedjo Samardzic, a Bosnian Serb, is condemned to 13 years of prison for crimes against humanity committed between 1992 and 1993.
- On 7th April, the Chief of Police of the Republika Srpska or Serb Republic, Dragomir Andan, resigns following complaints from the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Carla del Ponte, on his lack of cooperation with the ICTY.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 3rd and 4th April, Serbian and Albanian delegations attend a new round of negotiations in Vienna on the future status of the Province of Kosovo, under the auspices of the United Nations.
- On 5th April, after several weeks of speculation on the circumstances of the death of the former Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, the Office of the District Public Prosecutor of the Hague confirms that he died of a heart attack.
- On 16th April, Serbia declares a state of emergency due to severe flooding of the Danube, reaching record levels for the century.

Macedonia

- On 10th April, Macedonia declares the abolition of compulsory military service.
- On 11th April, the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, criticises the government's inability to restructure the police.
- On 12th April, a bomb exploding before a restaurant frequented by diplomats and politicians takes one life.

Greece

- On 25th April, demonstrations organised by the Communist Party and anti-globalisation activists break out in Athens in protest against the visit by US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice.

Turkey

- Turkey suffers a number of terrorist attacks during the month of April: three people die on 2nd April in an attack on a public bus; on 5th April, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) sets off a bomb in the offices of the Justice and Development Party (PJD), in power, in the District of Esenyurt and on 16th April, 30 people are injured by a bomb exploding near a café in Bakirkoy.
- On 10th April, Rene van der Linden, Chair of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, accuses the PKK of encouraging violence in Turkey.
- On 11th April, the police arrest 20 people suspected of being Kurdish militants plotting bomb attacks.
- On 11th April, a new trial is instituted against the writer, Orhan Pamuk, at the instigation of 6 Turkish nationalists who accuse him of having insulted the Turkish identity.
- On 18th April, President Ahmet Necdet Sezer approves the government's appointment of Durmus Yilmaz to the post of Governor of the Central Bank.
- On 19th April, the Grand National Assembly (GNA, unicameral legislative body) approves a series of social reforms seeking, among other things, to comply with the demands of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

- On 23rd April, the police arrests 6 people suspected of being members of Al-Qaeda in Gaziantep, in the south-east.

Syria

- In early April, a Syrian military tribunal announces the conviction of the former Vice President, Abdul-Halim Khaddam, in exile in Paris, of having encouraged a foreign attack against Syria and conspiring to take power.
- On 6th April, the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Walid al Moualem, rejects the demand of Lebanese leaders to reinstate diplomatic relations between the two countries, alleging that it would be a premature decision.
- On 7th April, a study carried out by the General Union of Syrian Women and funded by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) reveals that one of every four Syrian women are battered, usually by their husband or father. This study breaks the taboo on discussing violence against women in Syria.

Lebanon

- On 25th April, Serge Brammertz, the Commissioner of the International Independent Investigation Commission into the assassination of Former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, meets with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to continue the inquiry. Brammertz likewise meets with the Vice President and former Prime Minister Farouk al-Sharaa.
- On 26th April, Terje Rød-Larsen, UN Special Representative for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004) in Lebanon, submits his third semi-annual report to the Security Council, in which he asserts that, although there has been progress in implementing the said resolution, a number of demands have not been met, such as the dismantling of all Lebanese and foreign militia, the spread of government authority throughout the territory and strict respect for the country's political independence. The report likewise calls Syria to cooperate with the Lebanese government in order to reinstate diplomatic relations and establish the coordinates of their shared borders.

Egypt

- On 14th April, attacks against three Christian Coptic churches in Alexandria result in one dead and some fifteen wounded. On 15th and 16th April, violent confrontations break out in Alexandria between Muslims and Christian Copts, who denounce increasing attacks against them by Islamist extremists.
- On 19th April, the Minister of Home Affairs announces the arrest of 22 Islamic militants, members of the Victorious Group under the leadership of Ahmed Mohammed Ali Grabr. They are suspected of planning terrorist attacks against tourist sites and Muslim and Christian religious personalities.
- On 24th April, the resort town of Dahab suffers three successive terrorist attacks resulting in 21 dead and over 85 wounded. On 26th April, although the attacks went unclaimed, the Minister of Home Affairs, Abib al-Adli, accuses the Sinai Bedouins, who had been responsible for similar attacks in 2004 and 2005.
- On 26th April, two suicide bomb attacks target the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), a peacekeeping force entrusted with ensuring compliance with the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty of 1979 and stationed in El Gorah. The MFO sustains no casualties.

Tunisia

- On 21st April, Tunisia and Syria sign thirteen cooperation agreements in Tunis, concerning, among other things, extradition of criminals and judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

European Union

- On 4th April, the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission agree to increase the European budget by 4 billion euros over the course of 7 years for the 2007-2013 period, raising it to 862.4 billion euros. The increase will be allocated, among other items, to research and development and EU external relations. The agreement likewise establishes that Parliament will be officially involved in the mid-term budget audit.

- On 30th April, the period of two years during which the majority of European countries had imposed restrictions on the free movement of workers from the 10 new Member States (acceding in 2004) comes to an end. Finland, Greece, Portugal and Spain decide to lift their restrictions, thereby joining Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom, which had opted to allow the free movement of workers from Eastern Europe since 2004. The other 8 Member States decide to maintain restrictions of varying intensity.

May 2006

On 21st May, Montenegro becomes independent. Giorgio Napolitano becomes the new President of Italy and the Prodi Administration is officially approved by the legislative branch. Thousands of Turks demonstrate, demanding the country's secularisation after the assassination of a judge by a radical Islamist. The European Union decides to send reinforcements to the Canary Islands, which are having a hard time handling the significant increase of illegal migrant arrivals. The European Commission breaks off negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro on a stabilisation and Association Agreement. A number of political and human rights activists are arrested in Syria. In Egypt, the People's Assembly accepts the government's request to prolong the state of emergency for a period of 2 years. The United States decides to re-establish full diplomatic relations with Libya and remove it from its list of countries sponsoring terrorism.

Spain

- On 21st May, the President of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, announces at a Socialist Party (PSOE) meeting in Bilbao that peace negotiations with the organisation Euskadi ta Askatasuna, i.e. "Euskadi and Freedom" (ETA) will begin in June.
- On 23rd May, following an appeal by Deputy Prime Minister, María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, the European Union decides to send reinforcements to the Canary Islands, where nearly 7,400 immigrants have arrived since the

start of 2006, 5 times more than the same period in 2005.

France

- On 1st May, Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the Front National, an extreme right-wing party, announces his candidacy for the 2007 presidential elections.
- On 9th May, France, along with 46 other countries, is appointed by the United Nations General Assembly as a three-year member of the new Human Rights Council (UNHRC).
- On 11th May, the FNLC-October 22, one of the branches of the National Liberation Front of Corsica (FLNC), claims authorship for 11 recent terrorist attacks occurring on the island.
- On 16th May, Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin survives a motion of censure concerning the Clearstream corruption affair, tabled by the Socialist Party (opposition) at the National Assembly. The Clearstream Affair has to do with the manipulation by a secret informer (the "canary") of Judge Renaud Van Ruymbeke in his inquiry into the Taiwan Frigate Affair. In this affair, Villepin, by authority of President Jacques Chirac, allegedly sought to smear the reputation of his main political rival, Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister of Home Affairs and Regional Development and President of the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP).
- On 29th and 30th May, the most significant demonstrations since the riots throughout the country occurring in October and November 2005 break out in the suburbs of Montfermeil and Clichy-sous-Bois, where young Arab immigrants set fire to cars and confront the police. The protests arise due to the arrest of a young immigrant who had an argument with a bus driver and the attempt of the Montfermeil Mayor to prohibit people from gathering in groups of more than three people in the streets.

Italy

- On 10th May, Giorgio Napolitano, Prime Minister Romano Prodi's candidate, becomes the new Italian president. He takes up office on 15th May. The following day he authorises Prodi to form a new administration and on 17th May, Prodi and his cabinet, primarily consisting of members of the left-wing

Democratic Party and the Margherita (Daisy) coalition, officially take up office. On 19th and 23rd May, respectively, the Senate and Chamber of Deputies approve Prodi's new administration.

- On 28th and 29th May, local elections are held for mayors. The Prodi government keeps its position in the country's major cities, including Rome.

Slovenia

- On 16th May, the European Commission announces that Slovenia has attained a high degree of stable economic convergence with other EU countries and has fulfilled the conditions necessary for adopting the euro on 1st January 2007.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 8th May, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) sentences the Croatian commander of Bosnia, Ivica Rajic, to 12 years of prison for his involvement in the attack on the village of Stupni Do, which led to the death of 31 civilians, and for inhumane treatment of 250 Muslims of the municipality of Vareš.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On 3rd May, the European Commission breaks off negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, in view of the government's inability to arrest General Ratko Mladic, accused of war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), by the deadline of 30th April. The Chief Prosecutor of the ICTY, Carla del Ponte, declares on the same day that the Serbian government found out where Mladic was no later than 24th April. The EU's decision forces the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, Miroslav Labus, who had led association negotiations with the EU, to resign. He describes his administration's failure as a "betrayal of the Serbian people".
- On 21st May, Montenegrins vote in favour of the independence of Montenegro in a referendum. The independents win by a narrow margin, with 55.4% of votes, the EU having estab-

lished 55% as the majority needed for recognising independence. The participation rate was 86.3% of the voting population.

Greece

- On 10th May, the country is paralysed by a strike of public sector workers protesting against the government's social security reforms and demanding a raise in salaries.
- On 12th May, Prosecutor Nikos Dagitis institutes legal proceedings against "unknown persons" within the framework of allegations of abduction and torture by Greek and English agents of 28 Pakistanis suspected of being involved in the London terrorist attacks of 7th July 2005. The opposition requests the Minister of Public Order of the time, Georgios Voulgarakis, to resign. On 30th May, a bomb explodes in front of the home of Voulgarakis, who had become Minister of Culture in February. The attack goes unclaimed.

Cyprus

- On 21st May, legislative elections on the Greek part of the island result in the continuation of the incumbent administration, headed by the Workers' Party (AKEL). The Democratic Party of President Tassos Papadopoulos, opposed to the United Nations plan for the reunification of the island, wins two seats.

Turkey

- On 4th May, a bomb explodes at the passage of a military vehicle in the city of Hakkari, in the east, causing 21 wounded, 11 of them children. On 13th May, a bomb explodes in a garage in Ulalar, in the Province of Erzincan, also in the east, killing four children.
- On 10th May, Ibrahim Kaboglu and Baskin Oran, two professors accused of inciting hatred for having demanded greater rights for minorities in their report on "minorities and cultural rights," are acquitted by a criminal court in Ankara.
- On 17th May, the Islamist lawyer, Alparslan Arslan, opens fire on 5 judges of the Council of State (the supreme administrative court), killing Judge

Mustafa Yucel Ozbilgin, in response to a court decision against the promotion of a teacher because she wears the Islamic veil on her way to school. The following day, thousands of people flood the streets of Ankara to denounce the attack and in support of the secular State. On 19th May, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan criticises General Hilmi Özkök, Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of Turkey, for inciting Turks to pursue demonstrations in favour of the country's secularisation. On 23rd May, Deniz Baykal, the leader of the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), accuses Erdogan, who had criticised the court's decision, and his party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), of encouraging radical Islam.

- On 23rd May, two fighter planes, one Greek and the other Turkish, collide, causing the death of the Greek pilot. With the aim of maintaining the progress made in bilateral relations, both countries downplay the incident.
- On 24th May, Yakin Ertürk, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, travels to the city of Batman to investigate the sudden increase in suicides of women, presumably forced. In 2005, reforms of the Penal Code assign a life sentence to those indicted for "crimes of honour".

Syria

- On 16th May, the *Financial Times* reports that the authorities have arrested several political and human rights activists, among them the writer, Michel Kilo, as well as Fateh Jamous, of the Communist Party of Workers, Nidal Darwish, member of the board of trustees of the Committee for the Defence of Civic Liberties and Human Rights in Syria, Mohmoud Mer'y, Rapporteur of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights in Syria, and Ali al-Abdallah, member of the Committees for Activation of the Civil Society.

Lebanon

- On 17th May, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1680 (2006), which "encourages the Syrian government to respond positively to the re-

quest made by the Lebanese government, in line with the agreements of the Lebanese national dialogue, to delineate their common border, especially in those areas where the border is uncertain or disputed, and to establish full diplomatic relations and representation." On 17th May, the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs declares that the resolution constitutes interference in the internal affairs of his country and is an unjustified instrument of pressure that serves more to complicate matters than to settle them.

Egypt

- On 1st May, the People's Assembly (unicameral) accepts the government's request to extend the state of emergency for a period of 2 years. The state of emergency, which was introduced in 1981 after the assassination of President Anwar Sadat, lends the authorities extended powers of arrest and detention. According to the *Financial Times* of 11th May, approximately 100 people, at least half of them belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood, were arrested after the protests against the extension of martial law.
- On 9th May, the Minister of Home Affairs announces that Nasser Khamis el-Mallahi, leader of Tawhid wal-Jihad, the group considered responsible for the deadly terrorist attacks in Dahab last April, has been killed by security forces.
- On 18th May, thousands of demonstrators gather in the centre of Cairo in support of two judges, Mahmoud Mekky and Hasham Bastawisi, who are being tried by the Supreme Judiciary Council for having publicly denounced electoral fraud during the legislative elections in November and December 2005. The demonstrators likewise protest against the Supreme Court of Appeals' rejection of the appeal filed by Ayman Nur, an opposition politician sentenced to 5 years of prison in December 2005 for falsely registering his party, Al Ghad, for presidential elections. According to the Muslim Brotherhood, 500 of their members were arrested at the demonstration. On 25th May, some 300 judges protest in silence against what they consider government interference in the powers of the judiciary branch.

Libya

- On 15th May, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announces that the United States has decided to re-establish full diplomatic relations with Libya and has removed Libya from its list of countries sponsoring terrorism.

Tunisia

- On 9th May, the UN General Assembly appoints the 47 members of the new Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to serve a term of three years, among them Tunisia.

Algeria

- On 9th May, Algeria is appointed by the UN General Assembly, along with 46 other countries, as a three-year member of the new Human Rights Council (UNHRC).
- On 24th May, Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia submits his resignation. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika appoints his rival, Abdelaziz Belkhadem, until then Minister of Home Affairs and the President's personal representative, to the vacant post. Belkhadem announces that his priorities will be to revise the constitution and raise workers' salaries. Belkhadem's party, the National Liberation Front (FLN) advocates the government's project to reform the constitution, which seeks to prolong the presidential term from two to three years and increase the president's powers, whereas Ouyahia's party, the Democratic National Rally (RND), is against it.

European Union

- On 3rd May, the European Commissioner on Competition announces that 7 chemical industries have been fined, among them French, Italian and Spanish companies, for having operated illegal cartels engendering an increase in prices within the EU.
- On 17th May, the European Parliament provides its final approval of the 2007-2013 budget, as established at the inter-institutional consultation in April.
- On 30th May, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) gives the EU 4 months to bring its agreement with the United States – concerning the provision in

advance of the personal data of transatlantic flight passengers for purposes of anti-terrorist and anti-criminal struggle – in line with European Law.

June 2006

The EU and Albania sign a Stabilisation and Association Agreement, while Croatia and Turkey take another step towards accession to the EU by opening negotiations on the first of 35 items that must be discussed. The Spanish government announces the start of peace negotiations with the organisation "Euskadi and Freedom" (ETA). Whereas the Catalans approve the new Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, in Italy, 61.7% of Italians oppose the project for constitutional reform designed to increase regional autonomy and strengthen the role of the Prime Minister. In Malta, demonstrations by illegal immigrants against their detention intensify. Macedonia experiences political violence less than a month from legislative elections. Serbian leaders declare a state of emergency in the Province of Kosovo. In Egypt, mass arrests of the members and sympathisers of the Muslim Brotherhood continue.

Portugal

- On 30th June, Minister of Foreign Affairs Diogo Freitas do Amaral resigns for health reasons.

Spain

- On 18th June, the new statute of autonomy for Catalonia receives 73.9% votes in favour. Catalonia is granted greater power in judicial and taxation matters and is hereafter officially considered a nation. The participation rate is slightly lower than 50%.
- On 29th June, Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero announces that his administration will begin peace talks with the organisation Euskadi ta Askatasuna, i.e. "Euskadi and Freedom" (ETA). Zapatero states that the negotiation process will be a long and difficult one, and that he will not make any concessions to ETA's demands for independence from Spain. The Popular Party (PP) opposes the initiation of peace talks with ETA.

France

- On 14th June, a Parisian court sentences 25 Algerian members of the Islamist "Chechen Cell," including its leader, Merouane Banhamed, to prison terms of up to 10 years for having planned chemical attacks on France against the Eiffel Tower, among other targets.
- On 17th June, 200 representatives of Muslim communities meet in Paris, where they found the Rally of Muslims in France (RMF). The RMF, chaired by Taoufiq Sebti, considers itself as "complementary to and not in competition with" the government-backed French Council for the Muslim Cult (CFCM).
- On 30th June, the law on tightening control of immigration, though controversial, is passed by the Senate after its adoption in May by the National Assembly. On 14th June, an amendment was adopted extending the clause on the revocation of residency permits for foreigners who are involved in confrontations with the police to include those who publicly insult the French flag or national anthem.

Italy

- On 9th June, *The Independent* reports that the EU Commissioner for the Environment, Stavros Dimas, had accused Italy of having the worst record insofar as environmental issues, with 80 incidents of violations of environmental regulations.
- On 11th June, 400 irregular immigrants disembark on the Island of Lampedusa.
- In a nation-wide referendum on 25th and 26th June, 61.7% of Italians reject the constitutional reform proposed by former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's Administration, which sought to increase the autonomy of Italy's 20 regions and strengthen the role of the Prime Minister to the detriment of the President. The rate of participation in the referendum was 53.6%, which is considered a high turn-out.

Malta

- On 27th June, three police officers and two soldiers are wounded during an attempt to stop a demonstration by

some 200 illegal immigrants from the Safi detention centre marching towards the offices of the Prime Minister. The group was intercepted at Paola, ten kilometres from La Valletta, by hundreds of police officers and soldiers, some of them in anti-riot gear. The immigrants are protesting against their condition as detainees.

Croatia

- On 12th June, the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs formally initiate talks on the first 35 chapters to be negotiated with regard to Croatia's accession to the EU. The first chapter, concerning science and research, is the least controversial one.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 30th June, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) condemns Naser Oric, former commander of the Muslim Bosnian Forces in Srebrenica, to two years of prison. He is convicted of not having taken the measures necessary to prevent the assassination and mistreatment of a number of Serbian prisoners in the former United Nations "safety zone".

Serbia

- On 5th June, Serbian leaders in the Province of Kosovo announce that they have cut off all communication with the Albanian authorities of the province and declare a state of emergency following a number of armed attacks that they attribute to Albanian separatists.
- On 15th June, Serbia officially recognises Montenegro as a sovereign State. The Serbian government declares that the Montenegrins living in Serbia are entitled to Serbian nationality.

Montenegro

- On 3rd June, the legislative branch officially declares Montenegro's independence. On 20th June, Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic is elected temporary Minister of Defence. On 23rd June, Slovenia becomes the first country to establish an embassy in Mon-

tenegro and declares its wish to assist the new republic in acceding to the EU.

- On 28th June, Montenegro becomes the 192nd Member State of the United Nations.

Macedonia

- A month before legislative elections, Macedonia experiences political violence, namely an armed attack against the Albanian leader of Macedonia, Abdulhalim Kasami, a member of the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) comprising part of the coalition government. The United States and the European Union warn Macedonia that this nearly daily violence linked to politics could undermine Skopje's efforts to join NATO and the EU.

Albania

- On 12th June, the EU and Albania sign a Stabilisation and Association Agreement, an important step towards Albania's accession to the EU. This agreement covers, among other items: political dialogue, regional cooperation, a free trade market, movement of workers and cooperation in the fields of justice, liberty and security.

Greece

- On 27th June, the Athens police uses tear gas to disband a crowd of students protesting against reforms of the educational system, injuring two people. The students are against the government's intention to impose a time limit for obtaining a degree.

Cyprus

- On 8th June, President Tassos Papadopoulos effects a cabinet reshuffle following the re-election of his administration in the May legislative elections. Gorgio Lillikas becomes Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- On 15th June, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1687 (2006), extending the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for another 6 months.

Turkey

- On 9th June, Aydin Budak, the Kurdish Mayor of the city of Cizre, is sentenced to 15 months of prison for having praised the imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Abdullah Ocalan.
- On 12th June, the EU Foreign Affairs Ministers officially initiate talks on the first 35 chapters to be negotiated with regard to Turkey's accession to the EU. The first chapter, concerning science and research, is the least controversial one.
- On 16th June, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared that Turkey prefers to break off negotiations for accession to the EU rather than opening its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot ships and aircraft and that it will not comply with the EU's demands unless the embargo on the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is lifted. The EU leaders warn Turkey that it should not try to associate the lifting of the embargo with granting Greek Cypriots access to Turkish ports and airports. On 28th June, the EU decides to advance in accession negotiations with Croatia instead of Turkey, alleging Turkey's intransigence on Cyprus as the reason for temporarily suspending negotiations. On 30th June, Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen, at a press conference to open Finland's EU Presidency, warns Turkey that accession negotiations could be suspended in the following months should its differences with Cyprus not be resolved.
- On 19th June, a court in Van condemns Ali Kaya and Ozcan Ildeniz, two soldiers accused of attempting to kill Seferi Yilmaz, member of the PKK, in a terrorist attack in Semdinli in November 2005, to 40 years of prison. The attack had caused one death and 12 wounded. On 20th June, Yilmaz is arrested on the accusation of being a member of a terrorist organisation.
- On 23rd June, 11 militant members of the PKK are killed in confrontations with the Security Forces in Cukurca, in the southeast. Nearly 17 soldiers are killed in the course of the month in confrontations with militant Kurds.

Syria

- On 2nd June, an attack against the Syrian public television and radio stations causes 4 deaths, one of them a guard.
- On 4th and 5th June, the National Salvation Front (NSF), a movement in exile led by former Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam, and the leader of the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sadral-din al-Bayanuni, hold their first meeting in London. The NSF decides on the composition of its general secretariat and issues a final declaration announcing that its goal is to change the regime, appealing to the Syrian people and the Armed Forces to join their struggle.

Lebanon

- On 13th June, the Security Council adopts Resolution 1685 (2006) prolonging for 6 months the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) stationed in the Golan Heights.
- On 14th June, Serge Brammertz, the Commissioner of the International Independent Investigation Commission into the Assassination of Former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafiq Hariri, submits an interim report to the Security Council, declaring that Syria's co-operation with the inquiry was "generally satisfactory" and that of Lebanon "excellent." Brammertz commends the considerable progress made in the inquiry but insists on the importance of focussing greater efforts on 14 other attacks that could be connected with this affair. On 15th June, the Security Council's Resolution 1686 (2006) prolongs the Investigation Commission's mandate until 15th June 2007.
- On 16th June, the *Financial Times* reveals that the Lebanese Authorities have uncovered an Israeli spy ring which acknowledges having assassinated several Hezbollah militants and militant Palestinians since 1999.

Egypt

- On 10th June the Women's Summit begins in Cairo, focusing on the economic role of women and seeking to "make them advance in economy and business throughout the world." This

Summit likewise seeks to modify the traditional image of Muslim women as "veiled and silent."

- A number of members and sympathisers of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt are arrested during the course of the month, nearly 200 of them on 12th June during a demonstration in support of a leader of the Brotherhood, Hassan Hayaouan, who was being tried in Zagazig for illegal possession of arms and belonging to an illegal organisation. According to the Muslim Brotherhood, 850 of their members have been arrested over the past three months.
- On 18th June, Waël Al-Ibrachi and Hoda Abou Bakr, of the weekly periodical, *Sawt-al-Oumma* (independent), Abdel Hakim Abdel Hamid, Editor in Chief of the weekly, *Afaaq Arabiya* (with affinities to the Muslim Brotherhood), and the lawyer, Gamal Tag el-Din, of the Muslim Brotherhood, appeared before a criminal court in Cairo for having denounced presumed fraud in the legislative elections of late 2005.
- On 26th June, the Egyptian Parliament, dominated by the incumbent party, adopts a controversial law on the judiciary branch's powers, strongly criticised by the opposition led by the Muslim Brotherhood and judges in favour of reform.
- On 26th June, Ibrahim Eissa, Editor in Chief of the Egyptian opposition weekly, *al-Doustoura*, is condemned to one year of prison for defamation of the Head of State, Hosni Mubarak. In April, he had published an article describing a suit filed against the President by a lawyer and accusing him of selling off public enterprises for ridiculously low sums and squandering international aid. The lawyer was likewise sentenced to a year of prison.

Tunisia

- On 7th June, Belgacem Nawar, involved in the Al-Qaeda network, is condemned to 20 years of prison for his involvement in a suicide attack in Djerba in April 2002 that caused 21 deaths, 14 of them German tourists.

Algeria

- On 4th June, the historic leader of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Abassi

Madani, living in self-imposed exile in Qatar, advocates signing a treaty of friendship between Algeria and France. The Algerian President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, demands that France "officially apologise" for the exactions committed during the colonial period between 1830 and 1962 as a prerequisite to signing the treaty.

Morocco

- On 1st June, three hundred Moroccan Islamists prisoners, arrested and tried after the terrorist attacks of 16th May 2003 in Casablanca and on a hunger strike since 2nd May 2006 to demand their release or retrial, announce that they have "ceased" their strike after negotiations with the Minister of Justice.
- On 18th June, the General Assembly of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty begins in Casablanca. The aim of this two-day meeting is to delve into the state of evolution of the death penalty in the world and to examine the action to be taken in order to encourage countries to endorse the facultative protocol annexed to the pact on civil and political rights. Morocco, which has not applied the death penalty in 13 years, is represented by its National Committee against the Death Penalty.
- On 26th June, the Moroccan section of Amnesty International requests the Moroccan government to authorise visits by independent organisations to all detention centres in the country in order to prevent and put an end to torture.

European Union

- On 7th June, at the third Ministerial Session for Energy Dialogue between the EU and the Organisation of Petrol Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Brussels, both parties decide to step up cooperation.
- On 15th and 16th June, at the European Council meeting in Brussels, the 25 Member States decide to prolong the period for reflection on the European Constitution, which began on 6th June 2005 after it was rejected by the French and Dutch, with the aim of reaching a decision on institutional reforms by the end of 2008.

July 2006

Israel launches a major land, air and sea operation against southern Lebanon after two Israeli soldiers are captured by Hezbollah. The Srebrenica massacre trial begins at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). In Macedonia, the conservative coalition, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) wins the legislative elections following a campaign marked by violence and ethnic tension. A historical high-level meeting takes place between Kosovo Serbs and Albanians to discuss the future status of Kosovo. Turkey experiences escalating violence in the Kurdish southeast. In Egypt, members of the Muslim Brotherhood continue to be arrested. The H5N1 avian influenza virus now breaks out in Spain. On 28th June, Montenegro becomes the 192nd Member State of the United Nations.

Portugal

- On 3rd July, President Aníbal Cavaco Silva officially appoints Luis Amado Minister of Foreign Affairs. Nuno Severiano Teixeira is appointed to the post of Minister of Defence, replacing Amado.

Spain

- On 6th July, an unprecedented meeting takes place between Patxi López, leader of the Basque Socialist Party, and Arnaldo Otegi, leader of the Batauna party. López reminds militant Basques that they will have to relinquish all violence before they will be allowed to have any influence on the region's future.
- On 7th July, the authorities confirm a case of H5N1 avian influenza virus in the Basque Country. It is the first case officially registered in Spain.
- On 24th July, The Spanish Supreme Court orders the release of Hamed Abderrahman, the only Spaniard to have been detained at the US military base in Guantánamo.

France

- On 4th July, a trial begins against 6 former prisoners at the US military base

in Guantánamo. They are accused of criminally conspiring to terrorist ends. This is the first trial of former Guantánamo prisoners in the West.

- On 6th July, the Socialist Party (in the opposition) files an appeal with the Constitutional Court against the controversial law on immigration. The law, among other things, revokes the scheme for full regularisation after 10 years of residence in France and toughens family reunification regulations.
- On 28th July, the Minister of Home Affairs rejects the petition of the UN Committee Against Torture requesting that Adel Teboursky not be extradited to Tunisia during his prison term. Tambours had been condemned for his involvement in the assassination of the commander of Afghanistan's Northern Alliance, Ahmed Shah Masud.

Italy

- On 5th July, Marco Mancini and General Gustavo Pignero, two high-ranking members of SISMI, the Italian intelligence service, are arrested on suspicion of having assisted the CIA in July 2003 in Milan to abduct the Imam Hasan Mustafa Osama Nasr, who was subsequently brought to Egypt where he was allegedly tortured.
- On 7th July, the Milan judge, Fabio Paparella, opens legal proceedings against former Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, and 14 other individuals for fiscal fraud and laundering money through the company, Mediaset, belonging to Berlusconi.
- On 15th July, the Court of Assizes of Cremona condemns Imam Mourad Trabelsi to ten years of prison for international terrorism, namely for participating in a plot aiming to orchestrate attacks against the Cathedral of Cremona as well as the Rome metro.
- On 27th July, with the aim of remedying the overpopulation of the country's prisons, the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) votes in favour of a controversial amnesty freeing 12,000 prisoners. In response, the Minister of Infrastructures, Antonio Di Pietro, threatens to withdraw his party from the government coalition under Prime Minister Romano Prodi if the measure is adopted.

Malta

- On 21st July, after a week-long wait, the Spanish trawler that had rescued a group of 51 illegal immigrants off the coast of Malta is authorised to dock at a Maltese port, after an agreement had been reached among several countries concerning who would deal with the illegal immigrants. Malta did not want to take charge of the migrants alone. The migrants in question were finally distributed among Spain, Italy, Libya, Andorra and Malta.

Slovenia

- On 11th July, European Finance Ministers approve the entrance of Slovenia into the euro zone on 1st January 2007.

Croatia

- On 9th July, a regional summit on the security and enlargement of the European Union begins in Dubrovnik, with the presence of several Prime Ministers of the region.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 14th July, the trial of the Srebrenica massacre, which took the lives of thousands of Bosnian Muslims in 1995, begins at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Seven former Bosnian Serbian officers appear before the court. This historical trial is the largest one held by the ICTY.

Serbia

- On 10th July, proceedings begin at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to try 10 high political and military leaders of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including the former President of Serbia, Milan Milutinovic, for war crimes committed in Kosovo in 1999.
- On 17th June, Serbian Prime Minister, Vojislav Kostunica, in an attempt to re-establish good relations with the EU after the suspension of negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement by the latter on 3rd May, ex-

plains to the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs his action plan to capture Ratko Mladic, indicted for war crimes by the ICTY.

- On 24th July, for the first time since the onset of negotiations fostered by the United Nations on the future status of Kosovo in February 2006, the delegations meet at the highest level. Serbian President Boris Tadic and Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica officially meet with their Albanian counterparts from Kosovo, Fatmir Sejdiu and Lieutenant General Agim Ceku, for the first time. After the meeting, the United Nations Special Envoy to Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari, states that very little progress was made, as both parties maintain their opposed positions.

Macedonia

- On 5th July, the conservative coalition, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), wins the legislative elections following a campaign marked by violence and ethnic tension. On 6th July, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) announces that elections have been effected democratically, despite several isolated cases of irregularities.

Greece

- On 21st July, the French Minister of Home Affairs, Nicolas Sarkozy, and the Greek Minister of Public Order, Vyrion Polydoros, sign an agreement in Athens to step up bilateral police cooperation, in particular in the struggle against terrorism and on immigration matters.

Cyprus

- On 3rd June, Greek Cypriot President, Tassos Papadopoulos, and President Mehmet Ali Talat, of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), meet for the first time since the Greek Cypriots rejected the island reunification plan proposed by the United Nations in a referendum in 2004. On 31st July, Greek and Turkish Cypriot governments exchange lists containing the subjects they would like to discuss in

an effort to re-open dialogue on the island's reunification.

Turkey

- Several bombs go off in the country over the course of July, causing one death in Diyarbakir on 6th July.
- On 8th July, Kurdish politicians and eminent figures announce the creation of a new party, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), which advocates democracy, freedom of expression, federalism and the pacific resolution of the Kurdish question.
- On 18th July, the Turkish government, following an escalation in violence in the southeast resulting in the death of 15 soldiers in one week, decides to launch a cross-border operation against the base camps of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq. On 22nd July, US President George W. Bush, against a unilateral Turkish operation, promises Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan US support in his struggle against the PKK. During the course of the month, 45 police officers and soldiers and 31 Kurds lose their lives in confrontations.

Lebanon

- On 12th July, following the abduction by Hezbollah of two Israeli soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, near Shtula in Israel, Israel launches a vast land, aerial and sea operation against southern Lebanon that is to last the entire month with the aim of recovering the two soldiers. The Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, declares that the abduction of the two soldiers is intended to draw attention to the situation of Lebanese, Palestinian and Arab prisoners in Israel. This is the first time that Israel crosses the border since its retreat from southern Lebanon in May 2000. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert describes Hezbollah's attack as an "act of war" and accuses the Lebanese government of attempting to destabilise the entire region. The Lebanese government requests an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council and denies being responsible for the escalation in violence. Foreign countries organise the mass evacuation of their nationals. On 13th July, Israel imposes a general em-

bargo on Lebanon and kills 52 civilians in air raids over southern Lebanon and in the bombardment of the Beirut airport. In reply, Hezbollah launches rockets hitting the cities of Nahariya and Haifa and killing 2 Israelis. On 13th July, the President of the United States declares that Israel "has the right to self-defence" and places responsibility for the crisis on Syria. The following day, the Europeans qualify the offensive as "disproportional" while condemning Hezbollah's rocket strikes. On 14th July, Nasrallah survives an attack against his home in Beirut. On 16th July, 8 Israelis die in Haifa rocket strikes. On 17th July, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan calls for the creation of an international stabilisation force to put a stop to the combat by reinforcing the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Kofi Annan's plan is received without a great deal of enthusiasm by Israel and the United States. On 18th July a United Nations delegation travels to Israel to propose a series of measures to arrive at a cease-fire, including sending an international force. On 19th July, 57 Lebanese civilians die in an Israeli air raid and two Israeli children are killed by Hezbollah rockets. On 20th July, Israel warns Lebanese civilians to leave southern Lebanon and move north of the Litani River. On 21st July, Israel mobilises thousands of reservists. On 22nd July, Israel launches a vast land operation against the city of Bint Jbail, a stronghold of Hezbollah resistance. On 23rd July, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, accuses Israel of violating human rights. On 25th July, 4 members of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) are killed by an Israeli airplane. On 26th July, the Israeli army experiences its most violent combat in and around Bint Jbail. On 26th July, the international community meeting in Rome cannot agree to appeal for a cease-fire, the US demanding a preliminary agreement for lasting peace. The final declaration calls on the United Nations to urgently authorise an international force to come to the support of the Lebanese army. On 26th July, Iran calls for a cease-fire, accusing the US of want-

ing to redesign the political map of the Middle East. On 30th July, 60 civilians, 37 of them children, die in an Israeli air strike on the city of Qana, raising the pressure exerted by the international community on Israel to stop its offensive. Following the massacre, the Lebanese government toughens its position and publicly praises Hezbollah. It likewise declares that it rejects any negotiation unless there is a cease-fire, causing Condoleezza Rice to cancel her visit to Beirut. Israel announces a suspension of hostilities for 48 hours in order to allow civilians to flee from combat zones. Since the start of hostilities, over 600 Lebanese have lost their lives, as well as 19 Israeli civilians and 33 Israeli soldiers. Over 500,000 Lebanese people have had to leave their homes.

Jordan

- On 24th July, Amnesty International publishes a report accusing the Jordanian authorities of being accomplices to acts of torture and having participated in secret transfers of prisoners orchestrated by the United States. The report points in particular to Jordan's General Intelligence Department (GID).

Egypt

- On 8th July, Security Forces arrest 27 members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Ras el Bar, a coastal city north of Cairo.
- On 9th July, independent and opposition newspapers suspend publication in protest against a new law prohibiting journalists from inquiring into corruption affairs upon pain of prison. On 10th July, the president revokes the part of the law establishing automatic imprisonment for journalists contravening the law, leaving it to the judges to impose a prison sentence or not.

Libya

- On 12th July, official Libyan sources indicate that the United States has lifted its restrictions on Libya with regard to aerial transport, including the sale of aircraft. In 1978, the United States had imposed a series of economic and military sanctions on Libya, particularly involving air transport.

Tunisia

- On 6th July, Aderrahmane Tlili, a former opposition candidate to the presidential elections in prison since 2003, begins a hunger strike to protest against being deprived of medical attention.
- On 25th July, Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali asserts that his country has no lesson to learn with regard to respecting human rights, in allusion to a recent European Parliament (EP) resolution on the situation of these rights in Tunisia. The EP had demanded "explanations" of Tunisia on the banning of a congress organised by the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH) and "acts of violence against Tunisian human rights activists and magistrates."

Morocco

- On 10th and 11th July, the first Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development is held in Rabat, bringing together representatives from 57 European and African countries. The final declaration states that "the management of migration between Africa and Europe must take the form of a partnership aiming to struggle against poverty and promote sustainable development and co-development." The participants likewise adopt an Action Plan to step up cooperation in the struggle against illegal migration, which combines security and development aspects. Algeria refuses to participate in the conference.
- On 11th July, at the presentation of its annual report, the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) denounces the violation of freedom of expression in Morocco, in particular condemning the judicial "harassment" suffered by certain periodicals. AMDH moreover denounces the voting system adopted on 29th June by the Moroccan government, which, according to it, is designed to "brush aside small political parties" from the 2007 legislative elections, as well as "those that did not participate in the 2002 elections."

European Union

- On 1st July, Finland takes up the rotating presidency of the EU for the fol-

lowing six months. Among its priorities are greater transparency in decision-making and the pursuit of EU enlargement, along with discussion as to the EU's capacity for absorption.

- On 21st July, Italy becomes the 18th EU Member State to lift all restrictions on the free movement of workers from the ten new Member States (acceding in 2004).
- On 24th July, European Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs give their temporary consent to measures put forth by the European Commission to combat illegal immigration to Europe, including the creation of a "Rapid Border Intervention Team" to assist border patrols.

August 2006

Despite pressure from the international community, Israel pursues its land and aerial offensive against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, Bekaa Valley and Beirut during the first half of August. Hezbollah withstands the Israeli attacks and launches hundreds of rockets against Israel. On 14th August, the Lebanese army begins a cease-fire and the reinforced UNIFIL is deployed in southern Lebanon. In Turkey, Kurdish separatists claim authorship for several bomb attacks targeting tourist areas and causing three deaths and dozens of wounded. In Algeria, the period for granting amnesty to members of armed groups handing in their weapons to the authorities within the framework of the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation comes to a close. Jordan tightens its anti-terrorist laws. The Italian government approves a new bill of law on nationality. Italy requests aid of the EU in the face of the growing influx of illegal immigrants. The region of Galicia in Spain is ravaged by deliberately set forest fires.

Portugal

- On 10th August, the socialist government decides to regularise 40,000 immigrants in an irregular situation and facilitate family reunification, while strengthening sanctions against employers of illegal workers.

Spain

- On 4th August, a number of forest fires ravage the Region of Galicia, in northern Spain. 70,000 hectares are burned and 4 people die. The police proceeds to arrest 30 people suspected of having intentionally set the fires. On 16th August, firemen manage to control the flames.
- From 18th to 20th August, over 1,000 illegal immigrants from Africa, primarily from Senegal, arrive on the coasts of the Canary Islands. On 24th August, Spain signs an agreement with Senegal allowing both countries to patrol the Senegalese coast.
- On 19th August, the organisation Euskadi ta Askatasuna, i.e. "Euskadi and Freedom" (ETA) declares that the peace process is in "crisis" and accuses the government of being "obstructionist" and "repressive" since the announcement of the onset of peace negotiations last June.

France

- On 9th August, an armed attack against a government building in Ajaccio, Corsica, is claimed by Clandestini Ribelli (Clandestine Rebels), a hitherto unknown group.
- On 17th August, 1,000 squatters are evicted from a former student residence in the Parisian suburb of Cachan by a judicial order from 2004. This is the largest eviction operation ever carried out in France. Those among them who are illegal immigrants are deported while the others are relocated to other lodgings.

Italy

- On 2nd August, the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) approves a series of measures aiming to reduce the deficit. The government aims to reduce the deficit to 2.8% of the GDP for 2007, after 4 consecutive years of deficit above the threshold of 3% of the GDP imposed by the EU.
- On 4th August, the Council of Ministers passes a bill into law reducing the residence period necessary for acquiring Italian nationality from 10 to 5 years and introducing the principle of "jus soli" (birthright citizenship), allowing children born in Italy of foreign parents to

automatically acquire Italian citizenship.

- On 7th August, a European warrant of arrest is issued against 26 CIA agents suspected of being involved in the abduction of the Imam, Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr, in Milan in 2003. The latter was allegedly transported to Egypt, where he was tortured.
- On 20th August, 70 illegal immigrants drown off the coast of the Island of Lampedusa. The Minister of Home Affairs, Giuliano Amato, calls for EU aid in the face of growing illegal immigration, with the number of illegal immigrants arriving on the island since the beginning of 2006 rising to 10,000.

Serbia

- On 14th August, it becomes known that the German citizen, Joachim Ruecker, has been appointed to succeed Soren Jessen-Peterson to the post of Chief of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).
- On 14th August, the *Financial Times* reports that Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Serbian delegation to negotiations on the "final status" of the province of Kosovo, suggests a partition of the province should Albanians and Serbs not feel capable of living together. Ruecker opposes the partition of Kosovo.
- On 26th August, a bomb explodes in a bar highly frequented by Serbs in Mitrovica. The Serbian public television reports that the attack was committed by a young Albanian.

Montenegro

- On 30th August, Montenegro abolishes compulsory military service.

Macedonia

- On 28th August, the Sobranje (unicameral legislative body) approves the new administration under Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, leader of the conservative coalition called Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). The government's priorities are to improve the standard of living and the employment rate, struggle against corruption, strengthen democratic institutions and improve inter-ethnic relations.

Turkey

- Over the course of the month of August, there are several bombings at tourist sites, beginning on 4th August, when two bombs are detonated in Adana, injuring 15 people. On 13th August, a bomb explodes in the District of Kumkapi, causing 5 wounded. On 21st August, one person is injured in Izmir by a bomb explosion. On 27th August, a bomb goes off in Bagcelir, causing 6 wounded. On 28th August, the explosion of a bomb in a shopping centre in Antalya results in 3 dead and a dozen wounded. That same day, three bombs detonate in Marmaris, one of them on a minibus, injuring 31 people. Also on the same day, another bomb attack is attempted in Izmir but foiled by the police, who are able to arrest a Kurd suspected of being a separatist rebel. On 29th August, the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), an off-shoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), claims the bombings targeting tourist areas and warns tourists not to come to Turkey. TAK likewise claims authorship for a number of forest fires. On 30th August, a bomb explodes in Mersin, injuring one person. Six soldiers are killed over the course of the month in confrontations with Kurdish separatists.
- On 16th August, *The Independent* announces that the EU has proposed a plan to transfer authority over the ports of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) to the United Nations in order to prevent the failure of negotiations for Turkey's accession to the EU. Nonetheless, Turkey demands the economic embargo against the TRNC be lifted as a condition for opening its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot vessels and aircraft.
- On 28th August, General Yasar Buyukanti, a fervent nationalist and secularist, becomes the Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Armed Forces. He declares that one of his priorities will be the defeat of Kurdish separatism.

Lebanon

- On 1st August, the EU Foreign Affairs Ministers fail to reach an agreement on a call for immediate cease-fire, under pressure from the United Kingdom, Germany, The Netherlands

and Poland. The EU27 issue a communiqué demanding an "immediate suspension of hostilities followed by a permanent cease-fire." On 1st August, even before the 48-hour truce announced by Israel on 30th July is over, the Israeli Armed Forces launch a major operation in Bekaa Valley. The Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, announces that Israel has destroyed all Hezbollah infrastructures. Nonetheless, on the following day, Hezbollah launches over 200 missiles against Israel. One of these missiles covers a record distance, striking the city of Jenin. On 3rd August, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference appeals to the United Nations to demand an immediate cease-fire. On 3rd August, Israel resumes its aerial offensive against Hezbollah positions in Beirut, whereas the latter launches over 100 rockets against Israel. On 4th August, Israel intensifies its attack and destroys the last practicable route between Lebanon and Syria, thereby cutting off humanitarian aid to the over one million displaced citizens. On the same day, an Israeli air raid on the city of El Qaa in Bekaa Valley kills 28 farmers, while Hezbollah launches at least 195 rockets against Israel. On 4th August, Human Rights Watch publishes a report accusing Israel of war crimes. On 6th August, 9 Israeli reservists die under fire from Hezbollah missiles. A number of Lebanese soldiers who had not generally been involved in combat are killed. On 6th August, the Lebanese government rejects a French-US proposal for a United Nations resolution, alleging that it would legitimise Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. On the following day, the Arab League comes to the support of Lebanon and demands substantial changes in the French-US proposal. On 7th August, Israel intensifies its aerial offensive over southern Lebanon and Bekaa Valley. On 8th August, the Lebanese government votes in a seven-point plan aiming to foster a stable cease-fire and including, among other items, sending soldiers to southern Lebanon, disarming Hezbollah, extending Lebanese authority throughout national territory, a long-standing international demand, and resolving the Chebaa Farms conflict. On 9th August, the Israeli Commander-in-

Chief, Halutz, authorises the Israeli army to pursue its penetration of Lebanese territory to the Litani River in view of the escalating violence. Hezbollah launches over 160 rockets. On 10th August, Israel broadens its offensive against Hezbollah and Israeli troops enter the city of Marjayoun. On 11th August, the Security Council adopts Resolution 1701 (2006) calling for a complete stop of hostilities, demanding that the Lebanese government and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) deploy their forces in southern Lebanon and demanding that the Israeli government colaterally withdraw all its forces from southern Lebanon. The new UNIFIL has an increased mandate: it is authorised to take all necessary measures in the sectors where its forces are deployed, must ensure that its theatre of operations not be used for hostile activities and it must protect civilians exposed to imminent danger of physical violence. On 12th August, the Israeli offensive intensifies with the aim of maximising control over southern Lebanon before the cease-fire comes into effect. Twenty-four soldiers die. On 14th August, a fragile cease-fire begins, though some minor confrontations take place. This war has taken the lives of some 500 Hezbollah combatants, 119 Israeli soldiers, 44 Israeli civilians and 1,200 Lebanese civilians. In southern Lebanon, the Israeli army occupies a 15km strip of territory. The Israeli army calls on the Lebanese civilian population not to return to southern Lebanon before the arrival of the Lebanese army and United Nations peacekeeping forces. On 14th August, the Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, declares that his combatants have won a historic and strategic victory over Israel, whereas the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, maintains that Israel has eliminated a "state within a state." On 16th August, France accepts command over the UNIFIL. France, Italy, Belgium, Spain, Finland and Poland have decided to send troops to swell the ranks of the UNIFIL. On 17th August, the Lebanese army begins to move south of the Litani River. On 18th August, Israel launches an operation in Bekaa Valley with the aim of thwarting arms deliveries to Hezbollah from Syria and

Iran. On 20th August, Israel declares that it does not accept the involvement in the UNIFIL of troops from countries not having diplomatic relations with Israel. On 31st August, the 51 States participating in the international meeting of donors for Lebanon in Stockholm pledge US\$ 940 million in emergency reconstruction aid.

Jordan

- On 6th August, two Jordanian Islamist MPs are sentenced by a military court to serve prison terms for having commemorated the terrorist, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, killed on 7th June 2006 in Iraq.
- On 27th August, the Jordanian Parliament approves an anti-terrorist law authorising preventive arrest of suspects, despite the criticism put forth by Islamists and human rights activists, who rebuke the law for limiting freedom of expression and giving the police and prosecutors extensive powers over those suspected of fostering terrorist attacks.

Egypt

- On 5th August, Ayman al-Zawahiri, spokesperson for Al-Qaeda's leader, Bin Laden, announces on the Al-Jazeera television station that Gamaat-i-Islamiya, the main Islamist group behind the insurrection in Egypt in the nineties, has joined the ranks of Al-Qaeda.
- On 28th August, President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak creates a Ministry for Local Development and a Ministry for Economic Development to replace the Ministry of Planning.

Libya

- On 29th August, the death sentence is once again imposed on the five Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian doctor accused by the Libyan courts of having intentionally injected over 400 children with the AIDS virus. The verdict of the first trial was overruled by the Supreme Court.

Tunisia

- On 13th August, Tunisia commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Personal Status

Code (PSC), unique in the Arab world, namely abolishing polygamy and the practice of repudiation.

Algeria

- On 28th August, the six-month period granted by the government to armed groups to end their armed activities and hand over their weapons in exchange for the cancellation of judicial proceedings against them comes to an end. This amnesty is part of the government's "Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation," approved by referendum in September 2005. According to the Minister of Home Affairs and Local Communities, Yazid Zerhouni, between 250 and 300 terrorists have handed in their weapons under this amnesty.

Morocco

- On 31st August, the MAP press agency reports that 56 members of the Islamist group Ansar el-Mahdi who were preparing attacks against Morocco have been arrested.

European Union

- On 16th August, the Home Affairs Ministers of Finland, France, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia and the United Kingdom meet in London and adopt additional measures for European cooperation in the struggle against terrorism.

September 2006

The Coalition for a European Montenegro wins the first legislative elections of Montenegro since its independence. The government of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is dissolved and Prime Minister Ferdi Sabit Soyer forms a new governmental coalition with the new Freedom and Reform Party (ORP). The European Parliament's report on Turkey's progress towards accession to the European Union (EU) indicates "persistent shortcomings" in human rights issues, and the European Parliament calls on Turkey to recognise the Republic of Cyprus before the end of 2006. Israel ends its sea and air embargo of Lebanon and the UNIFIL is de-

ployed in southern Lebanon. In two days, over 1,400 illegal immigrants reach the Canary Islands, leading the eight southern EU countries to unite in their struggle against clandestine migration. A series of unprecedented agreements are signed concerning Gibraltar.

Portugal

- On 14th September, the Minister of Justice announces that the State of Portugal officially recognises the Jewish and Muslim communities as religious organisations established in Portugal, granting them certain rights.

Spain

- On 3rd and 4th September, over 1,400 illegal immigrants disembark on the Canary Islands. On 5th September, the Minister of Labour and a number of NGOs reach an agreement to double the number of reception centres for irregular immigrants transferred from the Canary Islands to the Spanish mainland, while the Minister of Home Affairs sends over 450 police officers to assist in the struggle against illegal immigration. On 13th September, the authorities begin to deport hundreds of Senegalese nationals in order to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. On 21st September at a an EU Ministerial meeting, the Commissioner for Immigration, Franco Frattini, and the French Minister of Home Affairs, Nicolas Sarkozy, accuse Spain of having encouraged illegal immigration by regularising over 600,000 illegal immigrants in February 2005. On 29th September, the eight southern EU countries agree to cooperate in the struggle against illegal immigration from Africa. These eight countries decide to reinforce maritime patrols, create a joint coastguard network and develop an electronic alarm system capable of detecting clandestine vessels leaving the African coast.
- On 22nd September, the newspaper ABC reports that the organisation Euskadi ta Askatasuna, (ETA) has threatened to reconsider its ceasefire should the government not make "significant progress" by 15th October.

France

- On 1st September, the Minister of Home Affairs, Nicolas Sarkozy, declares that 12,716 illegal immigrants had been deported between January and July 2006. On 18th September, he states that 6,924 illegal immigrant families had received a residency permit under the partial amnesty announced in June for families whose children were born and go to school in France.
- On 11th September, the fifth anniversary of Al-Qaeda's terrorist attacks on the United States, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al-Qaeda's second in line, directly threatens France in a video and appeals to the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) to strike out at the "French crusaders."
- On 13th September, the National Front for the Liberation of Corsica – Union of Fighters (FLNC-UC) claims authorship for 21 recent attacks and attempted attacks on the island.

Italy

- On 4th September, Prime Minister Romano Prodi upholds his plan to reduce the budget and reform pensions before the parliamentary leaders of his coalition as well as before the leaders of the three major Italian trade unions in order to defuse growing agitation among the trade unions and the left wing of his coalition.
- On 6th September Silvio Berlusconi, after losing the immunity enjoyed as a Prime Minister, can be included by Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón in the inquiry on fiscal fraud involving the Spanish TV Station, Telecinco.
- On 18th September, Romano Prodi's economic advisor resigns in the aftermath of the controversy regarding Telecom Italia. On 28th September, Prodi declares before the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) that he refutes allegations made by the House of Freedoms, Silvio Berlusconi's centre-right coalition in the opposition, according to which he allegedly interfered in Telecom Italia's change in strategy.
- On 19th September, Senator Sergio De Gregorio retires from the Italy of Values party (IDV) that is part of the government coalition to form a new movement called Italians in the

World. As a consequence, the government coalition only maintains a majority by one seat in the Senate.

Croatia

- On 5th September, the organisation for the defence of human rights, Human Rights Watch (HRW), warns Croatia that its accession to the EU will be delayed due to problems regarding violation of the human rights of Serbian refugees having fled their country during the war of 1991-1995. HRW declares that the Croatian government must demonstrate greater commitment to improving the conditions of life for this community if they wish to progress in EU accession procedures.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 27th September, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) condemns Momcilo Krajisnik, Serbian member of the collective presidency of Bosnia from 1996 to 1998, to 27 years of prison for persecution, extermination, murder, deportation and forced relocation of non-Serbian civilians during the conflict in Bosnia.

Serbia

- On 19th September, the President of the Kosovo Assembly, Kole Berisha, declares that revolts by citizens of Kosovo can be expected if the region does not gain independence.
- On 29th September, the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Carla del Ponte, declares that she is not satisfied with Serbia's plan of action for arresting and extraditing General Ratko Mladic, convicted of war crimes by the ICTY. The Commissioner for EU Enlargement, Olli Rehn, declares that nothing encourages him to relaunch the negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement suspended in May.

Montenegro

- On 10th September, the Coalition for a European Montenegro, dominated by the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) headed by Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic, wins an absolute majority

at the first legislative elections since the country's independence. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) ratifies the elections. Voter turnout reaches 71.4%.

Albania

- On 6th September, the European Parliament ratifies the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between Albania and the EU, the first stage towards eventual accession to the EU. This agreement is designed to progressively establish a free trade area and bring Albania closer to European values and norms through financial and political support.

Cyprus

- On 5th September, the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Cyprus, Phivos Klokkaris, resigns for health reasons. On 8th September, the Minister of Home Affairs, Andreas Christou, resigns with the aim of running in the local elections in December. Neokolas Silikiotis takes up the functions of Minister of Home Affairs.
- On 7th September, an MP of the Republican Turkish Party (CTP), in power in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), along with three MPs from the National Unity Party, in the opposition, resign and together they form a new, right-wing party called Freedom and Reform Party (ORP). Prime Minister Ferdi Sabit Soyer accuses the Turkish government of having encouraged these resignations, which followed a meeting with the Turkish Minister for Cypriot Affairs, Saban Desli. On 11th September, the government of the TRNC is dissolved after the Prime Minister, Ferdi Sabit Soyer, withdraws his party, the Republican Turkish Party (CTP), from the coalition formed with the Democratic Party (DP). The collapse of the government is, among other things, the consequence of a disagreement concerning the island's reunification. Soyer accuses the leader of the DP, Serdar Denktash, of holding a nationalist position and opposing concessions in favour of the Greek Cypriot government despite European demands. On 13th September, Soyer forms a new government coalition with the ORP. On 25th September, the president approves the new administra-

tion. The leader of the ORP, Turgay Avci, is appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. The new government commits to finding a solution to the division of the island and the isolation of the TRNC.

Turkey

- On 3rd September, a bomb explodes in Catak in the southeast, causing 2 dead and 10 wounded. On 12th September, the Turkish Revenge Brigade (TIT) sets off a bomb at a bus stop in Diyarbakir, killing 10 people and wounding 17. On 23rd September, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) explodes a truck in front of a police station in Igdir, killing 17 people. Twenty-five soldiers and 14 Kurdish rebels lose their lives during the course of the month in confrontations.
- On 6th September, Amnesty International declares that unfair trials are taking place under anti-terrorist laws and that confessions obtained under torture are still used as proof in Turkey. On 22nd September, a mission of the European Parliament travelling primarily through the southeast of the country reports an increase in allegations of torture and abuse.
- On 21st September, the novelist, Elif Shafak, is acquitted from the charge of denigrating the Turkish identity, as per Article 301 of the Penal Code, in her novel, "The Bastard of Istanbul," which deals with the Armenian question. The Head of the European Commission delegation to Turkey, Hansjörg Kretschmer, declares that Article 301 hampers the freedom of expression and should be amended or suppressed.
- On 26th September, 56 Kurdish mayors go on trial accused of aiding and abetting a terrorist organisation. They had asked the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, not to shut down the Denmark-based Roj TV radio station, which the Turkish Authorities believe serves as a mouthpiece for the PKK.
- On 27th September, the European Parliament approves a report on the progress of Turkey towards accession to the EU, revealing Turkey's "persistent shortcomings" in such spheres as freedom of expression, the rights of religious and other minorities, relations between civilians and the armed forces, women's rights, trade union and cultural rights

and the independence of the judicial branch. The report likewise warns Turkey that if it does not comply with the EU's demand to lift the blockade against traffic from the Republic of Cyprus, accession negotiations could be suspended. The Parliament likewise calls on Turkey to recognise the Republic of Cyprus before the end of 2006 under pain of suspending said negotiations.

Syria

- On 12th September, Syrian security services foil an attack against the US Embassy in Damascus. The United States thanks Syria for having intercepted the attack and declares that it hopes Syria will become an ally in the struggle against terrorism.

Lebanon

- On 1st September, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan announces that Syria has committed to institute an embargo on weapons to Lebanon and is not opposed to international personnel contributing technical assistance for enforcing the embargo. On 3rd September, 1,000 Italian marines disembark in southern Lebanon to reinforce the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). On 4th September, Annan announces that Israel and Hezbollah have accepted mediation by the United Nations to negotiate a possible exchange of prisoners. On 5th September, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey consents to contributing to the international force. On 7th September, Israel lifts its air blockade against Lebanon and on 8th September, it lifts its sea embargo. On 13th September, the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, takes the historical decision of sending 2,400 aerial and naval troops. On 13th September, the Israeli armed forces declare that 80% of the territory they occupy in southern Lebanon has been handed over to the UNIFIL but that they reserve the right to pursue their secret surveillance, as the two Israeli soldiers abducted by Hezbollah have not yet been released. On 13th September, Amnesty International accuses Hezbollah of war crimes for deliberately targeting civilian populations in their attacks. On 20th September, the

UNIFIL announces that it now has a force of 5,000 troops after the arrival of the French, Italian and Spanish contingents. On 22nd September, some 500,000 people gather in Beirut to celebrate the historic victory of Hezbollah against Israel. Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah declares that Hezbollah will hand in its weapons once a fair, strong government is in place in Lebanon. On 26th September, Chris Clark, Head of the UN Mine Action Coordination Centre in southern Lebanon, declares that nearly one million unexploded cluster bombs are scattered throughout southern Lebanon, possibly delaying the return of the 200,000 displaced civilians. Since the cease-fire, the cluster bombs, the majority of which were fired by Israel on the last days of combat when the cease-fire was imminent, have already caused 15 fatalities and 83 wounded, many of them children.

- On 5th September, Lieutenant Colonel Samir Shehade, Deputy Chief of the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF), narrowly escapes an assassination attempt near Rmeileh. Shehade had been involved in the arrest and interrogation of 4 high security force officials suspected of having orchestrated Hariri's assassination.
- On 25th September, Serge Brammertz, the Commissioner of the International Independent Investigation Commission into the assassination of Former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri, publishes his third interim report, in which he claims to have found links between the assassination of Hariri and 14 other political assassinations in Lebanon. Brammertz states that Syrian cooperation with the inquiry remains "generally satisfactory."

Jordan

- On 4th September, Nabil Ja'urah opens fire on tourists visiting the Roman amphitheatre in Amman, killing a British tourist and wounding three others. On the following day, Iraq's Mujahideen Shura Council applauds the attack in a message posted on Internet.
- On 22nd September, Sajida Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi is sentenced to death for his involvement in the terrorist attack in Amman in November 2005, which had caused 60 dead.

Egypt

- On 19th September, Gamal Mubarak, the son of President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak, makes a speech at the annual conference of the incumbent National Democratic Party (NDP) fostering growing speculation on his aspiration to succeed his father. In his speech, he criticises US politics in the Middle East and declares that Egypt should consider developing nuclear energy. On 22nd September US Ambassador Francis Richardson declares that the United States is willing to contribute its assistance to Egypt for developing a pacific nuclear programme. On 24th September, the Minister of Energy and Electricity, Hassan Younes, declares that the construction of a 1,000 MW nuclear power plant on the Mediterranean coast could be completed by 2016.

Libya

- On 11th September, Human Rights Watch (HRW), in a report entitled, "Stemming the Flow: Abuses Against Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees," accuses Libya of serious human rights violations against migrants, asylum seekers and refugees on its territory.

Algeria

- On 11th September, to mark the 5th anniversary of the terrorist attacks in the US, Al-Qaeda's second-in-line, Ayman al-Zawahiri, announces by video the official incorporation of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) into Al-Qaeda.

Morocco

- On 18th September, the newspaper *Aujourd'hui* reports that the writer and dissident, Abdelmoumen Diouri, has returned to Morocco after 35 years of exile in France, declaring that things have changed in Morocco, which has become a democracy based on rule of law.

European Union

- On 12th September, the European Commission finalises the EU budget for rural development for the financial peri-

od of 2007-2013. The sector will be allocated 77.7 billion euros, with Poland being the greatest beneficiary, followed by Italy, Germany, Spain and France.

- On 26th September, the European Commission concludes in a report that Romania and Bulgaria have made enough progress in their internal reform programmes to accede to the EU in January 2007. The European Commission imposes stricter safeguard clauses than for previous member state accessions.

October 2006

The last Israeli soldiers withdraw from southern Lebanon and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) grows to 9,509 peacekeepers. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) announces a unilateral ceasefire while the European Parliament gives its support to the Spanish government in peace negotiations with the organisation Euskadi ta Askatasuna, i.e. "Euskadi and Freedom" (ETA). Haris Silajdzic (Bosnian), Nebojsa Radmanovic (Serbian) and Zeljko Komsic (Croatian) are elected to the tripartite presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In a referendum, the Serbs approve a new constitution describing Kosovo as an integral part of the country. The Commissioner for Enlargement gives the Turks an ultimatum to put an end to their blockade against maritime and aerial traffic from the Republic of Cyprus and implement substantial reforms in the sphere of human rights. The strength of Romano Prodi's government coalition is put to the test.

Portugal

- On 12th October, the Minister of Defence announces that the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, José Manuel Garcia Mendes Cabeçada, will retire in December and that General Luis Vasco Valença Pinto will succeed him.

Spain

- On 5th October, 20 illegal migrants drown off the coast of the Canary

Islands.

- On 6th October, the National Supreme Court in Madrid sentences Javier Pérez Aldunate, member of the organisation Euskadi ta Askatasuna, (ETA), to 41 years of prison for several crimes, including participation in a plot to assassinate King Juan Carlos in 2004. On 16th October, Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero declares that the peace process with ETA is under way, despite ETA's statements in August that the peace process was in crisis. On 23rd October, ETA is accused of having stolen 350 firearms in a weapons depot in Vauvert, southern France. On 25th October, the European Parliament adopts a resolution providing support to the government's efforts for negotiating a peace treaty with ETA. On 26th October, three individuals suspected of planning an attack in Vitoria-Gasteiz, the Basque administrative capital, are arrested.

France

- On 19th October, Christophe de Margerie, the Director General of the Exploration-Production Division of the oil company, Total, is placed under judicial investigation, suspected of having paid bribes within the framework of the UN Oil-for-Food programme in Iraq in the 1990s.
- On 26th October, Karim Mehdi is sentenced to 9 years of prison for conspiring to support terrorism. He was an accomplice to Ziad Samir Jarrah and Ramzi bin al-Shib, both implicated in the 11th September terrorist attacks on the United States.

Italy

- On 2nd October, the authorities report that they have arrested the members of an Islamist cell having links with the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in Algeria and which aimed to finance attacks in Algeria. On 8th October, 4 Islamists connected with the GSPC are condemned to prison sentences of up to 6 years for having organised attacks against the metro in Milan and the cathedral of Cremona.
- On 3rd October, Prime Minister Romano Prodi's coalition government experiences its worse crisis since it entered into power in May, when Italy of Values

(IDV), a minor party in the coalition, withdraws its support for one of the provisions of the government law on judicial reform when said law is put up to vote in the Senate. On 25th October, the coalition loses another vote in the Senate due to the absence of a number of centre-left senators.

- On 26th October, an espionage scandal breaks out following the discovery by the office of the Milan Public Prosecutor that the tax police (Guardia di Finanza) as well as other civil servants illegally accessed the fiscal data of the prime minister and his wife on several occasions.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 1st October, presidential elections take place, as do elections for the House of Representatives of Bosnia, the House of Representatives of the Croat-Muslim Federation, the People's Assembly of the Republika Srpska (Serb Republic), the president of the Republika Srpska and the Cantonal Assemblies. On 3rd October, the observation mission of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) qualifies the elections as "generally complying with international norms" and representing an "improvement and progress in consolidating democracy and the rule of law." On 18th October, the Electoral Commission announces the election results: Haris Silajdzic (Bosnian), Nebojsa Radmanovic (Serbian) and Zeljko Komsic (Croatian) are elected to the tripartite Presidency of the State; Milan Jelic of the Independent Social-Democrat Party (SNSD) becomes President of the Republika Srpska; the Democratic Action Party (SDA) takes the greatest number of seats in the House of Representatives of Bosnia and the House of Representatives of the Croat-Muslim Federation; the SNSD wins the elections to the People's Assembly of the Republika Srpska (Serb Republic).

Serbia

- On 1st October, the liberal party, G17 Plus, withdraws from the government coalition in protest against the government's inability to arrest General Ratko Mladic, sought for war

crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). G17 Plus demands the election date be advanced to before 17th December.

- On 13th October, it becomes known that the Serbian Prosecutor for organised crime has instituted proceedings against 35 people, among them judges, lawyers, bankers, and businesspeople in what could possibly be qualified as the largest anti-corruption inquiry of the country's history.
- On 28th and 29th October, a new constitution is approved by referendum. The new constitution, following upon Montenegro's independence, describes Kosovo as an "autonomous province of Serbia with a significant degree of independence." The National Assembly of Serbia had approved the constitution on 30th September.

Montenegro

- On 4th October, the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), the main party in the Coalition for a European Montenegro, which recently won the legislative elections, appoints Zeljko Sturanovic to the post of Prime Minister.

Macedonia

- On 30th October, the Macedonian Parliament adopts a law on the police force demanded by the EU by slim majority, though the former Albanian-speaking rebels deem it insufficient. The main element of this law is that it increases the Albanian-speaking minority's involvement in selecting police officials.

Greece

- On 25th October, the EU announces that it will proceed to a thorough verification of the country's economic figures for 2005. In September, Greece had increased its estimates of the 2005 GDP by 25%.

- On 25th October, 30,000 teachers flood the streets of Athens to demand an increase in wages and protest against educational reforms. In their support, civil servants organise a general strike.

Cyprus

- On 6th October, Nikos Symeonides is appointed Minister of Defence of the Republic of Cyprus.

Turkey

- On 1st October, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) announces a unilateral cease-fire following appeals by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the imprisoned leader of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan.

- On 3rd October, EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn gives Turkey three months to lift the blockade against traffic from the Republic of Cyprus and implement substantial reforms in the sphere of human rights, upon pain of having its EU accession negotiations thwarted. On 4th October, Olli Rehn asserts that the dynamism of reforms in Turkey is jeopardised by "irresponsible" European leaders who wish to exclude Turkey from the EU and opt for a "privileged partnership" with the country. On 4th October, Turkey draws European criticism by cancelling a visit by the European Parliament's Environment Committee because it includes a Greek Cypriot member, Marios Matsakis, whom Turkey accuses of anti-Turkish propaganda. On 15th October, the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, warns Turkey that 20 years could pass before its accession, in view of the slowdown in the reform process.
- On 12th October, the French National Assembly (lower house) approves a law condemning the denial of the Armenian genocide of 1915 to 1923 under the Ottoman Empire. On 15th October, the French President Jacques Chirac calls on Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to apologise regarding the denial mentioned in the law.

- On 12th October, the Nobel Prize in Literature is granted to the novelist Orhan Pamuk, twice convicted of denigrating Turkish identity under Article 301 of the penal code.

Lebanon

- On 1st October, Israel withdraws its last armed forces from southern Lebanon. On 6th October, the first Muslim contingent, from Turkey, joins the

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). On 15th October, Rear Admiral Andreas Krause of the German Navy takes command of the naval detachment of the UNIFIL. On 19th October, Human Rights Watch (HRW) accuses Hezbollah and Israel of having used cluster bombs. On 22nd October, the Israeli Minister without portfolio, Yaacov Edery, admits that the Israeli armed forces used phosphorus bombs during the war in Lebanon. The United Nations Environment Programme launches an inquiry to ascertain whether Israel also used uranium-based weapons. By 31st October, the UNIFIL consist of 9,509 peacekeepers from Germany, Belgium, Bulgaria, China, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Ghana, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Nepal, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey, assisted by 53 military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO).

Jordan

- On 18th October, the State Security Court sentences 8 members of the Al-Ta'ifah al-Mansurah organisation to prison terms of between 2 and 10 years for having planned terrorist attacks against US and Israeli targets and Iraqi police training centres in Jordan.

Egypt

- On 31st October, a military court convicts the nephew of the former Egyptian president Anwar Sadat of defamation of the armed forces for statements he made early in the month on the television station, Orbit. Talaat Sadat had stated that his uncle's death was the result of an international plot in which his uncle's personal guards and army commanders had participated. He likewise accused the United States and Israel of being involved in the assassination of Sadat.

Libya

- On 26th October, it becomes known that nearly 400 children infected with AIDS have recently been sent to Italy and France to be treated. According to Libyan prosecutors, these children were deliberately infected with the AIDS virus by 5 Bulgarian nurses and one Palestinian doctor.

Tunisia

- In early October, the Tunisian Authorities cancel the International Conference on Employment and the Right to Work in the Euro-Mediterranean Area, which was to take place in Tunis on 8th and 9th September, at very short notice. In a press release, the EU states that it regrets this decision and declares that it "is disappointed at a series of negative signals which have been given by Tunisia in the area of human rights and governance over the last few years."
- On 18th October, on the first anniversary of the 18th October Movement, Tunisian activists from different organisations and political movements express their determination to pursue the struggle for liberty and in a press release, State that that they deplore "the continuous deterioration of the country's political situation."

Algeria

- On 22nd October, two soldiers are killed near Dellys in a bomb attack orchestrated by the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). On 29th and 30th October, 3 people are killed and 24 wounded in two car bomb attacks taking place in Raghiaia and Derghana, respectively.

Morocco

- On 28th October, the Socialist Party holds its founding assembly in Rabat. There, the Secretary General, Abdelmajid Bouzoubaa, declares that the party is "a socialist movement based on the values of Islam and justice."

European Union

- On 6th October, representatives of the European Commission and the United States make a new agreement on submitting personal data of passengers on transatlantic flights. Certain members of the European Parliament believe that this new agreement, like the previous one that was overruled by the European Court of Justice (ECJ), also impinges on civil liberties.
- On 20th October, at an informal EU summit in Finland, the Member States discuss energy policy and illegal immi-

gration, among other issues. The Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, urges the EU to act collectively against illegal immigration. The summit backs measures for joint action to combat illegal immigration and calls for cooperation on resolving the underlying causes of illegal immigration in countries of origin and transit.

- On 24th October, the EU Court of Audit refuses for the 12th consecutive year to certify large part of the EU's budget expenditure, in this case from the 2005 budget. Shortcomings are found in the domains of agriculture and regional development, among others. The EU Commissioner for Administrative, Audit and Anti-Fraud Affairs, Siim Kallas, criticises the auditors, who blame the Commission for irregularities in expenditure made by national governments.

November 2007

In Lebanon, Hezbollah organises pacific protests to demand the creation of a government for national unity and 5 Ministers belonging to Hezbollah and Amal resign from the Siniora government. On 21st November, in a series of political assassinations in Lebanon, the Minister of Industry, Pierre Gemayel, is assassinated in Beirut, triggering demonstrations against Syria and Hezbollah. For the first time, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) refers legal proceedings to the Serbian justice system. The European Commission submits its report on the progress of EU candidate countries, in which it criticises Turkey's shortcomings, in particular with regard to Cyprus. Military relations between France and Turkey are suspended following the adoption by the French National Assembly of a law condemning the denial of the Armenian genocide. Some fifty European and African countries meet in Tripoli in order to seek a solution to the problem of illegal immigration. A new constitution is adopted by referendum in Gibraltar, granting the area more power.

Portugal

- On 9th November, workers in the public sector begin a national strike, to last two days, against government meas-

ures aiming to reduce public deficit. The EU had demanded that Portugal reduce its deficit by 2008. On 11th November, the incumbent Socialist Party is the only party of the Assembly of the Republic (unicameral legislative body) to approve the austere budget put forth by the government for 2007.

Spain

- On 1st November, the conservative coalition, Convergence and Union (CiU) wins more seats in the legislative elections of the Autonomous Region of Catalonia. On 7th November, the Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSC) announces that it will renew the coalition with the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) party and the eco-socialists, Initiative for Catalonia-Greens (ICV), said coalition originally being formed after the previous elections in 2003.
- On 9th November, the leader of Bata-suna warns Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero that there will be no peace process if the government and judicial branch do not stop instituting proceedings against members of both the organisation Euskadi ta Askatasuna, i.e. "Euskadi and Freedom" (ETA) and Bata-suna. On 30th November, the head of ETA's logistics machine, Zigor Garro Pérez, is arrested in France along with his companion, Marina Bernadó, and other suspects. Pérez is suspected of being involved in the theft of arms in October.

France

- On 9th November, the Parisian Jewish school, Merkaz Hatorah, suffers arson, though the fire causes only minor damage.
- On 14th November, the EU Commissioner for Competition, Neelie Kroes, authorises the merger of the energy groups, Gaz de France and Suez, under certain conditions, among them the transfer of the shares held by the Suez Group in Distrigaz and by Gaz de France (GDF) in the Belgian company, Société de Production d'Electricité (SPE).

Italy

- On 6th November, the Egyptian Islamist, Rabei Osman Sayed Ahmed, the mastermind of the terrorist attacks on

Madrid in 2004, is sentenced to ten years of prison by a court in Milan for terrorism in relation with his activities in Italy. During the course of the month, he is extradited to Spain, where he is sought for murder, attempted murder and terrorist destruction with relation to the terrorist bombings in Madrid.

- On 17th November, 20,000 students, researchers and workers demonstrate in Rome against the budget for the 2007 financial year, which is approved on 19th November by the Chamber of Deputies. A number of politicians in the opposition criticise the increase in taxes and the reduction of expenditure.
- On 20th November, the government dismisses the Head of Military Intelligence (SISMI), Nicolo Pollari, suspected of being implicated in the abduction of the Imam, Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr, by the CIA in Milan in 2003. The Chief of Staff of the Italian Navy, Vice-Admiral Bruno Branciforte, is appointed in his stead.

Croatia

- On 24th November, the creation of a new coalition called the United Left is announced. It is composed of 5 parties with no members in Parliament.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 10th November, forensic scientists discover a new mass grave in Snagovo containing the bones of over 100 victims of the Srebrenica massacre of 1995.
- On 14th November, the Court of the State of Bosnia-Herzegovina convicts Radovan Stankovic to 20 years of prison for crimes against humanity for acts committed in Foca in 1992. Stankovic was the first accused whose case had been transferred by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to a national court for trial. On 30th November, the ICTY Appeals Chamber sentences General Stanislav Galic, the commander of the Bosnian Serb forces during the siege of Sarajevo from 1992 to 1994, to life in prison. He is charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- On 21st November, the UN Security Council extends the mandate of the EU Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR - Althea) by 12 months.

▪ On 30th November, the newly elected People's Assembly approves the new government under the leadership of Milorad Dodik. The priorities of the new government are economic reform, social welfare and development programmes. The government likewise commits to fully cooperate with the ICTY.

Serbia

- On 8th November, the National Assembly of Serbia officially adopts the new constitution, approved by referendum in October.
- On 9th November, the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Lieutenant General Agim Ceku, announces that he will unilaterally declare independence if negotiations on the final status of the province do not lead to the creation of an independent state. On 10th November, the United Nations Special Envoy for negotiations on the final status of Kosovo, Martii Ahtisaari, announces that he will postpone submitting his recommendations until after legislative elections in Serbia, to be held on 21st January.
- On 9th November, the National Assembly of Serbia accepts the resignation of the Minister of Justice, Mladjan Dinkic, member of the liberal party, G17 Plus, which had withdrawn from the government coalition in October.
- On 17th November, for the first time, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) refers a trial, on this occasion that of Vladimir Kovacevic, to the Serbian justice system.
- On 27th November, the ultra-nationalist leader of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), Vojislav Seselj, refuses to appear before court at the start of his trial before the ICTY, alleging weakness. On 11th November, he had begun a hunger strike to protest against the tribunal's lack of impartiality. In response, the ICTY denies him the right to choose his own defence council, assigning him a defence council. On 30th November, Seselj is hospitalised.

Montenegro

- On 10th November, the (unicameral) Parliament approves a new government led by Zeljko Sturanovic, member of the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS)

Albania

- On 24th November, Albania, which presides over the Central European Initiative, hosts a meeting of prime ministers and high representatives from 18 central and south-eastern European countries to discuss political and economic cooperation.

Greece

- On 3rd November, demonstrations against university reforms continue in Athens, where students throw Molotov cocktails at the police, who retaliate with tear gas.

Cyprus

- On 2nd November, the Finnish Presidency of the EU cancels an emergency summit that was to take place on 4th and 5th November on the Cyprus issue, under the conviction that no agreement would be reached involving its proposition. The Finnish proposition consisted of convincing Turkey to open its airports and ports to Cyprus in exchange for lesser economic isolation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), by placing its Famagusta Port under EU control and thus allowing it to trade with the EU.
- On 22nd November, the Mine Action Centre (MAC) announces that Nicosia has been cleared of all mines for the first time since 1974.

Turkey

- On 5th December, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan declares that he is ready to amend Article 301 of the penal code regarding "humiliation of the Turkish identity, of the Republic and State bodies or institutions," a law highly criticised by the EU, which considers that it limits freedom of expression.
- On 8th November, the European Commission (EC), in a report on the progress of Turkey towards accession to the EU, reproaches it for discriminating a Member State insofar as it refuses to recognise the Republic of Cyprus and impedes the free circulation of goods on the island. The EC likewise reproaches Turkey for the slow

progress of reforms in the spheres of freedom of expression, torture and the rights of women and minorities. On 21st November, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül, rejects the EU Finnish Presidency's request to make an effort to overcome the stalemate of Turkey's EU accession negotiations due to the Cyprus issue by 6th December. On 27th November, the Finnish Presidency announces that it ceases all diplomatic attempts to reach a compromise on the Cyprus issue. On 29th November, EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn recommends freezing negotiations on 8 of the 35 chapters due to disagreements.

- On 15th November, the Commander of the Turkish Army, General Ilker Basbug, announces that military relations with France have been suspended following the adoption of a law by the French National Assembly condemning the denial of the Armenian genocide.
- On 26th November, 20,000 people demonstrate in Istanbul against the arrival of Pope Benedict XVI on 28th November. The demonstrators rebuke him for having linked Islam with violence in a speech in September.

Syria

- On 21st November, Syria re-establishes diplomatic relations with Iraq, which had been broken off in 1980.

Lebanon

- On 1st November, the Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, calls a protest to demand elections be held early should the government under Prime Minister Fuad Siniora not accept the establishment of a government of national unity by mid-November. The White House spokesperson, Tony Snow, declares that the United States has proof that Syria, Iran and Hezbollah seek to overthrow Siniora's government. On 6th November, pro and anti-Syrian parties initiate a week of national discussion organised by Nabbi Berri, the President of the (unicameral) National Assembly, in order to reach an agreement. On 11th November, the talks fall through and the 5 Hezbollah and Amal Ministers resign from government. On 12th No-

vember, President Lahoud declares that the government is no longer legitimate, making reference to Article 95 of the Constitution, which stipulates that all the religious communities should be fairly represented in the cabinet. On 13th November, Siniora rejects the resignation of the 5 ministers. That same day, the government reveals the discovery of an "Iranian-Syrian plot for a coup d'état" seeking to put an end to the implementation of United Nations Resolution 1701. On 19th November, Nasrallah once more calls for pacific protest against the government, whom he qualifies as illegitimate, unconstitutional and controlled by the United States.

- On 13th November, Siniora's government approves a United Nations project concerning the establishment of an international tribunal to try those responsible for the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafiq Hariri. On 21st November, the UN Security Council officially endorses the plans for the international tribunal. That same day, the Syrian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Faisal Mekdad, states that it is for Syrian tribunals and not international jurisdiction to judge those responsible for Hariri's assassination. On 21st November, the Minister of Industry, Pierre Gemayel, member of a powerful Christian family and anti-Syrian leader, is assassinated in Beirut, becoming the last in a series of assassinations or attempted assassinations of anti-Syrian politicians and journalists. On 21st November, the Syrian government condemns the assassination, whereas a number of anti-Syrian figures accuse the Syrian regime of being involved. On 22nd November, the Druze leader, Walid Jumblatt, accuses Syria of wishing to overthrow the government to prevent the National Assembly from approving the creation of an international tribunal to try Hariri's assassins. On 23rd November, 800,000 people attend Gemayel's funeral, which turns into a demonstration against Syria and Hezbollah.

Jordan

- On 22nd November, King Abdullah II carries out a cabinet reshuffle, keeping Marouf Bakhet as prime minister.

Egypt

- On 21st November, the *Financial Times* reports that the Egyptian Authorities have prohibited the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood from leaving the country and have prevented its members from running in trade union and student elections.

Libya

- On 22nd and 23rd November, some fifty European and African countries meet in Tripoli, upon invitation of Colonel Gaddafi, in order to seek a solution to the problem of illegal immigration. African and European countries reach an agreement on an overall approach to immigration by adopting an unprecedented pact combining security with development.

Tunisia

- On 7th November, the Tunisian President, Zine ben Ali, in a statement on the 19th anniversary of his arrival in power, commits to reform the political system and open it to "fair competition." He also promises to authorise unannounced inspections of penitentiaries. Twenty-nine Islamist prisoners are released as part of an amnesty.

Algeria

- On 12th November, Prime Minister Abdelaziz Belkhadem demands that France recognise the crimes it committed against the Algerian people during the colonial period.

Morocco

- On 1st November, Morocco becomes the 13th Member State of the Global Initiative for the Struggle against Nuclear Terrorism.
- On 22nd November, the governing majority agrees to relax the criteria for allowing small political parties, who have been protesting against their exclusion over the past few days, to run in the legislative elections of autumn 2007.
- On 28th November, Morocco does away with compulsory military service.

European Union

- On 8th November, the European Commission submits its report on the progress of candidates to EU accession. The report criticises Turkey's shortcomings, in particular concerning Cyprus, and lauds Croatia and Macedonia for their progress.
- On 24th November, the EU-Russia Summit in Helsinki does not manage to overcome the differences between the two powers, among other things on energy issues.
- On 29th November, the EU Commissioner for the Environment, Stavros Dimas, announces a reduction of 7% in carbon emissions authorised for Member States in the second phase of the European Union Greenhouse Gas Emission Trading Scheme (ETS), to run from 2008 to 2012. This system is the EU's flagship instrument for struggling against global warming and meeting the goals established in the Kyoto Protocol, namely, to reduce CO₂ emissions by 8% by 2012 with respect to the 1990 level.

December 2006

The Spanish government puts an end to peace negotiations with the organisation Euskadi ta Askatasuna, i.e. "Euskadi and Freedom" (ETA) following the latter's detonation of a bomb at Barajas Airport in Madrid, killing 2. The EU Foreign Affairs Ministers decide to partially suspend negotiations for Turkey's accession to the EU in response to its refusal to recognise the Republic of Cyprus and open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot traffic. In Lebanon, demonstrations called by the Shiite factions, Hezbollah and Amal, and backed by the Christian leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, General Michel Aoun, to demand the government's resignation continue throughout December, increasing in scale. For the first time, a woman is appointed the head of a political party in Tunisia. Finland becomes the sixteenth EU country to ratify the treaty instituting a European Constitution. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia join NATO's Partnership for Peace.

Spain

- On 30th December, the organisation "Euskadi and Freedom" (ETA), after having warned the authorities, detonates a bomb in a parking at Barajas Airport in Madrid, ending a 9-month cease-fire. In response to the attack, which kills 2 and injures 26, Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero ends peace negotiations with ETA. On 31st December, thousands of Spaniards demonstrate throughout the country against ETA and demand Zapatero's resignation. The leader of Batasuna, Arnaldo Otegi, blames the government for the return to violence due to its unwillingness to advance in peace negotiations.

France

- On 7th December, a new international, state-funded French network station, France 24, begins to broadcast in the hope of competing with BBC and CNN.
- On 20th December, 10 people are convicted in the "false voter" affair regarding elections to the Paris City Council in 1989 and 1995, which had ensured victory for the party led by Jacques Chirac, Rally for the Republic (RPR).

Italy

- On 2nd December, 700,000 people demonstrate, on instigation of Silvio Berlusconi's opposition coalition party, the House of Freedoms, against the government's proposed budget, which involves increasing taxes. The budget is nevertheless approved on 21st December.
- On 18th December, the coast guard intercepts a fishing boat with 648 illegal Egyptian immigrants on board.

Croatia

- On 1st December, EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn asserts that Croatia is "next in line" in the future enlargement of the EU after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria on 1st January 2007.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On 14th December, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia join the

NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, the first step towards accession to NATO.

- On 19th December, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldavia, Montenegro, Serbia and the province of Kosovo sign a new Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) in Bucharest, joining the already extant Central European regional free trade bloc constituted by Croatia, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Rumania.

Serbia

- On 4th December, the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) elects Ivica Dacic as its new leader, succeeding Slobodan Milosevic, who died in March. Dacic declares that he will continue the Milosevic legacy.
- On 8th December, Vojislav Seselj, leader of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), ends his hunger strike after an appeals chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) restores Vojislav's right to choose his own defence.

Greece

- On 14th December, the telephone company, Vodafone Greece, is fined 76 million euros for its involvement in the scandal whereby phone calls by Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis and other high government officials as well as businessmen were tapped between June 2004 and March 2005 during preparations for the Olympic Games.
- On 20th December, nearly a million students and sympathisers protest against the government plan to create private universities.

Cyprus

- On 15th December, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1728 (2006), extending the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces until 15th June 2007. The Council again calls on both parties to solve the issue of disappearances and open more border crossing points.

Turkey

- On 8th December, the EU qualifies Turkey's proposal of opening a port and

an airport to Greek Cypriot traffic in exchange for a softening of trade restrictions against the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) as insufficient. On 11th December, the EU Foreign Affairs Ministers decide to partially suspend negotiations for Turkey's accession to the EU in response to its refusal to recognise the Republic of Cyprus and open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot transport. They also approve the European Commission's proposal to suspend 8 of the 35 chapters discussed due to disagreement, among them the commerce and transport chapters. On 12th December, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan qualifies the decision for provisional suspension as unfair and recalls that the EU has not fulfilled all of its promises, referring to the EU's promise in 2004 to put an end to the trade embargo on the TRNC. On 14th December, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the next EU President and previously in favour of a "privileged relation" with Turkey, changes positions and declares that she is not against Turkey's eventually joining the EU. On 15th December, British Prime Minister Tony Blair undertakes a diplomatic mission to Turkey to reassure the Turks on their perspectives for accession.

- On 19th December, the author, Ipek Calister, charged with insulting the Turkish identity by criticising the founder of the secular Turkish State, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, in a biography of Atatürk's wife, is acquitted.
- At least 18 soldiers die in confrontations with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the People's Defence Forces (HPG) in the southeast.

Syria

- On 11th December, Syria and Iraq reopen embassies in their respective capitals after over twenty years of diplomatic rupture.

Lebanon

- On 1st December, nearly 800,000 people demonstrate in downtown Beirut, on the instigation of the two Shiite factions, Hezbollah and Amal, demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Fuad Siniora and his government. The protesters are joined by many Christian fol-

lowers of General Michel Aoun, leader of the Free Patriotic Movement. On 2nd December, King Abdullah ibn Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia expresses his support of Siniora's government. On 3rd December, a Shiite demonstrator, Ahmed Ali Mahmoud, dies in the anti-government demonstrations. On 5th December, those attending Mahmoud's funeral call for Siniora's death. On 10th December, 2 million people gather in central Beirut, at the appeal of Hezbollah and its Christian allies. Aoun demands Siniora's resignation, stating that he will otherwise face action leading to early elections. Sheikh Naim Qasim, an important member of Hezbollah, tells the crowd that the protest will continue for months if necessary.

Jordan

- On 7th December, the State Security Court convicts 9 people involved in the rocket attack against two US warships stationed in Aqaba in August 2005.
- On 21st December, Nabil Ja'urah, who had opened fire against tourists in Amman in September, killing a British tourist, is sentenced to the death penalty.

Egypt

- On 14th December, the African Union and the African Development Bank organise the First African Conference of Ministers Responsible for Hydrocarbons in Cairo. The conference focuses on the rise in oil rates on the world market and its influence on the economies of African countries.
- On 26th December, President Hosni Mubarak requests that Parliament amend the Constitution to allow opposition parties to present candidates for the presidency more easily. Mubarak also proposes to ban parties based on religious obedience.

Libya

- On 19th December, the Benghazi criminal court sentences the 5 Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian doctor accused with having infected over 400 children with the AIDS virus in the late nineties to the death penalty. Their case is yet to be brought before the Supreme Court.

Tunisia

- On 26th December, May Eljeribi is appointed Secretary General of the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), becoming the first woman to lead a political party in Tunisia.

Algeria

- On 12th December, Algeria and Spain sign an agreement in Algiers on the extradition of criminals.

European Union

- On 5th December, Finland becomes the sixteenth EU country to ratify the treaty instituting a European Constitution.
- On 7th December, the European Central Bank decides to raise the interest rate from 3.25% to 3.50%, the highest it has been in 5 years, with the aim of reducing inflationist pressure in the euro zone.
- On 12th December, the EU Court of First Instance repeals the EU decision of May 2002 to freeze the assets of the Iranian group in exile, Mujahedeen-i-Khalq (MKO), alleging that they had not had fair hearings and valid reasons had not been put forth.
- On 14th and 15th December, the European Summit, under the Finnish Presidency, tackles the issue of the EU's "absorption capacity" and decides henceforth to give no dates for

accession until negotiations reach an advanced stage as well as to break the stalemate on the new constitution before considering any future enlargement. The summit also focuses on measures to combat illegal immigration. It is decided that priority shall be given to the study of a surveillance system for Europe's southern borders.

- On 21st December, the EU-25's Fisheries Ministers agree on the fishing quotas for 2007, including the reduction of codfish quotas by 14-20% and of fishing days by 7-10%. Nevertheless, scientists have advised banning fishing entirely.

Gibraltar and Western Sahara*Gibraltar*

- On 12th September, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) confirms the right of Gibraltar inhabitants to participate in European elections and rejects the claim filed by Spain asserting that only EU citizens can legally vote.
- On 18th September, the British Minister of European Affairs, Geoff Hoon, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, and the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Peter Caruana, sign a series of historic agreements in Cordoba, Spain, opening Gibraltar airports to traffic from Spain and the rest of Europe, relaxing border controls in

order to encourage trade, improving telecommunications between Gibraltar and Spain and allowing a Cervantes Institute (official Spanish Cultural Centre) to open in Gibraltar.

- On 30th November, 60.24% of voters approve the new constitution in a referendum. This constitution lends greater power to Gibraltar, including the establishment of its own judicial system. Voter turnout amounts to 60.4%.
- On 16th December, an airplane of the Spanish airline company, Iberia, lands at the Gibraltar Airport, renewing the airline connections between Spain and the British colony, which had been interrupted in 1954.

Western Sahara

- On 28th April, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1675 (2006), which extends the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara until 31st October.
- On 22nd April, the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS) announces that the King of Morocco, Mohammed VI, has ordered the release of 48 Sahrawi prisoners.
- On 31st October, the UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1720 (2006), extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to 30th April 2007.