

General Chronology of the Mediterranean

January 2005

The creation of the EU makes a step forward with the European Parliament's adoption of the Treaty establishing a European Constitution. In Algeria, the Minister of Home Affairs confirms that the GIA has been disbanded. In Croatia, the President Stipe Mesiv wins a second term of office. From the first of January Turkey introduces a new currency. Spanish-Moroccan relations improve with the visit of the King of Spain, whilst Turkish-Greek relations deteriorate following accusations against Turkey for violating Greek territorial waters. At the same time Turkey reopens relations with Israel. The Republic of Sprska in Bosnia-Herzegovina decides to reinforce its cooperation with the ICTY and simultaneously Serbia and Montenegro attracts European and American criticism for not collaborating with the ICTY.

Spain

- On the 3rd of January, the Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero opposes the "Ibarretxe Plan" describing it as secessionist and anti-constitutional as it suggested a "free association" between Spain and the Basque country. On the 13th of January, Juan José Ibarretxe, the Basque autonomous President, contests Zapatero's request to withdraw the plan. The Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) threatens to withdraw its support to Zapatero if he opposes the plan, since the minority government needs backing from regional and left-wing groups.
- On the 16th of January the Basque terrorist organisation (ETA) declares to be in favour of negotiating with the gov-

ernment without mentioning an eventual ceasefire. On the 18th of January ETA claims responsibility for a car bomb attack which injures a policeman and on the 30th of January, following a telephone warning, a bomb explodes in Denia, a holiday resort in Southern Spain.

- On the 17th of January 8 people are sentenced for having given logistic assistance and false documents to some suspects in the attacks of September the 11th 2001 in the United States.

France

- On the 3rd of January the trial of 4 people starts, including the Franco-Algerians Djamel Beghal and Kamel Daoudi, accused of being members of the Al-Qaida cell in Paris responsible for organising attacks against American targets in France. Beghal has supposedly confessed these facts in the United Arab Emirates before being extradited to France, where, he affirms he was forced to confess under torture.
- On the 13th of January, the Minister of Justice Dominique Perben calls for a criminal investigation to be held against the arguments advanced by the leader of the National Front (extreme-right party), Jean-Marie Le Pen. According to these the German occupation in France during the Second World War was benevolent. Such declarations, according to the French press laws, could lead to a prison sentence of up to 5 years.
- Between the 25th and the 29th of January, 12 people are arrested on suspicion of recruiting Muslims to lead the "holy war" against the American forces in the United States.
- On the 27th of January, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)

unanimously condemns France for violating the rights of the terrorist Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1997. The prisoner was kept in isolate confinement from 1994 to 2002 and again from March 2004 onwards. The accusations, according to which the prisoner was treated in an inhuman and degrading way are dismissed by a vote of 4 to 3.

- On the 31st of January the trial which will establish who was responsible for the fire in the tunnel of the Mont Blanc in 1999 starts. There are 4 companies and 12 people in the dock over involuntary homicide and negligence.

Italy

- On the 10th of January a ban on smoking in public places comes into force throughout the country, causing some protests as it involves fines for the establishments and the smokers who do not abide by the law.
- On the 25th of January the judge Clementina Forleo from the court of Milan dismisses the accusations of terrorism against 4 Tunisians and a Moroccan provoking criticisms from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Vice Prime Minister Gianfranco Fini and the European Commissioner responsible for Justice and Freedom, Franco Frattini. She declares that it is necessary to make a distinction between the defendant's engagement in guerrilla activities for recruiting militants to fight against the American forces in Iraq and terrorism. On the 28th of January, the Court of Cassation (the Italian Supreme Court) decrees that travelling to Iraq to take part to the insurrections is an act of international terrorism.
- On the 27th of January the trial of 47 people starts, including policemen, doc-

tors, nurses and prison warders, accused of verbally and physically mistreating anti-globalisation protesters during the 2001 G8 Summit in Genoa which left hundreds injured and caused the death of a demonstrator.

- On the 28th of January, the Italian Court of Cassation blocks the extradition of the Moroccan imam Mohammed Rafik to his country, which suspects him of being involved in the Casablanca attacks of May 2003. The judge bases his decision on the risk of Rafik being tortured or killed if extradited to Morocco.

Malta

- On the 14th of January, Amnesty International requests to open an inquiry over information received according to which, members of the Maltese armed forces would have inflicted physical abuse on some asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. This happened at the immigration detention centre of the army barracks in Safi as they were peacefully protesting against the length of their detention, the lack of information concerning the development of their demands for refugee status and humanitarian protection. Those who were refused asylum already were complaining about the absence of information regarding their future.

Slovenia

- On the first of January Slovenia takes over the presidency of the OSCE for 2005.

Croatia

- On the 2nd and 16th of January two rounds of Presidential elections take place. The current President of the Social Democratic Party (SPH), Stipe Mesiv, wins a second 5 year term of office.
- On the 4th of January, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miomir Zuzul, is accused of being involved in a corruption scandal and resigns.
- On the 31st of January, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), sentences Lieutenant General Pavle Strugar, former commander of the Yugoslavian navy, to 8 years of prison for not attempting to prevent the attacks on civilians during the

bombing of the city of Dubrovnik in 1991.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On the 8th of January, the President of the Srpska Republic (the Serbian entity in Bosnia), Dragan Cavic, nominates Pero Bukejlovic as Prime Minister. The former Prime Minister resigned at the end of December to protest against the dismissal of Bosnian Serb officials accused of not cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). A few days following Bukejlovic's nomination, the authorities announce a certain number of measures in order to reinforce cooperation with the ICTY. These include the creation of a team of 8 people on January the 13th with responsibility for verifying whether anyone involved in the murder of over 7,000 civilian Muslims in Srebrenica in 1995, still has an official position or is connected with the institutions of Srpska or Bosnian Republic. On the 15th of January, for the first time, the authorities of the Srpska Republic hand a war crimes suspect over to the ICTY, the Serbo-Croatian Savo Todovic. The latter is accused of taking part in the management of the Kazneno-Popravni Dom camp, where 300 prisoners were killed during the 1992-1995 war.
- On the 17th of January, the ICTY condemns two Serbo-Croatians to 18 and 9 years in prison for their involvement in the Srebrenica massacre.
- On the 17th of January, 300 agents of the Secret Service are dismissed in order to fulfil one of the conditions for joining the NATO and the EU.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On the 10th of January, following the assassination of a 16 year old Albanian by customs officers as he attempted to cross the Macedonian border, thousands of people of Albanian origins protest in the streets of Presova. They request that the Serbian military and police units are replaced by international troops in Albanian majority areas.
- On the 13th of January, a Nigerian police officer from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), is killed in Kosovo as his car explodes. On the 23rd of January, the *In-*

ternational Crisis Group declares that the situation in Kosovo is increasingly dangerous and could lead to severe riots or even to a new war.

- On the 14th of January the American ambassador, Michael Polt, announces that the United States decided to cut aid to the country and withdraw technical advisers in the Serbian Ministries. They threaten to take other punitive measures if the government continues to challenge the ICTY.
- On the 18th of January, the UN Security Council adopts resolution 1581 (2005) allowing judges from the ICTY to finalise some active cases.
- On the 21st of January, the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Javier Solana, postpones his trip to Serbia and Montenegro to discuss the reforms necessary to join the EU, as this country does not cooperate with the ICTY.

Macedonia

- On the 18th of January, the European enlargement commissioner, Olli Rehn, declares in front of the European Parliament Foreign Affairs Commission that there could be a new candidate country to join the EU between now and the end of the year if the commission considers Macedonia's arrangements sufficient. Macedonia is still just a "potential candidate country" at this stage. Rehn announces that starting negotiations with Macedonia is one of his objectives during his term of office ending in 2009. He stresses that progression to candidate country status will depend on the type of answers Macedonia gives to a questionnaire it is filling in, on the quality of its technical measures, on the country's positive and constant political evolution and on political reforms especially in the judicial field.

Albania

- On the 10th of January, the Albanian Parliament adopts a new election law by 99 votes to 140, the first of a series of reforms scheduled to anticipate this summer's elections. The new law, elaborated with the assistance of experts from the OSCE, intends to resolve problems encountered in the past concerning electoral rolls, constituencies and vote

count. Those in favour of the new law say that it will help to avoid a deadlock such as the one in Ukraine after the second set of Presidential elections which was characterised by frauds, on top of silencing Western Countries' critics who denounced the irregularities of previous ballots.

Greece

- On the 10th and 14th of January, the Greek High Command denounce that Turkish coast guard patrol boats invaded Greek territorial waters by the islet of Imia (Kardak in Turkish), over which Turkey disputes Greek sovereignty. However, Ankara dismisses these accusations. Over the last months, Greek High command has regularly accused Ankara of violating its national air-space and territorial waters.
- On the 20th of January, the Greek Parliament introduces a law preventing media directors from entering into public contracts. This, according to the government is supposed to fight against the influence played over public life, behind the scenes, by businessmen who are also press executives. The socialist party (PASOK) votes against it, accusing the government of wishing to distance media directors in favour of the opposition so that conservative business circles can profit from it. Most Greek media, traditionally very partisan, is controlled by half a dozen successful business men otherwise engaged in contracts within the public sector.

Cyprus

- On the 24th of January, the Greek-Cypriot President, Tassos Papadopoulos, nominates Andreas Gavrielides as Minister for Health, after the forced resignation of Constantina Akkelidou, found guilty of interfering with justice by the Court of Nicosia.

Turkey

- On the first of January, Turkey introduces a new currency eliminating 6 zeros off the previous one.
- On the 2nd of January, Turkish security forces, repel an attack by people suspected of being militants from the People's Congress of Kurdistan

(Kongra-Gel), who entered the country via Iraq. In January, Turkey, the United States and Iraq meet in Ankara and agree on a mechanism for sharing information as well as discussing ways to cooperate in order to protect Turkey from potential terrorist threats coming from the north of Iraq.

- On the 2nd of January, the President of the Islamist party Virtue, Recai Kutan, criticises the strict conditions imposed by the EU for Turkey's entry and requests a Turkish referendum on joining the EU.
- On the 3rd of January, the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül, pays a visit to Israel to discuss the re-launch of Middle East peace negotiations and to restore Israeli-Turkish relations, damaged after Recep Tayyip Erdogan described an Israeli raid on the Palestinian occupied territories as a political blunder. Gül is the highest member of the government to have paid a visit to Israel since the Justice and Development party (AKP) came to power in 2002.
- On the 12th of January, *The Guardian* announces that Turkey has sent over 1,000 moderate imams to Europe to promote a peaceful interpretation of Islam.

Syria

- From the 24th to the 27th of January, the President Bashar al-Assad goes to Russia to meet President Putin and some senior officials. Both leaders sign a declaration about strengthening their future relations which will be based on friendship and cooperation. According to Israel, Russia sold some advanced missiles to Syria that could be employed to reinforce Hezbollah's military capacity, a group that Syria supports in Lebanon. On the 25th of January, a spokesman from the Russian Ministry of Defence declares to the news agency *ITAR-TASS* that Russia will not sell offensive weapons to Syria.

Lebanon

- On the 28th of January, the Security Council adopts resolution 1583 (2005), prolonging the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon up to the 31st of July 2006. It is the first time that this re-

solution refers to year 2000 UN report, which states that Shabaa lands are part of Syria and not of Lebanon, undermining Hezbollah's activities, which the Lebanese government considers to be a resistance movement for national liberation.

Jordan

- On the 4th of January, the Jordan State Security Court, announces the accusation of four Islamists for their implication in a plot intended to attack Western tourists and Israelis as well as some secret services members.
- On the 12th of January, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, travels to Jordan to conduct the first visit in Jordan from a high-ranking official of the Atlantic Alliance. This trip is in line with the Alliance's efforts to increase the levels of "Mediterranean dialogue". This is a cooperation program that has been in place for ten years and that NATO was committed to revitalise during its Summit at the end of June in Istanbul. NATO's intention is to match this cooperation program to that of the Partnership for Peace (PPF, offered to European countries and to ex-soviet republics in central Asia).

Egypt

- On the 5th of January, diplomats close to the International Atomic Energy Agency declare that the UN Nuclear Watchdog has proof that secret nuclear experiments have been carried out in Egypt, mostly during the 80s and 90s but also last year. These could be used in armament programs. Inspectors do not deem these conclusions alarming enough to require a report from the IAEA Board of Governors.

Libya

- On the 23rd of January, a team of French lawyers from the NGO Lawyers without Borders, goes to Libya to support the defence of five Bulgarian nurses sentenced to death for having infected Libyan children with the AIDS virus.
- On the 29th of January, the French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin declares in an interview with the Tunisian

daily paper *Ach-Chourouq* that Libya is an “essential contact”, that it should find its place in “le concert des Nations” as well as on the regional map and adds that France encourages the country’s reinsertion programme.

Tunisia

- On the 18th of January, Manuel Marín, President of the Spanish Congress of deputies, pays a visit to Tunisia, in order to strengthen parliamentary relations between the two countries by activating the role of parliamentary friendship groups and organising periodical meetings. During a press conference, before leaving Tunisia, Marín confirms the creation of a friendship group with Tunisia within the Spanish Parliament.
- On the 30th and 31st of January, the French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin pays an official visit to Tunisia. During his talks with the Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and his counterpart Mohamed Ghannouchi, he pleads for a collaborative immigration policy, with the aim of an immigration policy that will simultaneously take into account the needs of the host country and those of the country of origin. He declares to be against a unilateral policy based on quotas. In an interview published on the 30th of January in the Tunisian newspaper *Le Temps*, Raffarin states that France will remain opposed to “the establishment of transit centres outside the EU, notably in Maghreb, to filter candidates for immigration”. Tunisia is also against it. Both countries have approached the terrorism issue in a similar way and Raffarin declares to be “very satisfied” to re-establish the former cooperation between Tunisia and France on this matter. He was also pleased with the exchange of information and the quality of relations between various services related to both countries. Finally, Raffarin declares that France will continue to support Tunisia’s economic and social modernisation.

Algeria

- On the 4th of January, the Minister of Internal Affairs announces that the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the second biggest Islamist rebel group active in the country, has been disbanded follo-

wing the death or imprisonment of its leaders by security forces.

- On the 8th of January, the Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and the Prime Minister of Portugal Pedro Santana Lopes, sign a “treaty of good neighbourhood and friendly cooperation” in Alger. The treaty envisages in particular, an annual summit between the Algerian and Portuguese leaders and high-level consultations between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from both countries. It also supports cooperation in economic, political, military, cultural and scientific fields. The visit concludes by signing a certain number of cooperation agreements between Algerian firms and their equivalents from Portugal in the fields of construction, public works and railway industry. Lopes and the Algerian Prime Minister, Ahmed Ouyahia, also agree to consolidate cooperation in the fishing sector and that of manufactured products. Finally, Lopes opposed to the creation of a transit zone in the Maghreb countries for emigrants waiting for their files to be dealt with in European countries.

Morocco

- From the 17th to the 19th of January, the King Juan Carlos of Spain pays an official visit to Morocco, an indication of an improvement in relations between the two countries after years of tensions caused by territorial disputes and by the problem of illegal immigration.

European Union

- On the first of January, Luxembourg takes on the rotating presidency for the next six months. Re-launching the “Lisbon Strategy”, with the objective of making the EU the most competitive area in the world, coming to an agreement on the budget for 2007-2013 and reforming the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) are amongst its priorities.
- On the first of January, the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Jean-Claude Juncker, also becomes the President of Euro Group for two years, the group that brings together the 12 member countries that have adopted the Euro.
- On the 12th of January, the Parliament approves the Treaty instituting a Constitution for the European Union

which is adopted by 500 votes in favour to 137 votes against with 40 abstentions. The majority of opponents are members of parliament from the United Kingdom, Poland and the Czech Republic and come from Euro-sceptical political parties. Amongst the arguments against the Constitution, there is the socialist criticism which describes the constitution as being anti-social and the catholic criticism which refers to the Christian origins of European civilisation.

- On the 14th of January, the European Commission announces that it will take Portugal, Greece and Spain to the European Court of Justice for breaching Community provisions on the environment. Portugal is put on the spot for not having created enough natural reserves for wild birds, for having reduced nature reserve surface areas for protected species and for not having implemented European rules on water resources protection. Moreover, the EC urges Lisbon to suspend the building of the Alqueva dam, as it considers it to be detrimental to the environment. If the European Court of Justice agrees with the European Commission, the EU will be entitled to fine its three Member Countries.
- On the 14th of January, Eurodeputies gathered in a plenary session in Strasbourg, re-elect Nikiforos Diamandouros as European Mediator. During his five-year term of office, the mediator particularly intends to set up a single telephone number covering all of the European Union territory to have access to the mediators’ network.
- On the 17th and 18th of January, the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (EcoFin), fails once again to agree on SGP reforms. Germany’s proposal is to loosen the public deficit rule (3% of GDP) in order to allow for an excess of the deficit during stagnation of economic growth or during expensive structural reforms. The proposal causes contentions between France and Italy on one side, which are in favour, and on the other the remaining European countries which fulfil the SGP criteria. Moreover, Germany requests that its contribution transfer to the ex-communist Eastern region and the country’s participation to the European budget are taken into consideration when calculating its public deficit. The commissioner for Economic and Monetary affairs, Joaquín Almunia, describes the

German proposal as “constructive” while the EU President, Jean-Claude Juncker, opposes to the exclusion of certain categories of expenses from the SGP calculation and reminds Germany that it is not the only country responsible for European economy.

- On the 18th of January Airbus A380 is unveiled; the model was designed by France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom and will come into service in 2006. With its 800 people capacity, it will be the world’s largest passenger aircraft.

- On the 27th of January, Amnesty International (AI), sends an open letter to the Council and to the Commission to denounce “the alarming situation of asylum seekers within the EU’s own borders”, the police suppression of an asylum seekers’ peaceful demonstration in Malta and a case of torture of both adult and minor afghans in Greece. AI said to be “very concerned” that these violations “have not been addressed by the Council and the Commission”.

February 2005

On the 14th of February, the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri is assassinated and an unknown group claims responsibility for the attack. Suspicions are immediately drawn to Syria and the United Nations set up an investigation commission. The pro-Syrian Lebanese government is ousted under popular pressure. As for the rest of the Middle East, Jordan and Syria sign an agreement putting an end to their border disputes. For the first time since the end of the conflicts, a Serb President visits Kosovo. In Portugal and Cyprus legislative elections are anticipated. Croatia appoints a new Prime Minister and Karolos Papoulias becomes Greece’s new President. As regards to the EU, both the growth and Employment strategy and the European Commission’s President Social and Environmental Agenda receive sharp criticism. Finally, Spain and Slovenia approve the European constitution by referendum.

Portugal

- On the 10th of February, the 127 Portuguese policemen deployed in

South Iraq as part of a stabilisation force since November 2003, leave the country.

- On the 20th of February, the Socialist Party (PS) wins the anticipated legislative elections against the Social Democrat Party coalition (PSD) and the People’s Party (PP), currently in power. The PS wins an absolute majority, the first one the party achieved since the restoration of democracy in 1974. These elections are all the more important as the electoral participation is the highest in the last ten years (62%).

Spain

- On the first of February, the Deputies Congress (Lower House) opposes the proposal of the autonomist Basque President, Juan José Ibarretxe, describing it as unconstitutional. This is to organise a referendum in the Basque Country on a statute of “free association” with Spain. Ibarretxe declares that if he wins the regional elections anticipated to be in April, he will go against the Congress’ decision and will organise the referendum. “The plan Ibarretxe ” intends to increase the region’s autonomy, to set up the Basque country’s own representation in the EU and to create a union with the Southern French Basque region.

- On the first of February, 4 members of a Moroccan family as well as a Spanish citizen are arrested for the attacks of the 11th of March 2004 in Madrid.

- At the beginning of February, the government announces that illegal immigrants who are able to present a work contract and can justify at least six months of residence in Spain, will be eligible for a residence and work permit of up to one year starting from the 7th of February. According to the Prime Minister, these measures will allow Spain to meet the demand for unqualified workers in the country. The opposition party, the Popular Party (PP), as well as France and Germany criticize this decision as it will encourage immigration in Spain and Europe.

- On the 9th of February, a bomb explodes near a conference centre in Madrid where King Juan Carlos is expected a few hours later; 40 people are slightly injured. The Basque terrorist group ETA claims responsibility for this attack. On the 11th and 17th of Fe-

bruary, 20 alleged ETA members are arrested.

- On the 20th of February 77% of Spanish people taking part in the Referendum on the European Constitution say “yes” (44% of Spanish people). This is the first referendum on the European Constitution taking place. The Spanish Socialist party in power, the PSOE, as well as the main opposition party, the PP, were in favour of the “yes” campaign. The “no” campaign was conducted by the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) and the United Left (IU).

France

- On the 11th of February, an alleged member of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM) is arrested, suspected of being involved in the Casablanca attacks of May 2003 and the Madrid attacks of March 2004.

- On the 11th of February, two Corsican nationalists, Gérard Cianelli and Hervé Santelli, are sentenced to 10 and 8 years in prison for the bomb attack aimed at Emile Zuccarelli, the Mayor of Bastia in March 2002.

- On the 24th of February, the Paris Court of Appeal orders Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front Party (FN), to pay a fine of 10,000 euros for encouraging racial hatred against Muslims in an interview given to *Le Monde* in 2003.

- On the 25th of February, three Islamist militants, amongst which one Pakistani, Ghulam Mustafa, and two French, Hakim Mokhfi and Hassan al-Gheguer, are taken to court on suspicion of having helped Richard Reid, who attempted to explode shoe bombs on a Paris-Miami flight in December 2001. A fourth person, described as the Imam of the Mosque in Paris, is accused for breaching the Foreigners’ Law by taking in Reid.

- On the 25th of February, the Minister of the Economy, Finance and Industry, Hervé Gaymard, resigns after the newspaper *Le Canard Enchaîné* reveals the exorbitant price of his luxury apartment in Paris (14,000 euros per month) paid using public funds.

- On the 28th of February, the National Assembly and the Senate approve modifications to the French Constitution, making it compatible with the European Constitution and also allowing

the possibility of organising a referendum on the above mentioned European Constitution.

Italy

- On the first of February, the former leader of the Sicilian regional government and political ally of Silvio Berlusconi, goes to court accused of having passed on information to the Mafia regarding some official inquiries. On the 18th of February, Morio Mori, Leader of the Italian Republic Civilian Secret Service and Segio di Caprio, a high ranking police detective, find themselves summoned to court accused of having helped and supported the Mafia during the arrest of Salvatore Riina, a Sicilian Mafia leader, in 1993.
- On the 14th of February, the European Commission asks Italy for some assurances concerning its intention to authorise foreign buyouts of Italian banks, as the country is suspected of protectionism in the banking sector. The President of the Italian central bank, the Bank of Italy, is accused of hindering foreign companies' attempts of buying out Italian banks.

Slovenia

- On the first of February, the State House of Assembly (Lower House) ratifies the European Constitution.

Croatia

- On the 17th of February, the House of Representatives (Lower House), approves of a cabinet reorganisation following the resignation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in January. The current Minister for Integration, Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic, becomes the new Minister of Foreign Affairs. On the 27th of February, Kitarovic reproaches the EU for having lead the opening of Croatia's entry negotiations to a deadlock by requesting, as a precondition, the arrest of general Ante Gotovina, who is pursued for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). She insists on the fact that Gotovina is not in Croatia.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On the 15th of February, the Sprska Republic legislative power approves the

new cabinet, presided by Pero Bukejlovic, member of the Serb Democratic Party.

- On the 24th of February, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) accuses two generals from the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS), Milan Gvero and Radivoje Miletic, of being involved in the Srebrenica and Zepa war crimes in 1995. Both men submit themselves to the ICTY respectively on the 24th and 25th of February. On the 28th, Ramsim Delic, also member of the VRS, submits himself to the ICTY as he is suspected of having breached laws and customs of war. During the war he was responsible for foreign voluntary Muslims found guilty of torturing assassinating and raping Bosnian-Croat civil prisoners

Serbia and Montenegro

- On the 2nd of February, Greece extradites Dejan Milenkovic to Serbia, a member of Serbia's main criminal group, the Zemun Gang, and the key suspect in the assassination of the Serbian Prime Minister in March 2003.
- On the 3rd of February, general Vladimir Lazarevic, accused of war crimes for his actions during the war in Kosovo, submits himself to the Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). This is after meeting the Serbian Prime Minister, Vojislav Kostunica, who is put under increasing pressure by the International community to hand over fugitive war criminals.
- On the 13th and 14th of February, the Serbian President Boris Tadic, sets out on an historical visit to Kosovo, the first one by a Serbian President since the NATO bombings in 1999. Tadic affirms once again that Kosovo is Serbian and that its independence is unacceptable.
- On the 22nd of February, the Prime Minister of Montenegro, Miodrag Vlahovic, proposes a virtual independence between Serbia and Montenegro. The day after, the Serbian Prime Minister Kostunica rejects the proposal saying that it violates the Belgrade Agreement (March 2002) on the establishment of the union of Serbia and Montenegro. On the 28th of February, the Minister for Foreign Affairs for Montenegro declares that Montenegro wishes to join NATO and the EU as an independent member and not as part of the confederation.

Albania

- On the 15th of February, the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whilst on tour in the Balkans, declares to Tirana that his country is firmly decided on supporting Albania's entry in NATO's structures.
- On the 23rd of February, the Albanese justice clears the Prime Minister Fatos Nano of accusations of arms dealing between Albania and Kosovo in 1998. These allegations were made in November 2003 by a deputy from the opposition who could now be charged with defamation.

Greece

- On the 8th of February, the socialist Karolos Papoulias, elected by the Vouli (unicameral legislative parliament), becomes the new President of Greece.
- On the 9th of February, the European Commission suggests giving Greece an extra year (until the end of 2006) to comply with the budget deficit criteria of the Stability and Growth Pact (3% of GDP), before imposing sanctions.

Cyprus

- On the 20th of February, during the anticipated legislative elections in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the Turkish Republican Party led by the pro-European Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Talat returns to power, increasing its seats to 24 out of 50 in the Republican Assembly (unicameral).

Turkey

- On the 2nd of February, experts defuse an explosive packet found in a club in Incirlik, generally frequented by Americans.
- On the 5th of February demonstrations take place in the capital Ankara to protest against American foreign policy, as its presence in Iraq, while the American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice starts a two-day visit to Turkey.
- On the 7th of February, the President of the Human Rights Consultancy Council, Ibrahim Kaboglu, and some of his colleagues resign accusing legislative, ju-

dicial and executive powers of hindering their work.

- On the 14th of February, Istanbul Tenth Criminal Court acquits 8 of the 71 people charged for the suicide attacks taken place in Istanbul in November 2003.
- On the 15th of February, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) within the European Council, publishes its report requesting the reduction of the role religion has in Turkey. Amongst other things it proposes to eliminate religion as a compulsory course in schools as well as removing the religious reference from ID cards. On the 16th of February, Sevet Kazan, vice-President of the Islamist Welfare Party, criticises the Justice and Development party currently in power for not seeing the "stratagem against our country". Kazan declares that this report intends "to separate a nation from its moral values and to extend the crusades to Turkey".
- On the 22nd of February, during a ministry reorganisation, the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan appoints Atilla Koc as the new Minister for Culture and Tourism, as a replacement of Erkan Muncu, a secular liberal from AKP who criticised Erdogan's attempt to criminalize adultery.
- On the 23rd of February, the Grand National Assembly (GNA-unicameral) grants an amnesty to 677,000 students who were expelled from universities after the 29th of June 2000, some for having refused to remove the Islamic headscarf at university. They will be able to enrol at university again but the ban on wearing the headscarf remains in full force.
- On the 23rd of February, two soldiers are injured during clashes between the Turkish Army and the People's Defence Force (HPG) in the south-east of the country.

Lebanon

- On the 14th of February, the former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri is assassinated in Beirut in a car explosion as his convoy passes by, also causing the death of 16 people and injuring 135. An unknown Islamist Group (Victory and Jihad in Greater Syria) claims responsibility for the attack against Hariri, which was carried out because of his

relations with Saudi Arabia. Even though Syria immediately condemns the attack, the Lebanese opposition parties indicate the Pro-Syrian administration and the Syrian government as responsible for Hahiri's death. Since his resignation in October 2004, the Prime Minister became increasingly more critical against the Syrian military presence in Lebanon. On the 15th of February, the United States withdraw their ambassador from Syria. On the 16th of February, during Hahiri's funeral, thousands of people gather together, holding up anti-Syrian slogans and insulting the Pro-Syrian President, Emile Lahoud. On the 18th of February, the opposition groups call for an "independence uprising" and requests for Lahoud Pro-Syrian regime to step down in order to set up a new government which will organise a Syrian military pullout. Following this declaration, thousands of people in favour of the opposition group together in the centre of Beirut, where they stay throughout the month of February. On the 21st of February, during a visit to Brussels, the American President G. W. Bush requests that Syria withdraws its troops from Lebanon. On the 24th of February, the Lebanese Minister of Defence, Abed Al-Rahim Murad, announces that he reached an agreement with Syria for the withdrawal of all of its troops to the valley of Bekaa, in line with the 1989 Taif Agreement which put an end to the Lebanese civil war. On the 25th of February, the assistant of Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Walid al-Mu'allim, declares that the Syrian government is ready to cooperate with the UN in order to apply resolution 1559 (2004) which requests the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon. He adds, however, that it will be the Lebanese government and Security Services' responsibility to ensure that internal security is maintained. On the same day, a UN team, presided by the Irish Peter Fitzgerald, starts an investigation commission on Hahiri's assassination. On the 27th of February, the Lebanese government of Prime Minister Umar Karami steps down under popular pressure. On the same day, during a heated parliamentary session, some deputies from the opposition accuse the Karami government of having organised Hariri's assassination.

Syria

- On the 16th of February, the Syrian Prime Minister Mohammed Naji al-Itri, meets the First Vice-President of Iran Mohammed Reza Aref. The two decide to stand together against the threat of Americans who see them as the main obstacles to the establishment of peace and democracy in the Middle East. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Assistant, Walid al-Mu'allim, while explaining the nature of Syria's relationship with Iran, declares to the London based newspaper *Al-Hayat*, that this is a strategic bond and not an alliance against a third state.
- On the 19th of February, the President Bashar al-Assad appoints his brother in law, general Asef Shawkat, as the head of the military intelligence service.

Jordan

- On the 22nd of February, the King of Jordan Abdallah II, begins a European tour in Spain centred on Near East developments.
- On the 28th of February, Jordan and Syria sign an agreement resolving a long frontier dispute by exchanging lands on their communal borders. Moreover, Syria and Jordan sign an agreement on fighting against drugs traffic and organised crime as well as another 19 treaties in the fields of culture, agriculture, commerce and transport.

Egypt

- On the first of February, Mohammed Abdel Rahman Badawi, a key suspect in the October 2004 attack on Sinai, is killed during a confrontation between the police and Islamists in the mountains near Ain Sudr. On the 22nd of February, a *Human Rights Watch* report declares that the estimated 2,400 people arrested without charge following the October 2004 attack, were victims of torture and inhumane treatment.
- On the 27th of February, President Hosni Mubarak announces important democratic reforms. While up to now the President was not elected directly but selected by legislative power and submitted to a referendum, the reform modifying article 76 of the constitution will

allow more candidates to come forward for the Presidential elections taking place at the end of 2005. Once approved, the amendment of article 76 will be subject to a referendum.

Libya

- On the 5th of February, the French Minister of Defence Michèle Alliot-Marie, goes to Libya to re-launch a military cooperation which used to be productive but was spoilt by the years of embargo. Alliot-Marie and her Libyan equivalent, Abou Bakar Younes Jaber, sign a master agreement establishing their future relations with regards to strategic communication, military cooperation and weaponry issues.
- On the 6th of February, the Italian Minister of Internal Affairs Giuseppe Pisanu, during a business trip to discuss immigration issues, reasserts the Italian government intention of assisting Tripoli to find solutions geared towards promoting legal immigration as well as stopping clandestine immigration from its origins. This includes a firm suppression against clandestine organisations responsible for it.
- On the 10th of February, the American Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, William Burns, at the end of his visit to Tripoli, reaffirms the United States objective to totally restore normal diplomatic relations with Libya. On the 11th of February, the United States and Libya lift restrictions preventing each other's diplomats' from visiting their soil.

Tunisia

- On the 8th of February, Tunisia and Algeria inaugurate a "collective memory" museum in the bordering city of Ghardimaou (North Eastern Tunisia).
- On the 13th of February, the first private Tunisian television channel starts broadcasting.
- On the 14th and 15th of February, a seminar takes place in Tunis regarding the "dismantlement of the Multifiber Agreement and its repercussions on the economies of the countries in the Arab Maghreb Union"; this was organised by the Arab Maghreb Union and the African Economic Commission. Tunis seminar participants are unanimous: Magh-

reb countries have to work together to guarantee the survival of their textile-clothing sector and to preserve their market shares.

- On the 22nd of February, the "International Freedom of Expression Exchange" (IFEX), a large network of associations campaigning for the freedom of the press, accuses Tunisia of banning newspapers, closing internet sites, imprisoning people because of their opinions or press activities and of resorting to torture.

Algeria

- At the beginning of February, the Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika was appointed honorary President of the main pro-governmental party, the National Liberation Front (FLN), putting an end to almost two years of internal disputes within the party between those in favour of Bouteflika and those supporting the former President Ali Benflis.
- At the beginning of February, the President appoints former President Ahmed Ben Bella as leader of the National Commission for a General Amnesty (CNAG), which is responsible for the amnesty of Islamist rebels.

Morocco

- On the 14th of February, for the first time King Mohammed VI appoints a civilian, Yassine Mansouri, as head of the General Directorate of Studies and Documentation (DGED), the Moroccan counter-espionage service.
- On the 17th of February, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) get together in Rabat. This meeting, which coincides with the 16th anniversary of UMA's creation in 1989, is dedicated to analysing the regional group's renewal prospects.

European Union

- On the 2nd of February, the President of the European Commission (EC) José Manuel Durao Barroso, reveals the European Union Growth and Employment Strategy up to 2010. This strategy is described as being neoliberal and excessively "pro-market". One of the strategy's most controversial proposals,

which Germany and France oppose, concerns the liberalisation of services providing that anyone or any company can offer its services in another European country as long as they respect the rules of their country of origin (with the exception of public services). On the 9th of February, Durao Barroso presents a Social and Environmental Agenda to complement the Strategy. This envisages the promotion of collective negotiation, a greater role given to trade unions in companies' decisions and greater environmental responsibilities for big enterprises. This agenda is criticised for having an "anti-business" orientation.

- On the 16th of February, the EC decides to allocate 8 million euros to finance information campaigns on the Constitution in those member countries that are least informed. Eurosceptic parliamentarians condemn this decision describing it as propaganda.
- On the 16th of February, the Party of European Socialists (PSE) accuses the EC President Barroso of compromising the EC's independence by turning up in the Portuguese elections supporting his former Party, the Social Democratic Party (PSD).
- On the 17th of February, disagreements continue within the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (EcoFin) on the Stability and Growth Pact and particularly on the criteria fixing the public deficit threshold to 3% of the GDP. Luxembourg presidency will have to draw up one last reform proposal between now and March.

March 2005

Anti-Syrian demonstrations continue in Lebanon while the United Nations fact-finding inquiry report makes Syria indirectly responsible for the death of the former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri. In France, the National Liberation Front of Corsica – The Fighter's Union (FNLC-UC) suspends its ceasefire. In Italy, the Senate approves a controversial constitutional reform that reinforces the Prime Minister's powers and increases regions' autonomy. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Croatian-born President is dismissed from presidency and the Prime Minister in Kosovo resigns to submit him-

self to the ICTY. The EU postpones opening entry negotiations with Croatia and accuses Turkey of human rights violation. In Algeria, the fact-finding inquiry on disappearance cases during the civil war excludes any State responsibility.

Portugal

- On the 4th of March, the Prime Minister José Socrates (Socialist Party PS) announces the composition of his cabinet which will be approved on the 12th of March. Two independents are appointed to two vital roles: Diego Freitas do Amaral, who was Minister of Defence and President of the UN General Assembly and who is very critical of the American foreign policy, is appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Luis Cam-pose Cunha, former vice governor of the Portuguese Central Bank and renowned for his fiscal conservatism, becomes Minister of Finance.
- On the 22nd of March, the Assembly of the Republic introduce reforms which intend to modernise the economy, bring back the 150,000 jobs lost under the previous government, achieve a 3% increase in the annual GDP, raise internal investments and improve infrastructure.

Spain

- On the 8th of March, the Moroccan Jaouad el Bourouti, suspected of having collaborated with the perpetrators of the Madrid attacks on the 11th of March 2004, is arrested. On the 18th and 19th of March, two brothers of Spanish nationality, suspected of having hidden kamikazes in safe locations, are arrested.
- On the 11th of March, following the inquiry on the Madrid attacks which brought to light the faults within the co-ordination of security forces, the government introduces a series of measures in order to reinforce the security of the country against terrorist threats. The Civil Guard, the Police and the National Intelligence Centre will be linked together by a single command and will have to share their information. 1,000 supplementary officers and 130 translators from Arab countries will be employed.

France

- On the first of March, President Jacques Chirac promulgates an environmental charter which gives constitutional force to rights and obligations arising from the need of protecting the environment.
- On the 10th of March, the National Liberation Front in Corsica – The Fighter's Union (FNLC-UC), the main separatist movement on the island, suspends the ceasefire observed since November 2003 after the opening of the trial of 22 nationalists from Corsica. Amongst these was the suspected commander of FNLC-UC, Charles Pieri accused of extortion, embezzlement, of financing terrorism and associating with criminals in a terrorist plot. On the 11th of March, a bomb explodes outside a government building in Ajaccio, injuring 5 people.
- On the 10th of March, the son of former President François Mitterrand, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, is the object of a judicial investigation for having profited from embezzlement in Angola's arms trade case.
- On the 15th of March, a court of Paris sentences two French men of Algerian origin, Djamel Baghal et Kamel Daoudi, to 10 and 9 years of prison respectively for being members of an Al-Qaida cell that was planning an attack against American targets in France. Another 4 people have been condemned to prison sentences going from 1 to 6 years. During the trial, the court finds out that the person in charge of carrying out the suicide attack against the American embassy was the Tunisian professional footballer, Nizar Trabelsi, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison for similar offences in Belgium.
- On the 21st of March in Paris the trial of 47 businessmen and politicians starts, amongst which are the former ministers Michel Giraud, Miche Roussin and Guy Drut, accused of fraudulent party financing under the mandate of Jacques Chirac (1977-1995), who at the time was the mayor of the city of Paris.
- On the 29th of March in Paris, the trial of three French of Maghreb origins and an Algerian starts, accused of having helped the assassins of Ahmed Shah Masud, the Northern Afghan Alliance commander.

- On the 29th of March, the senate introduces a law that raises the minimum legal age for marriage from 15 to 18 years in an attempt to fight against forced marriages within the muslim community and other immigrant communities.

Italy

- On the first of March, official statistics show that the public deficit has reached 3% of the GDP, the maximum threshold authorised by the EU Stability and Growth Pact.
- On the 3rd of March, the government majority within the Chamber of Deputies (Lower House) stops a proportion of legislative reforms on financial regulation which intends to prevent any enterprise fraud, following the Parmalat scandal in 2004. The government rejects the amendments to the law on false accounts, introduced not long after Berlusconi came to power. The opposition parties believe that the amendment suppression supports Berlusconi's economic interests.
- On the 4th of March a diplomatic crisis erupts between the United States and Italy after American troops shoot Nicola Calipari, an Italian Secret Services agent, just after he rescued the hostage Giuliana Sgrena in Iraq. On the same day, the American President G. W. Bush expresses his regrets in a telephone call to the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi promising to conduct an inquiry to establish the exact circumstances of Calipari's death. The incident relaunches requests to withdraw the Italian troops from Iraq. On the 15th of March Berlusconi announces that Italian soldiers will leave in September 2005, then retracts his statement two days later.
- On the 13th of March, a bomb placed by the "Unabomber", a serial bomber, explodes in a church in Treviso injuring a young child.
- On the 15th of March, Cinzia Bannell, a member of the Red Brigades is sentenced to 16 years in prison for being involved in the murder of a government councillor in 2002.
- On the 17th of March, an Advocate General from the Court of Justice for the European Communities declares that the enterprise tax known under the

name of Irap is illegal because of its similarity to VAT. The Finance Minister announces the tax abolition.

- On the 23rd of March, the Senate (Higher House) approves a controversial constitutional reform which reinforces the Prime Minister's executive power, leads to the senate's federalisation and increases the autonomy of the 20 Italian regions. On the same day, the Minister of Administration Reform and of Decentralisation, Roberto Calderoli, a member of the Northern League, retracts his threat of withdrawing from the governmental coalition, which he made because of the time taken to introduce the above mentioned reform. The opposition parties criticise this reform which allows the Prime Minister to disband the legislative authority and to dismiss Ministers.

Croatia

- On the 16th of March, the European Union Ministers of Foreign Affairs decide to postpone entry negotiations with Croatia which were due to start on the following day. This is because of the country's lack of cooperation with the Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) General Ante Gotovina's arrest. No new date is proposed for the beginning of negotiations. While Croatia reaffirms that Gotovina is not in the country, the ICTY declares that it cannot rely on Croatia's full cooperation for as long as Gotovina is not submitted to the ICTY. Austria, Hungary and Slovenia favour the opening of negotiations to congratulate Zagreb on reforms made. However the majority of states are opposed to it, amongst these are France, The Netherlands, The United Kingdom and Germany.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On the 9th of March, there is the official inauguration of a special court in Sarajevo, to which the Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) will transfer a certain number of trials. Croatia is the first country in the region to be entrusted independent judgement in these affairs. Little by little this court's international judges and attorneys will be replaced by Bosnian professionals.

- On the 11th of March, the former Minister of Internal Affairs of the Sprska Republic (Bosnian Serb entity), Mico Stanisic, submits himself to the ICTY, as suspected of being involved in the permanent relocation and ethnic cleansing of non-Serbians between April and December in 1992 on what was to become the "Serbian State" territory.

- On the 14th of March, Gojko Janjovic, the leader of a paramilitary group responsible for invading the city of Foca in Bosnia in 1992, who contributed to the realisation of "rape camps", gives himself in to the ICTY after taking refuge in Moscow for 4 years. He was accused of crimes against humanity and violations of the laws and customs of war.

- On the 23rd of March, former Bosnian Serb general, Vinko Pandurevic, is transferred to the ICTY, accused of genocide, crimes against humanity, violations of the laws and customs of war and of being involved in the Srebrenica massacre of 1995.

- On the 29th of March, the High Representative of the International Community, Lord Paddy Ashdown, dismisses the Croatian-born President Dragan Covic, from the tripartite presidency established in October 2002. The day after, Covic is sentenced for corruption activities committed before being appointed as President.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On the 7th of March, general Momcilo Perisic, the Yugoslav Army former High Command Leader from August 1993 to November 1998, submits himself to the Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), as he is accused of crimes against humanity and violations of the laws and customs of war because of crimes committed by his troops in Bosnia and Croatia, amongst which the Srebrenica attacks on civilians.

- On the 8th of March, Ramush Haradinaj, the Prime Minister of the disputed Serbian province of Kosovo, resigns to submit himself to the ICTY that accuse him of crimes against humanity, violations of the laws and customs of war for actions committed against Serbian, Albanians and Roma between March and

September 1999 in Kosovo. He pleads not guilty. On the 23rd of March, the Assembly elects Bajram Kosume to replace him.

- On the 15th of March, Kosovo's President, Ibrahim Rukova survives an assassination attempt.

Macedonia

- On the 15th of March, the Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), in its first conviction in Macedonia, takes to court Ljube Boskovski, the former Minister of Internal Affairs and Johan Tarculovski, a former Macedonian policeman and the bodyguard of the past President Boris Trajkovski. The two men are accused of violating the laws and customs of war during confrontations between Macedonian security forces and Albanian rebels in Ljubotno near Skopje at the beginning of August which cost 10 Albanian lives. Ljube Boskovski and Johan Tarculovski are transferred to the detention unit of the ICTY respectively on the 24th and 16th of March.

- On the 13th and 28th of March the local elections take place for mayors and district council members. This is the first test for the reforms established in the Ohrid Agreement, which put an end to the Albanian insurrection requesting more autonomy for the Slavs in the country. The OSCE elections observation mission denounced numerous irregularities during both rounds of voting.

Greece

- On the 18th of March, the budget deficit official figures indicate a shortfall of 6.1% of the GDP, well over the government predictions (5.3%) and the maximum threshold provided in the EU Stability and Growth Pact (3%). The difference from the predictions is due to excessive expenses incurred during the organisation of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. This is the highest deficit in the Euro-zone since the introduction of the Euro in 1999. On the 29th of March, in order to reduce its external deficit, Greece increases its indirect taxes on cigarettes and alcohol and rises VAT from 18 to 19%.

Cyprus

- On the 4th of March, following the February legislative elections, the President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Rauf Denktaş, brings Mehmet Ali Talat (Republican Turkish Party CTP-pro-European) back to his Prime Minister role. On the 8th of March, the President accepts Talat's decision on maintaining the coalition with the Democrat Party (DP-anti-European). On the 16th of March the new government receives the vote of confidence of the Republican Assembly by 29 votes to 19.

Turkey

- On the 4th of March, security forces kill 2 members of the People's Congress of Kurdistan (Kongra-Gel) and arrest 3 others in the cities of Sirnak and Mardin. On the same day, Kurdish People's Defence Forces (HPG) kills four soldiers in the Gabar mountains. On the 5th of March, the HPG kills a policeman in the Mardin district.
- On the 7th of March, the EU officially condemns Turkey for the disproportionate use of force by the anti-riot police, who employed truncheons and tear gas to disperse a group of women and young people during a non-authorised demonstration in Istanbul on International Women's Day. The Enlargement commissioner, Olli Rhen, visiting Turkey during these events, raises doubts on Turkey's intention to implement the reforms before going into the negotiation phase for joining the EU.
- On the 13th of March, 3,000 people, amongst which representatives of European Youth Organisations, get together for the Turkish Communist Party initiative to protest against the EU and the United States.
- On the 26th of March, according to *The Guardian*, Erdogan takes the satirical magazine *Penguen* to court for the caricatures depicting him.
- On the 29th of March, Rhen announces that Turkey consents to sign a protocol which extends the customs agreement with the EU to the ten new members including the Greek part of Cyprus. The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül, however, specifies that he will not recognise the

Greek Cypriot government until the division of Cyprus Island is settled.

Syria

- On the 9th of March, thousands of Syrians demonstrate in the streets of Damas in support of their President Bashar al-Assad, who is increasingly pressurised by the international community to withdraw his troops from Lebanon, since the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri, on the 14th of February.
- On the 10th of March, violent confrontations erupt while hundreds of students and members of pro-governmental youth groups attack demonstrators asking for a reduction of the state of emergency which has been in place for the last 42 years.

Lebanon

- Throughout the month of March, the international community pressure demanding the withdrawal of all Syrian troops and security agents intensifies. On the first of March, the American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the French Minister of Foreign affairs, Michel Barnier, during a meeting in London supporting Palestinian Authority, demand an immediate withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. The following day, the American President makes a similar declaration and adds that all countries in the world speak unanimously and demand the Syrian troops pullout. He then says that Syria has to withdraw before the Lebanese elections in May. On the 3rd of May, the heir prince of Saudi Arabia, Abdullah ibn Abdul Aziz, warns Syria that generally benefits from Saudi support, that if the country does not withdraw from Lebanon it will suffer the consequences in its relationship with Saudi Arabia. On the 5th of March, whilst talking to the Syrian People's Assembly (unicameral legislative), al-Assad announces that Syrian troops will pull back in the Bekaa Valley, in the East of Lebanon, before moving to the border. This is in compliance with the Taif Accord, the 1989 agreement on national reconciliation which is in line with the 2004 UN Security Council 1559 Resolution. On the 7th of March,

with the Lebanese President Emile Lahoud, the Syrian leader agrees that the pullout in the Valley will be carried out at the end of March and that a military committee will be put in place to administer operations. While for many in the Lebanese opposition the pullout of Syrian secret services (*mukhabarat*) is more important than the pullout of troops.

- Al-Assad does not mention Syrian military secret agents in his withdrawal plan. Throughout the month of March, anti-Syrian demonstrators maintain their presence in Martyres square in the centre of Beirut. The Lebanese opposition political class multiplies its requests to Hezbollah to join the "Intifada for Independence" ranks (also called Cedar Revolution), which unites Christians, Druzes and Sunnite Muslims. The Hezbollah refuse, organising a pro-Syrian demonstration on the 8th of March, which will make history as one of the greatest gatherings the country has ever had. On the 14th of March, the opposition organises a rally to mark the first month gone by since Hariri's assassination. On the 16th of March, the *International Herald Tribune* reports that Syrian secret agents are starting to evacuate their headquarters located in the Ramlet al-Baida district in the centre of Beirut. On the 24th of March, the UN report regarding Hariri's assassination makes Syria responsible for the politically tense situation preceding Hariri's murder, without saying, however, that the country is responsible for the attack itself. The report mentions the threats made by President al-Assad against Hariri if he opposed to prolonging the Lebanese President mandate. It also criticises the Lebanese government for its lack of effort in establishing the truth on Hariri's assassination and requests that an independent board of enquiry is put in place. The report later adds that the board will not be able to function efficiently if the current Lebanese Security Service leadership remains in force. The Lebanese Minister of Foreign Affairs criticises the report, while President Lahoud asks the UN to do what is necessary to establish the truth. Outside the Arab League Summit, the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Al Gaddafi, defends the role played by Syria in Lebanon and accu-

ses the UN of showing double standards.

- On the 10th of March, President Lahoud reappoints Prime Minister Umar Karami to his position, as the opposition was not capable of agreeing on a common candidate to replace him. Karami suggests to the opposition to form a unity government, which the opposition refuses until all Syrian troops leave the country and an international enquiry is put in place to investigate Hariri's assassination and the Lebanese high ranking security service officials are replaced. On the 30th of March Karami announces to the President that he has failed to create a new cabinet.
- On the 18th, 23rd and 26th of March three bombs explode in some Christian districts of Beirut killing three people and injuring another 17. On the 20th of March, the Druze opposition leader accuses Pro-Syrian groups of bringing disorder.

Jordan

- On the 8th of March, some Jordanian, Palestinian and Israeli officials decide to renew their joint efforts to fight against the ecological disaster present in the river Jordan. No agreement is reached on key elements of restoration of the water supply, which in the past 50 years decreased from 1.3 billion cubic metres to less than 100 million, of which over 20 million is untreated sewage.
- On the 20th of March, the State Security Court condemns in absence the Jordanian Abu Misab Zarqawi, the Al-Qaeda leader responsible for the holy war in Iraq, to 15 years of prison for terrorist conspiracy.
- On the 22nd of March relations between Jordan and Iraq deteriorate when Jordan withdraws its ambassador from Iraq, after Iraqi Shiite Muslims accused the country of letting Sunni militants enter Iraq. These criticisms follow an attack committed by a Jordanian on the 28th of February in the Shiite city of Hilla, which caused 125 deaths. Shiite Iraqi politicians demand the Jordanian Monarchy, which in the 80's was close to Saddam Hussein's regime dominated by Sunnis, apologise for the attack, compensate the victims' families, arrest and extradite the Iraqi officials from Saddam's former regime who are taking refuge in Jordan.

Egypt

- On the 12th of March, the leader of the opposition party Al Ghad, Ayman Nur, who was accused of counterfeiting signatures necessary for the official recognition of his party in January, is released on bail. On his way out of prison he declares that he will stand in the Presidential elections. However, on the 22nd of March, the prosecutor announces that Ayman Nur will be taken to court accused of counterfeiting.
- On the 27th of March, the Muslim Brotherhood organises a demonstration in front of the legislative buildings in Cairo, to request political reforms. The police arrests 230 members and supporters.

Libya

- On the 22nd and 23rd of March, during the Arab League meeting, the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Al Gaddafi, declares that he will not succumb to Western pressure and that he will not forgive the Bulgarian nurses who are accused, together with a Palestinian doctor, of having deliberately infected 426 children with the AIDS virus. On the 29th of March the 5 Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian doctor appeal against their death sentence in front of a Libyan court.

Tunisia

- At the beginning of March, in the framework of the organisation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) by the United Nations in Tunis, the violations of human rights increase. On the first of March, Mohammed Abbou, lawyer and member of the National Council for Liberties in Tunisia (CNLT), is arrested. In an Internet article Mohammed Abbou criticised the invitation to attend the WSIS made by the government to the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at the end of February as well as the persistent torture of Tunisian political prisoners. On the 2nd of March, plain-clothes policemen physically assault several lawyers gathered outside the Tunis Palace of Justice, for protesting against the arrest of Mohammed Abbou. On the 4th of March police forces assault numerous people,

amongst which are human rights defenders, during a demonstration called by political parties and independent non-governmental organisations who wished to protest against the authorities' refusal to grant them authorisation to hold their meeting. On the 7th of March, the police forcefully break into Tunis Tribunal, where around fifty lawyers defend Abbou. On the 9th of March, at request of the National Bar, the majority of 1,400 Tunisian lawyers go on strike in order to denounce the police's forceful entry in their offices. At the beginning of March, during various demonstrations protesting against the invitation made to Sharon, the police injure six people amongst which is Radhia Nasraoui, lawyer and human rights campaigner, who openly criticised Abbou's arrest. On the 10th of March, students go on general strike, which leads to clashes with the forces of law and order especially in some university institutions in the capital. In a communication brief, the Democratic progressist Party (PDP/ opposition) denounces the repression caused by the student insurrection and demand the release of students arrested. Authorities point out that the invitation addressed to the Israeli Prime Minister is not of a bilateral nature, specifying that he was invited just as all the United Nations member countries' leaders were.

- On the 4th of March, the General Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Rodrigo Rato, says goodbye to the "success story" of Tunisian economy which has to prepare itself, according to him, to confront new challenges, especially in the textile sector.
- On the 19th of March, the representatives of eight parties (4 Tunisian parties of which two are legal and two are unrecognised, three Moroccan parties and one Algerian) get together in Tunis to discuss the theme "For an Arab Maghreb Union freed of political prisoners". They demand that Arab prisons are emptied of detainees in this category, that the latter's individual and public freedom is respected and that their governments respond to the Arab masses' hopes for democracy, whose absence, according to them, represents the main obstacle to the region's development and to the realisation of complementarity and union. Nevertheless, they record the progresses made by

Morocco with regards to establishing truth and equity.

- On the 29th of March, on the occasion of the official visit to Tunis of the Turkish Prime Minister M. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, both countries express their determination to develop their commercial relations. Tunisian Prime Minister, M. Ghannouchi, asks Tunis and Ankara to join their efforts to promote the textile industry so to protect their market share from external markets, especially the European one.

Algeria

- On the 21st of March, President Bouteflika meets the King of Morocco Mohamed VI outside the Arab summit in Alger, in order to prepare the AMU summit. The presence of King Mohammed VI in Alger is a major diplomatic event for Maghreb as no Moroccan sovereign has visited Algeria in the past 14 years.
- On the 26th of March, islamist rebels from the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), kill two soldiers in an ambush set up in the East of Alger.
- On the 31st of March, an inquiry commission appointed by the government regarding cases of disappearance, concludes that members of the Algerian secret forces are responsible for the disappearing of 6,146 civilians during the civil war in the 90s. It also specifies that the agents in question acted on their own initiative and not under the state orders. The inquiry, conducted over 12 months, draws on the State's leader national reconciliation policy.

Morocco

- On the 6th of March, Watanouna (Our Nation), a network of non governmental organisations, organises a demonstration in Morocco bringing together 30,000 people (artists, NGO, opposition members...). This is to claim for international support for the efforts shown to obtain the liberation of Moroccan prisoners of war from the independentist movement sahraoui, in Tindouf, Western Algeria, at the border with Western Sahara. Demonstrators urge Algeria to release militaries and denounce the human rights violations and acts of torture committed in the

Sahrawis refugee camps. Encouraged by Moroccan authorities, Watanouna addresses a petition to the UN signed by over 500,000 Moroccans requesting the prisoners' liberation.

European Union

- On the first of March, a regulation providing a common judicial area in terms of family law, comes into force. All the EU members except for Denmark take part to it.
- On the 8th of March, International Women's Day, Vladimir Spidla, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, announces the creation of the European Institute for Gender Equality.
- On the 22nd and 23rd of March, the Brussels European Council makes two decisions marking the victory of the Franco-German axis. Firstly, the European Council sanctions the Finance Minister's decision of softening rules of the European Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), just as France and Germany wished. Consequently, no sanction can be taken towards a state that violates the 3% deficit criteria, whether it is confronting economic recession or a period of persistent slow growth. Moreover, as per certain expenses financing education, research, defence, external aid, and every expense contributing to "Europe's unification" (a German request for its unification), they will be excluded from the calculation of public deficit. Finally, the period admitted to remedy excessive deficit, changes from 1 to 2 years and can be extended to 2 supplementary years if the economic situation during excessive deficit proceedings has negative effects on the budget. These reforms are criticised by countries respecting the SGP rules and the European Central Bank which fears that these reforms would not lead to an inflation and would make necessary to raise the euro zone interest rates. The European Council's second decision regards the refusal of the European Commission (EC) directive project for the liberalisation of the services sector (*Bolkenstein* directive). France and Germany oppose it as it would weaken the European Social Model. According to the States opposed to the directive, the "country of origin criteria" will favour

the poorer new member states and result in "social dumping in richer European States". Finally, the European Council introduces the Growth and Employment Strategy by the EC President, Jose Manuel Durao Barroso, to re-launch the Lisbon Strategy which intends to make Europe the most competitive economic area in the world by 2010.

- On the 23rd of March, President Chirac declares that the budget reduce (4.6 billion euros per year), which the United Kingdom benefits from since 1984, is no longer necessary. The Minister of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Jack Straw, replies that he will exercise his veto against any attempt to erase the British rebate. The EC President, Durao Barroso, proposed that the British rebate is replaced by a "generalised corrective mechanism", through which other net contributor countries are equally eligible to reimbursements, this would lead to a decrease of the British rebate. According to Durao Barroso, these measures are justified by the fact that the United Kingdom, which in 1989 had the third lowest GDP, today has a higher GDP in comparison to other net contributors to the European budget (Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden) and that the extended European Union includes much poorer countries than the United Kingdom.

Arab League

- On the 22nd and 23rd of March, the Arab League holds a summit in Alger, in Algeria. Only 13 out of 22 leaders are present and few resolutions are introduced. Even though the crisis in Lebanon is not mentioned in the final text, Syria finds itself supported in its policy against "foreign intervention". Sovereigns and State leaders insist on the need to pursue the development and modernisation procedure in order to concentrate on democratic practice, the enlargement of political participation, the promotion of human rights and the role of women in society. They also call for the revitalization of common mechanisms of action as well as the re-launch of economic partnership projects. As per the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, General Secretary Amr Mohammed Musa declares that "commitments have to be made in return for disenga-

gements" and that Arabs will not normalize their relations with Israel without commitment on its part. Sovereigns and State leaders also discuss the opportunity to re-launch the peace proposal resulting from the 2002 Summit in Beirut. The original text, known in the Arab world under the name of "Beirut Initiative" proposed to offer Israel a normalization of its relations with over 21 Arab countries in return for a pull-out from the Palestinian territories confiscated in 1967, the creation of a Palestinian state with Eastern Jerusalem as capital and the recognition of Palestinian refugees' rights.

April 2005

While the Egyptian government faces increasing pressures for political reforms, Egypt is shaken up by a terrorist attack in Cairo, which causes 21 deaths. In the Near-East, Syria leaves Lebanon definitely; where a new government is set up under Najib Mikati's leadership and in a Christian district of the capital four bombs explode in two weeks. In Italy, the Prime Minister Berlusconi forms a new government after resigning, following his governmental coalition defeat in the regional elections. In Maghreb, for the first time in 14 years, Tunisia accepts to authorise Human Right Watch to visit its prisons, suspected of keeping prisoners in prolonged isolation. In Turkey, 40 soldiers die in the most violent confrontations with Kurdish rebels since the PKK announced its ceasefire in 2003. Again in Turkey, the government accepts to put in place a Turkish-Armenian commission of historians which will discuss the issue of Armenian genocide. Finally, in the TRNC, Mehmet Ali Talat becomes the new President.

Portugal

- On the 24th of April, the opposition party, the Democratic and Social Centre/People's Party (CDS/PP), elects Almeida Ribeiro e Castro as its new President and successor to Paulo Portas, who resigned following the party's defeat at the legislative elections in February.

Spain

- On the first of April, Belgium extradites Youssef Belhadj, an Al-Qaeda spokesman who claimed responsibility for the Madrid attacks of 11th of March 2004, to Spain. On the same day 12 people are arrested in the country, suspected of being connected with Islamic activism and of being involved in the Madrid attacks. Four of the suspects are linked to Belhadj, while the others are suspected of being associated with Sarhane ben Abdelmajid Fakhret, the Madrid attacks' leader who exploded himself in an apartment in the suburbs of Madrid in April 2004.
- On the 21st of April, the Cortes (Lower House) introduces a bill allowing marriage between partners of the same sex. This makes Spain the fourth country in the world to introduce such law. This law was a PSOE electoral promise. On the 22nd of April, the Vatican condemns this decision, which was also strongly criticised by the conservative opposition.
- On the 22nd of April, the trial of 24 men accused of being members of the Al-Qaeda network starts. Three of the accused are suspected of being directly involved with the September 11th attacks in the United States, amongst these Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas, Al-Qaeda's leader in Spain. This trial represents the culmination of an 8 year investigation conducted by the judge Baltasar Garzon.

France

- On the 6th of April, Amnesty International (AI) presents its report entitled "France: The Search for Justice" in which AI accuses French police of using excessive force, acts of bad treatment and torture, of carrying out illegal homicides especially against Arabs and blacks and of being guilty of racial abuses. AI highlights the impunity resulting from these acts in the French system.
- On the 7th of April, Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), announces the French Council for the Muslim Religion President's nominations: Abderrahmane Dahmane, as national secretary responsible for relations with immigration communities and Ahmed Guenad, Muslim businessman, at the UMP Executive

Council. These nominations intend to modernise the UMP and to open it to all communities.

- On the 8th of April, an alleged member of the terrorist "Chechen cell" based in France, is put under judicial investigation. On the 24th of April, the Moroccan Said al-Maghrebi is arrested, suspected of recruiting French Muslims to join the insurrection against American forces in Iraq. On the 29th of April, Nouari Khari confirms the judicial questioning of Zoubair Harabaoui and Farez Massaoudi, suspected of financing Islamic terrorism by borrowing funds with the pretence of creating an IT firm and then declaring it bankrupt.
- On the 14th of April, President Jacques Chirac affirms that he will not resign in the eventuality of a negative vote in the European Constitution referendum. On the other hand, the Minister of Internal Affairs Dominique de Villepin, declares that whatever the result of the referendum, some political changes are required. On the 26th of April, the German chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder visits Paris in order to give his support to the "yes" campaign of his French counterpart.

Italy

- On the 3rd and 4th of April, regional legislative elections take place in 20 regions, marking the defeat of the governmental coalition of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, against the centre-left coalition which wins in 11 regions against 2 for Berlusconi. On the 14th of April, negotiations within the governmental coalition to confront the defeat conclude with the withdrawal of the Union of Christian and Centre Democrats, because of Berlusconi's refusal to revise the coalition programme or call for anticipated elections. On the 19th of April, the leader of National Alliance threatens to withdraw its party from the coalition. On the 20th of April, Berlusconi resigns. The following day, however, the President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi asks him to form a new government which goes into power on the 23rd of April. The new government, which retains 19 of the 23 ministers in their posts, sets as its priority to support the expansion of businesses, encourages economic growth and improves Southern

Italians' living standards. It also creates a Development and Cohesion Ministry, responsible for encouraging relations between the North and the South of the country.

- On the 26th of April, Fininvest, Berlusconi's company, announces a 51% to 34% reduction of its holdings in the multimedia company Mediaset, which owns 3 television channels and considering that Berlusconi is the head of government, and can control the public channels (RAI), this allows Berlusconi to have an influence on 90% of the Italian television market. Romano Prodi, the opposition leader, states that even though he has sold part of his shares, Berlusconi retains his control over Mediaset as Fininvest remains its main investor and his son, Piersilvio, is Mediaset vice-President and is responsible for the company's broadcasting.
- On the 26th of April, an American investigation on the death in Iraq of the Italian Secret Services Agent, Nicola Calipari, drops all charges against American soldiers who shot him just as he freed an Italian hostage.

Croatia

- On the 19th of April, the Prime Minister Ivo Sanader dismisses the criminal police leader, Dragutin Cestar, for withholding information in the search for Ante Gotovina, sentenced by the Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Sanader declares that other dismissals will follow. On the 26th of April, the ICTY General Prosecutor Carla del Ponte, states that Croatia does not always fully cooperate with the ICTY in Gotovina's arrest and adds that the tribunal benefits from supporting networks within the Croatian state apparatus itself.
- On the 30th of April, a new party is recorded under the name of Democratic Alliance Medjmurje. Its leader, Zeljko Pavlinic, is a former member of the Party of Liberal Democrats (LIBRA) which merged with the Croatian People's party.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On the first of April, Ljubomir Borovcanin, a member of the Serbian military and police forces, accused of crimes against humanity and violations of

the laws and customs of war for his involvement in the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, is transferred to the detention unit of the Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). On the 7th and 14th of April respectively, two Serbo-Bosnians involved in the Srebrenica massacre, Milorad Tribic, a commander of the Zvornic Brigade and Vujadin Popovic, member of the Drina corps from the Serbian Army in Bosnia, submit themselves to the ICTY.

- On the 14th of April, the International Commission on the Balkans presents its report entitled "The Balkans in Europe's Future" in Belgrade. The report recommends a radical revision of international politics within the Balkans and the transferral of the High Representative's responsibilities in Bosnia to a European official in charge of enlargement. The High Representative, Lord Ashdown declares to the *Financial Times* that according to him his role is still useful in some respects even though he admits that his mandate will have to come to an end in the near future. The report also criticises the UN administration of the Kosovo Province affirming that the region should benefit from some form of independence. Finally, the report declares that the European Policy has not been able to convey a convincing political perspective to the people in the Balkans and that a radical change in European thought is necessary, all taking into consideration "the enlargement fatigue" present in certain European capitals.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On the 4th of April, the former Vice-President of Internal Affairs, general Sreten Lukic, accused since 2003 of crimes against humanity and violations of the laws and customs of war during the 1998-1999 Kosovo conflict, is transferred to the Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) detention centre in The Hague. According to the government's version of events, he voluntarily surrendered to the authorities. On the 25th of April, General Nebojsa Pavkovic, former leader of the High Command Rank of the Yugoslavian Army, who lead the Serb campaign in Kosovo, surrenders to the ICTY that accuse him of crimes against hu-

manity and violations of the laws and customs of war.

- On the 5th of April, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vuk Draskovic, declares to the *Financial Times* that general Ratko Mladic, former commander of the Serb forces in Bosnia is hiding thanks to the help of Serbian secret services. Miroslav D. Petrovic, a former Serb officer who deserted, on the 11th of April declares to the Serb independent newspaper *Danas*, that Mladic is hidden by the Serbia-Montenegro army.
- On the 12th of April, the European Commission (EC) declares that the federation has improved its cooperation with the ICTY and that it will recommend open negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU, which represents the first step towards joining.

Macedonia

- On the 9th of April, in an attempt to put an end to the dispute with Greece regarding Macedonia's name, which persists since the independence of this former Yugoslavian Republic, the UN special correspondent Matthew Nimitz suggests "Republika Makedonija-Skopje" as a new name, which the translation would not be recognised. While Greece declares to be satisfied with the proposal, the Macedonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ilinka Mitreva declares that she will not accept any other name at international level, but the one registered in the constitution (Republic of Macedonia) and that Macedonia will continue to negotiate to find a suitable compromised name which will be employed only in bilateral relations with Greece.
- On the 10th of April, electors are recalled to the polls to vote for district councils and for the second ballot of mayoral elections in 19 out of 84 administrative districts present in the country, as well as in the capital Skopje. According to the press agency *Makfax*, local elections took place without major irregularities or severe violations of the electoral system, as opposed to the elections last March.
- On the 22nd of April, a court in Skopje acquits 4 people, amongst which 3 former policemen who were accused of having killed 7 immigrants coming from South Western Asia in March 2002.

This is under orders of the former Minister of Internal Affairs Ljube Boskovski, who intended to show the authorities determination in fighting against terrorism in order to obtain support from the West. The Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) accused Boskovski of crimes of war in March.

Albania

- On the 24th of April, former Albanian President Sali Berisha is re-elected as leader of the democratic party (the opposition), which held its congress in Tirana before the legislative elections next July.

Greece

- On the 6th of April, the European Commission congratulates Greece on the efforts undertaken to reduce its public deficit to 3% of its GNP as the EU Stability and Growth Pact requires.
- On the 19th of April, the Vouli (unicameral legislative parliament) approves the European Constitution by 269 votes to 17, becoming the 6th European country to ratify it.

Cyprus

- On the 17th of April, the Prime Minister in power and leader of the pro-European Republican Turkish Party (CTP), Mehmet Ali Talat, is elected President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) on the first round with 55.59% of the votes. After handing in his resignation from his government, Talat takes up his post as President on the 24th of April. On the 25th of April, Talat asks the new CTP leader, Ferdi Sabit Soyer, to form a government. On the 28th of April, the Republican Assembly approves Soyer's cabinet, which was previously agreed with the Democratic Party leader, Serdar Denktash, in order to maintain the existing governmental coalition.
- On the 28th of April, the Minister of Justice in the Greek part of the island, Solon Nikitas, resigns following the Supreme Court's acquittal of the former Minister of Health Constantina Akkelidou, found guilty of interference in judicial affairs by an inferior jurisdiction.

Turkey

- During the month of April, 40 Turkish soldiers and 41 Kurdish are killed in the most clashes between the army and violent Kurdish rebels since the end of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK – illegal) ceasefire in September 2003. Towards the end of the month, military operations against the PKK and the Kurdish People's Defence Forces (HPG) intensify and the Turkish Army assembles at the Iraqi border. Several bombs explode in Istanbul during the course of the month (on the 6th, the 17th and the 30th of April) causing the death of a policeman. On the 17th and 18th of April, the police defuses two other bombs in Istanbul.
- On the first of April, the Assyrian Christian minority celebrates its New Year (Akito), which for the first time was officially authorised by Turkish authorities.
- On the 4th of April, the PKK announces an organisational restructuring which will no longer intend to create a Kurdish State through the use of violence, but will aim to promote a "confederal democracy" and to employ violence only as self defence. The new PKK will not replace the People's Congress of Kurdistan (Kongra-Gel), which succeeds PKK, but will collaborate with it.
- On the 7th of April, President Ahmet Necdet Sezer declares that Turkey will not submit to European pressures demanding to recognise as genocide and not as war deaths the massacre of one million and a half Armenians under the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923. He also criticises some EU member States for turning this recognition into a condition for Turkey's entry into the EU. On the 13th of April, the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan proposes to the Armenian President Robert Kocharian to set up a common commission of historians to investigate the Armenian allegations of genocide, proposal welcomed by the European Council. On the 17th of April Poland joins the 9 European countries who have officially recognised the Armenian massacre as genocide. On the 24th of April, Armenians commemorate the 90th anniversary of the beginning of the Turkish Ottoman massacre.

Syria

- During the course of April, the International Community continues to pressurise Syria to withdraw from Lebanon.
- On the 15th of April, the Human Rights Association in Syria which is based in Damascus, announces that it will sue the Syrian government for the first time on the grounds of torture.

Lebanon

- On the first of April, a bomb explodes in a shopping centre in a predominantly Catholic district of Beirut, causing 6 injuries. It is the fourth bomb in the last two weeks that explodes in Christian districts.
- On the 7th of April, the United Nations Security Council introduces resolution 1595 (2005) where it declares being concerned about the UN fact-finding enquiry's results on the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri. The Council sets up an independent investigation commission in Lebanon, conducted by Mark Quaterman from the UN Department of Political Affairs, which will be responsible for helping Lebanese authorities to find the culprits, organisers, sponsors and accomplices of his assassination.
- On the 13th of April, after 5 weeks of negotiations, the Lebanese Prime Minister Umar Karami (Pro-Syrian) announces that he abandons all efforts to form a new government. On the 15th of April, President Emile Lahoud appoints Najib Mikati as Prime Minister. Mikati, who has some relations with Syria and is a friend of President Assad, received unexpected support from the members of the opposition. On the 27th of April, the new government is approved by the National Assembly.
- On the 26th of April, the remaining Syrian troops and the last members of the Syrian intelligence service leave Lebanon, following pressures exerted by the International Community after the death of the Lebanese former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri on the 14th of February in Beirut. The leader of the Syrian High Command, Ali Habib declares that Syria withdraws from Lebanon as the country is now capable to assume its own responsibilities.

Jordan

- On the 5th of April, King Abdullah II accepts the resignation of Prime Minister Faysal Akif al-Fayiz and appoints Adnan Badra, who held the portfolio of Agriculture and Education in the 80s and was UNESCO's Assistant General Director. According to the *Middle East International*, Fayiz's government was unpopular and attracted the king's dissatisfaction because of its campaign against professional associations and their political activities. On the 7th of April Badra forms a new government.
- On the 17th of April, the Israeli government announces that it intends to free 9 Jordanian prisoners in an effort to strengthen and improve bilateral relations.

Egypt

- During the course of April, judges, journalists and students demonstrate to protest against the lack of political reforms and attempt to increase the pressure on the government. On the 6th of April, the Judges Club organises a sit-in during their meeting in Alexandria to protest against the interference of the executive in judicial affairs. They threaten to not supervise the next Presidential and legislative elections if a law guaranteeing the independence of judicial power is not introduced. On the 12th of April thousands of students demonstrate in the country's different campuses (of which 2,000 in Assiut), to express their support to the Kifaya movement, request Mubarak's resignation and oppose the succession of his son Gamal Mubarak.
- On the 7th of April, a bomb explodes in the touristic souks of Khan al-Khalili in Cairo, causing 21 deaths amongst which 10 are foreign. On the 8th of April, a group named "Islamic Brigades of Pride in Egypt" claims responsibility for the attack. This was carried out to show President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak that there are some active Mujahideen and that the movement is not only made of lethargic cells as Mubarak previously declared. On the 11th of April, the Minister of Internal Affairs declares that the person responsible for the suicide attack is a minor from the suburbs of Cairo, Rifaat Ahmed Bashandi, who

became an extremist after his father's death and who, according to many specialists, would have acted alone.

Libya

- On the 14th of April, the EU Ministers of Internal Affairs get together to discuss the establishment of cooperation with Libya as well as technical assistance to supervise its borders and coasts. The European Commission presents a report to the Ministers where it declares that Libyan authorities are incapable of managing the migration flux into the country's territory.

Tunisia

- On the first of April, during the fifth meeting of the Mixed Committee for Industrial Cooperation in Tunis, Tunisia and Morocco agree to intensify their cooperation on the prospects of development of the textile sector. This is a vital sector for both economies which, amongst others on the European markets where the greatest part of Tunisian and Moroccan exportation is sold, finds itself threatened by Chinese exportations since the dismantling of the Multi-Fiber agreements. They agree to adopt a "common and united attitude" to stand against the challenges of international competition.
- On the 20th of April, during a press conference in Tunis with 3 Tunisian NGO's, Human Rights Watch (HRW) present a report denouncing tortures, rape and the isolation, sometimes of 10 years, of over 500 political prisoners, enforced to suppress the islamist opposition. On the same day, the Tunisian government agrees to no longer place prisoners in prolonged isolation cells for over ten days and authorises HRW, for the first time since 1991, to visit the prisons suspected of practicing prolonged isolation.
- On the 25th of April, the Tunisian ecological party, "Green Tunisia", which has been waiting for a year to be legalised by the authorities, denounces the political freeze of which it has been the object and affirms its right to "organise itself freely". The party's coordinator, Abdelkader Zitouni, asserts to have accomplished, in vain, all the administrative and judicial formalities to obtain the

legal receipt, as required by the law. On the 29th of April, the founders of a new left-wing party, the Patriotic and Democratic Working Party (PTPD), deplore the authority's refusal to legalise their formation.

- On the 27th of April, several opposition parties grouped within a "Democratic Alliance for Citizenship" denounce the invalidation of their lists for the local elections planned for the 8th of May in Tunisia, describing it as "irregular". The authorities explain that the lists' invalidation is due to "breaches of electoral law".
- On the 29th of April, Mohamed Abou, Tunisian lawyer and human rights defender, is sentenced to three and a half years in prison for "inducement to infringe the law", "spreading false information" likely to disturb the peace and "assault and battery" against a lawyer colleague, a charge added the day before.

Algeria

- Throughout the month of April, Algeria is shaken by a series of attacks which cause the death of civilians. Even though these attacks are unclaimed, the authorities suspect the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), whose aim would be to cause the failure of the government's amnesty project. On the 17th of April, Boulououar Oukil, leader of a GIA unit, thought responsible for the death of 14 civilians on the 7th of April at a fake roadblock near Larbaa and also responsible for the death of another 16 civilians in Medea last October, is captured. Mohamed Chama, also a GIA member and suspected of the 82 civilians' massacre in Larbaa in 1997, is also arrested.
- On the 2nd of April, Algerian authorities announce the removal of the need for visas for Moroccan nationals wishing to visit Algeria, an initiative welcomed as a step further towards the "warming" between the two countries.
- On the 3rd of April, Algerian groups defenders of Human Rights, call for an independent investigation on the arrest (carried out by security forces) and consequent disappearance of over 6,000 civilians during the 90's. These groups refuse the report of the 31st of March 2005, established by the Enquiry Com-

mission. On the 14th of April, 5 international human rights defence organisations, amongst which the International Federation of Human Rights (IFHR), Amnesty International (AI) and Human Rights Watch (HRW), denounce the general amnesty project in a joint statement, stating that it "could permanently deprive the victims or their families of their right to truth, justice and compensations". The amnesty project was planned by the Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to put an end to 13 years of violence.

- On the 7th of April, the day before his first re-election anniversary, the Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika speaks to the nation and announces a five year programme (2005-2009) for the support of economic growth with a budget of over 4,200 billion dinars (55 billion dollars). The President specifies that above all this intends to "improve the population's living conditions".
- On the 10th and 11th of April, the second conference of the (AU) African Union's Ministers of Education, takes place in Alger in the presence of the UNESCO general director, Koïchiro Matsuura. This conference has the aim to sum up the objectives concerning African education established for the decade 1997-2006.

Morocco

- On the 12th of April, a Rabat tribunal bans the Moroccan journalist Ali Lmrabet, well-known for being critical towards the monarchy, from practising journalism for ten years as well as fining him. The Association of families of Sahrawis, victims of repression in the Tindouf camps, filed a libel suit against Ali Lmrabet at the beginning of the month because of an article he wrote where he challenged the official argument on Tindouf according to which Tindouf refugees are kept prisoners by the Polisario Front. Lmrabet believes that this sentence intends to stop him from publishing his new magazine "Demain Libéré".
- On the 21st of April, the Moroccan government presents a new plan which intends to fight against corruption within the kingdom, in which cost would go up to 2% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Azzedine Akesbi, the Mo-

roccan representative of the NGO Transparency welcomes this decision.

European Union

- On the 13th of April, two thirds of EP votes oppose a series of proposals to regulate European parliamentary expenses. The EP majority group, the European People's Party, justifies its opposition by stating its wish for a global reform of the system which would entail a uniform salary for all parliamentarians (currently salaries vary for each nationality reflecting those paid to parliamentarians in their nation of origin).
- On the 14th of April, EU Ministers of Justice and Internal Affairs, because of insurmountable legal and technical obstacles, decide to postpone their plans to create a register containing information about EU citizens' sentences, which is in line with The Hague's Programme for Freedom, Security and Justice introduced in November 2004.
- On the 14th of April, the EC declares that it will take several European countries to the Court of Justice of the European Communities (CJEC). Amongst these are Italy, Malta and Portugal which are accused of not having implemented European Directives compelling telecommunications monopolies to open up to competition.
- On the 18th of April, *Die Welt* reports that the President of the European Commission (EC), José Manuel Durao Barroso spent his holidays on Spiros Latsis's yacht, a Greek billionaire banker. Following this, the EC agreed to support one of Latsis's companies with a grant that goes up to 10 million Euros. According to the same newspaper, as for the commerce commissioner Peter Mandelson, he spent his holidays in the Caribbean during which he went to a party on Paul Allen's yacht. Paul Allen is the cofounder of Microsoft, who is currently in a legal dispute with the European Commission because of antitrust laws. Both commissioners deny any conflict of interests. While the European Parliament (EP) requests an explanation, on the 25th of April Durao Barroso revives the 1999 proposal suggesting the creation of an independent authority responsible for supervising eventual conflicts of interest deriving from the behaviour of EU officials and politicians.

May 2005

The French referendum rejection of the European Constitution causes a serious political crisis in the EU. The Egyptian multi-party system in the Presidential elections, is definitely recorded in the constitution. In the Near East, general Michel Aoun returns to Lebanon after being in exile for over 25 years, while a fifth attack targets the Christian community. In Turkey, Kurdistan Freedom Falcons set off a bomb in Kusadasi, while in Algeria, 12 soldiers die in an attack organised by islamist rebels. Relations between Syria and the United States deteriorate because of the issue concerning the access of rebels in Iraq. In Spain, the Batasuna leader is arrested following the explosion of several bombs and the government accepts willingness to negotiate with ETA if it declares a ceasefire. Finally, both the governmental coalition of the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and the Croatian conservative party in power, face a political defeat in regional elections.

Portugal

- On the 23rd of May, an independent commission lead by the Bank of Portugal concludes that the public deficit risks reaching 6.83% of the GDP in 2005, which corresponds to twice the 3% of GDP limit imposed by the Growth and Stability Pact in the Euro zone. On the 25th of May, the Portuguese government announces a plan to fight against the public deficit soar, amongst other things this includes an increase on VAT and taxes, as well as freezing the wages of officials, whose retiring age will be in line with that of the private sector.
- On the 24th of May, the Portuguese former Prime Minister Antonio Guterres, is appointed as head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Spain

- On the 6th of May, two members of the Basque terrorist group, ETA, are sentenced to 2,775 years imprisonment each for having planned a bomb attack on a train directed to Madrid on Christ-

mas Eve in 2003. The bomb was defused in time. On the 17th of May, the Cortes (Lower House) approve a motion consenting to open peace negotiations with the terrorist group ETA, as long as it declares a ceasefire. On the 16th, the 22nd and the 25th of May three bombs explode in Madrid, the last one slightly injuring 52 people. A few hours after the explosion of the last bomb, Arnaldo Otegi, the leader of Batasuna, the political party linked to the terrorist organisation ETA, is arrested.

- On the 7th of May, the government announces that 700,000 immigrant workers benefited from the amnesty law for illegal workers. The number of registered workers rises by 4% and almost 90% of jobs on the black market have therefore been legalised. The opposition party, the People's Party (PP), criticises this initiative. According to the Minister for Labour, Jesus Caldera, this initiative contributed to reducing criminality and to promoting economical growth.

France

- On the 11th of May, in Paris, the trial of three people starts, amongst which two French, accused of having assisted Richard Reid in his attempt to make his shoes explode in a Paris-Miami flight in December 2001.
- On the 13th of May, the Algerian Nacer Eddin Mettai is taken to court suspected of having provided false identity documents to Muslims wishing to join the insurrection in Iraq.
- On the 16th of May, the Pentecost national day of holiday becomes a "solidarity day" for the elderly and disabled people with the aim of avoiding a heat-wave tragedy similar to that which occurred in August 2003. The government's objective is to raise a special tax on the assets gained from the additional work carried out on that day in order to finance extra care for these particularly vulnerable people. While this initiative is supported by the majority of trade unions, almost half of the employees do not go to work.
- On the 17th of May, A Parisian Court condemns the Algerian Abderahmane Ameroud and two French, Adel Tebourski and Youssef el-Aouni, to prison sentences of up to 7 years because of

their involvement in the assassination in 2001 of Ahmed Shah, commander of the Northern Afghan Alliance. On the same day, two French of Algerian origins are sentenced to 2 and 5 years of prison for employing Islamic fighters in order to send them to Afghanistan.

- On the 20th of May, Charles Pieri, alleged leader of the National Front for the Liberation of Corsica – Fighters Union (FNLC-UC), is condemned to ten years of prison as he is found guilty of financing terrorism. Nineteen other people, amongst which Pieri's "lieutenants", Charles-Philippe Paoli and Jacques Mosconi are also sentenced.
- On the 29th of May, the French reject the European Constitution project by 54.68% of the votes in the national referendum. 69.3% of the population participates in it. This result marks the defeat of President Jacques Chirac who actively conducted the "yes" campaign. On the 30th of May, the Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin hands in his resignation. On the 31st of May he is replaced by the Minister of Internal Affairs, Domestic Security and Local Liberty, Dominique de Villepin.

Italy

- On the 2nd of May, the government makes public the report on the death of the secret services agent Nicola Calipari, killed by American troops in Iraq just after freeing the Italian journalist taken hostage by Iraqi rebels. According to the report there is no proof that the death of Calipari was deliberate, but the American troops' "inexperience and stress" are to blame for their disproportionate reaction. As per the American report, it states that the American soldiers are not responsible and accuses Italy for not coordinating the rescue operation with the Americans. Moreover, it highlights that the car in which Calipari was, travelled at an excessive speed and would not have responded to the American soldiers alerts.
- On the 8th of May, Berlusconi's centre-right coalition experiences another defeat with the elections in Sardinia and in the Northern Regions of Valle d'Aosta and Trentino Alto Adige. The centre-left opposition parties ask the Prime Minister to resign.
- On the 19th of May, 26 arrest warrants are issued in the North of Italy, fo-

llowing several informants' detailed plan reports to the government on the Milan and Cremona bomb attacks. On the 20th of May, three Algerians are arrested in Naples accused of supporting the Algerian organisation, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), suspected of having connections with Al-Qaeda.

Malta

- On the 30th of May, 60 illegal immigrants originating from Eritrea and Sudan, divided on two drifting ships are brought back to Malta.

Croatia

- On the 15th of May, the conservative party in power in Croatia since 2003 (HDZ), is weakened by the local and regional elections after the left-wing opposition wins over the main cities, Zagreb included, and leading nine of 21 regional assemblies. These results can be explained by mixed economic results and the government's failure to open negotiations regarding the country's entry into the European Union.
- On the 18th of May, Carla del Ponte, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), declares to journalists present at the headquarters of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), that Croatia's current efforts will allow the rapid arrest of General Ante Gotovina, who has escaped since he was charged with war crimes in 2001. The Croatian prime Minister, Ivo Sanader, commits to research for the fugitive more actively hoping to open negotiations for Croatia's entry into the European Union, suspended because of the Gotovina affair, next June.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On the 4th of May, Ivo Miro Jovic, elected by the Chamber of Representatives (Lower House), becomes the new Croatian member of the tripartite presidency, following Dragan Crovic, relieved from his duties by the High Representative Lord Paddy Ashdown. On the 9th of May, the Higher House approves his election and on the 18th of May he takes up his post.

- On the 12th of May the trial against The Netherlands government in The Hague starts. This was set up by the survivors of the July 2005 Srebrenica massacre who hold Dutch Blue Helmets responsible for the tragedy and believe that The Netherlands have to compensate the victims' families for not knowing how to protect the people of Srebrenica, which at the time of the events was considered to be a safe place by the United Nations.
- On the 17th of May, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), transmits a case to the country's judicial authorities for the first time. This is the Serb-Bosnian Radovan Stankovic affair, accused of violating the laws and customs of war and of crimes against humanity in the "rape camps" near Foca between 1992-1993.
- On the 19th of May, the European Commission (EC) announces that Bosnia-Herzegovina does not fulfil the necessary conditions (amongst which were the police and media reforms) to establish the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, the first step towards joining. A few days earlier, negotiations between Bosnian politicians on the police reform failed as Serb Bosnians rejected changes in line with the formation of a national multiethnic police.
- In Sarajevo on the 20th of May, a meeting inaugurating a new political party, the Democrat Party, takes place. During this meeting the party's President Sead Avdic announces that the party's objective is to bring the Bosnian constitution in line with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and to promote a free market economy.
- On the 24th of May, the Bosnian Prime Minister, Adnan Terzic, accepts the resignation of the Minister of Transport and Telecommunications, Branko Dokic, who is pursued by the law.

Serbia-Montenegro

- On the 9th of May, sources from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) inform that the Serb Bosnian war criminal, Radovan Karadzic, has been seen twice during the course of April, apparently as he was organising his mother's burial. During her burial, on the 5th of May, hundreds of people wear T-shirts featuring Karadzic

picture, as he is also absent. On the 25th and 26th of May, troops from the European Stabilisation Forces, EUFOR, search the house of Karadzic's partner, as well as those of his two children.

- In Mid-May, UN expert forensic surgeons find a communal grave in Kosovo, probably containing corpses of Serbians killed by Albanian guerrillas.
- In mid-May, Germany starts to deport approximately 50,000 refugees from Kosovo, mainly members of the Roma community, who found refuge in Germany during the war. In this respect, Germany is criticised by the Roma community because many people of Albanian ethnic origins, who also escaped from Kosovo, have received permanent residence in Germany.
- On the 18th of May, the American Undersecretary of State for political affairs R. Nicholas Burns, declares that from now to the end of the year he hopes to launch, together with the Contact Group (France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union), a process to establish the future status of the disputed Serbian province of Kosovo. Burns specifies that this will depend on Kosovo's capability of fulfilling the United Nations standards which protect multiethnicity and ensure democracy and a free market economy. He adds that the final solution must include effective mechanisms to address organised crime and terrorism and must exclude any partition or change of border.

Macedonia

- On the 25th of May, the new centrist party Macedonian Future, holds its inaugurating congress in Skopje and elects Zlatko Dimcovski as its leader.

Greece

- On the 5th of May, following Greece's invitation, experts from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) arrive in Athens aiming to bring to the government "a technical support to improve public funds' management" and to take measures against the "waste" of public funds. This initiative should help bring the country back in line with the EU Pact of Stability and Growth.
- On the 5th of May, Greece denoun-

ces new violations of Greek air-space by Turkish military planes and describes them as "provocative".

- On the 12th of May, the Greek Parliament rejects a motion by the opposition of 151 votes to 300. This requested the organisation of a referendum on the European Constitution which had already been ratified in parliament on the 19th of April. The opposition requested a referendum as it believed that this procedure would increase Greek interest in the treaty.

Cyprus

- On the 6th of May, the Greek-Cypriot President, Tassos Papadopoulos, appoints Petros Clerides as Minister of Justice following Solon Nikitas, who resigned in April following the acquittal of the former Health Minister Constantina Akkelidou, accused of interfering in judicial affairs.
- On the 16th of May, the envoy of the Greek/Cypriot President Tassos Tziomis, meets the UN Undersecretary for Political Affairs, Sir Kieran Prendergast, at the UN headquarters in New York to discuss the new efforts invested in unifying the island.

Turkey

- On the first of May, a bomb explodes in the seaside city of Kusadasi, killing a policeman. Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK) connected to the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), claim responsibility for the attack. During the course of the month of May, several clashes between the Turkish Army and the PKK rebels cause the death of 69 soldiers and 8 Kurdish rebels.
- On the 11th of May, the IMF approves a confirmation agreement (*stand-by agreement*) which goes up to 6.66 SDR (*Special Drawing Rights*), to support the Turkish financial and economic programme up to year 2008. The IMF congratulates Turkey for its economic performances, highlighting that inflation was the lowest in the past 30 years and that the last three years' average growth was of 8%.
- On the 12th of May, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) stipulates that Abdullah Ocalan, PKK leader banned from Turkey and sentenced to

life in 2002, was not judged by an independent and impartial tribunal and that he only had limited access to his lawyers. This decision is unappealable. Turkey announces that the country will conform to this decision and that Ocalan will be judged again.

- On the 24th of May, the Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan appoints Ali Babacan as head negotiator in discussions regarding Turkey's entry into the EU, due to start in October. Ali Babacan was the Minister of Economy who helped Turkey recover from its economical crisis.
- On the 27th of May, the Grand National Assembly votes a modified version of the reformed criminal code by 346 votes to 3, which will come into force on the first of June. Groups defending human rights and multimedia organisations, already critical towards the reform, declare that the new version does not make any significant step forward towards freedom of press.

Syria

- On the 4th of May, President Bashar al-Assad issues a decree in order to include the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in the National Progressive Front, which brings together the 6 main political parties of the country.
- In Mid-May, the leader of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights in Syria, Mohammed Ra'dun, is arrested. From the 24th to the 31st of May, several journalists and intellectuals, members of the Al-Atasi Forum for Democratic Dialogue, are arrested and interviewed.
- On the 20th of May, *The Times* reports that Americans and Iraqis accuse Syria of denying the activities of rebels who enter Iraq through Syria. On the 24th of May, the Syrian ambassador in the US, Imad Moustapha, announces that Syria suspends all military and intelligence cooperation with the United States in protest against their unfair and unfounded accusations. Moreover, he accuses the United States of trying to deteriorate its relations with Syria despite its withdrawal from Lebanon and the measures taken against the insurrection in Iraq. On the 30th of May, Syria announces having deported 30 Saudi Arabians who could have joined the conflict in Iraq

and that over 1,200 people have been arrested during the past weeks as they were attempting to surpass the Iraq border.

Lebanon

- On the 4th of May, for the first time since the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, the Prime Minister Mikati goes to Syria where he meets the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.
- On the 4th of May, a court in Beirut cancels all charges against the former Maronite army commander, General Michel Aoun, exiled in France since the defeat of the Liberation War which he organised against the Syrian occupation army in Lebanon at the end of the 80s. On his return to Lebanon, where thousands of supporters are expecting him, he announces his new party, the Free Patriotic Movement, which will take part in the next legislative elections.
- On the 6th of May, an attack in the city of Jounieh, a seaside centre mainly frequented by Christians, causes one death and 22 injuries. This is the fifth bomb targeting Christians since the death of Hariri in February.
- On the 13th of May, after several rockets were set off from Southern Lebanon to Israel, the Israeli army attacks four Hezbollah outposts in the disputed Shabaa farms area near the Golan Heights.
- On the 29th of May, 28% of electors vote in the first round of legislative elections taking place in Beirut. The candidates' block conducted by the son of the former Prime Minister assassinated in February, Saad al-Hariri, wins 19 seats. The remaining three rounds will take place in the rest of the country in June.

Jordan

- On the 9th of May, the Ministers of Jordan, Israel and Palestine, gathered together in Amman, decide to carry out a feasibility study for the construction of a canal linking the Red Sea to the Dead Sea. The World Bank will finance the study, which will amount to 20 million dollars. The canal, which will cover 175 Km from Aqaba to the Dead Sea, will allow the production of elec-

tricity, the provision of drinking water and will help to stop the Dead Sea from drying out.

Egypt

- On the 10th of May, the People's Assembly (unicameral) approves by 405 votes to 34, the amendment of article 76 of the constitution in order to introduce a multiparty system in the Presidential elections. This initiative came from President Hosni Mubarak, who was put under increasing pressure, both internally and internationally, to make political reforms. After voting against, 26 members of the Assembly, amongst which the leader of the opposition party Al Ghad, Ayman Nur, go out to protest against the reforms which according to them are limited and are targeted to keeping Mubarak's National Democratic Party in power. In fact, in order to present a candidate to Presidential elections, the party has to have at least 5% of the seats in the Assembly, a threshold that no opposition party reaches which implies that opposition parties are therefore excluded from the next elections. Moreover, any independent candidate has to assemble 300 signatures in support of his candidacy, amongst which 65 from the Assembly, 25 from the Consultancy Council (Shura – Higher House) and 10 by local councillors in each of the country's 14 provinces. On the 25th of May, 83% of Egyptian electors approve this constitutional amendment via referendum. According to the authorities, there was a 54% participation whilst independent reports describe polling stations as being deserted, following the opposition parties' request to boycott the referendum. Throughout the referendum campaign, the opposition parties and especially the Muslim Brothers were picked on by the government. The Muslim Brothers protest against the detention of 2,000 of their supporters during the course of the campaign, amongst which is their Secretary General Mahmud Izzat.

Libya

- At the beginning of May, Libya suspends the payment of the third and last instalment of financial compensations

directed to the families of the victims of the Lockerbie attack in 1988. This is because the American State Department did not observe the precondition of removing Libya from the list of countries supporting terrorism which was established in the August 2003 agreement between the USA, Libya and the United Kingdom and backed by the United Nations.

- On the 3rd of May, the group Royal Dutch/Shell announces to have reached a long term agreement worth 637 million dollars for a large scale exploration for natural gas and a development agreement with the National Oil Corp in Libya.

Tunisia

- On the 3rd of May, the Tunisian lawyer Faouzi Ben Merad is sentenced to four months of prison for contempt of court. The authorities justified this verdict by recalling that lawyers have primarily a duty to show an example of respect towards the judicial institution. However, according to Merad's colleagues this sentence is aimed at Merad's repeated criticisms of the government. Merad blames the government for controlling the judicial system and for exploiting it at the expense of its opponents.
- On the 8th of May, the Council Local Elections take place marking the overwhelming victory (93.86% of the seats) of the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) of President Ben Ali. A part of the opposition, excluded from the ballot, denounces a climate of political lockdown. Four parliamentary opposition parties close to power (People's Unity Party, Democratic Socialist Movement, Unionist Democratic Union, Social Liberal and Democratic Party) and an independent list took part in 65 constituencies winning 268 seats or a 6.1% rate. The general rate of participation is of 82.75%.

Algeria

- On the first of May, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika reorganises the ministerial cabinet, keeping Ahme Ouyahia as Prime Minister. According to the Algerian newspaper *al Watan* this reorganisation reinforces Ouyahia's position.
- On the 15th of May, 12 soldiers are

killed in an attack organised by the Islamist rebels in the Khenchela region, in the East of the country. Algerian media accuse the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC).

Morocco

- At the beginning of May, over 1,000 suspects in the Casablanca attack affair of May 2003, detained in various prisons of the country, start a hunger strike. On the 10th of May, one of the prisoners, Khalid Boukri, dies. According to *The Middle East International*, prisoners request to be released unconditionally, an investigation of the attacks and the trial of those who have tortured them during their detention.

European Union

- On the 23rd of May, the EU Ministers of Defence in Brussels agree on a schedule starting from 2007 for the creation of 13 "battle groups" of 1,500 people each, for the EU Rapid Reaction Force. The first three groups will be made by 1) France, Germany and Spain 2) Germany, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania and Slovakia 3) Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Norway.
- On the 24th of May, in an attempt to come closer to the United Nations objective to provide assistance to development by reaching 0.7% of the GDP, Development Ministers adopt the development assistance agenda proposed by the EC last April.
- At the end of May, the EU goes through a serious crisis following the French rejection of the treaty instituting a European Constitution on the 29th of May. On the 29th of May, the President in power Jean-Claude Juncker from Luxembourg and the EC President, José Manuel Durao Barroso, refuse to drop the treaty and declare that the ratification process has to continue as 9 countries out of 25, representing almost 50% of Europeans, have already ratified the treaty. They also specify that the treaty stipulates that if up to 5 countries do not ratify the treaty, this will be reconsidered rather than abandoned. The various countries that still have not ratified the treaty agree with more or less enthusiasm with this position. On the 30th of May, the British Prime Minister requests

a period of reflection on the consequences of the French vote.

June 2005

In the Near East, the anti-Syrian opposition wins the legislative elections in Lebanon. President Mubarak announces that he will put himself forward for a fifth mandate of Presidency in Egypt. In the Balkans, a video of the Srebrenica massacre is made public, which makes direct reference to the responsibility played by the former Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic in the massacre and leads to the arrest of former members of the "Scorpions". While Turkey makes a step forward towards joining the EU by enforcing its new criminal code, the EU, with regards to the negotiations procedure, imposes the strictest conditions that have ever been imposed to any candidate state. The European Council is marked by the disagreement between the 25 member states on the budget for 2007 and on the future of the European Constitution, as Cyprus has just ratified it. A new government is set up in France under the Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin and in Spain, an important network of radical islamists who recruited combatants to fight in Iraq, is dismantled.

Portugal

- On the 15th of June, the Portuguese former Prime Minister Antonio Guterres, appointed by the United Nations General Assembly, takes on his duties as the 10th United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), replacing Ruud Lubbers from The Netherlands, who was involved in a sexual harassment scandal.

Spain

- On the 1st and the 2nd of June, England extradites the Moroccan Farid Hlali to Spain, wanted for the attacks of March the 11th 2004 in Madrid and September the 11th 2001 in the United States. England also extradites Hedi Ben Youssef Boudhiba to Spain, who is suspected of being part of a Spanish network which gave logistic support to

those who carried out the September 11th attacks.

- On the 4th of June, 300,000 people demonstrate in the streets of Madrid on the initiative of the Association of Victims of Terrorism (AVT) and the main opposition party, People's Party (PP), to protest against the Prime Minister's José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero plan to open negotiations with the Basque terrorist organisation ETA. On the 10th of June, two grenades explode in Zaragoza airport, after an ETA warning. There are no victims. On the 26th of June, a car explodes by a sport stadium in Madrid, probably as an attempt to undermine Spain's candidature to organise the Olympic Games in 2012. There are only material damages to report.

- On the 15th of June, the Minister of Internal Affairs, José Antonio Alonso, announces that a network of radical islamists, that recruits combatants to carry out suicide attacks in Iraq in name of the Al-Qaeda organisation of Abu Misab Zarqawi, is dismantled. The network is controlled from Syria and is connected to several countries in Northern Africa, the Middle East and also to the United Kingdom. Amongst the 16 people arrested, 11 were preparing suicide attacks in Iraq and 5 are suspected of being linked to the terrorist attacks in Madrid on the 11th of March in 2004.

- On the 23rd of June, the regional Basque President, Juan José Ibarretxe from the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) is re-elected for a third term in office, thanks to the support given by two of the new representatives for the Basque Communist Party (ETAK). Ibarretxe's party wins 34 votes out of 75 in the Parliament, followed by the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE) which wins 33 votes.

- On the 25th of June, the *International Herald Tribune* announces that the United States oppose the Spanish authority's interviewing of Ramzi bin al-Shibh, a high ranking member of Al-Qaeda captured in Pakistan and kept in detention in the United States where he is suspected of having helped in the organisation of the September 11th attacks. This interrogation is crucial for the trials of Driss Chebli and Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas, the alleged leader of Al-Qaeda in Spain, who was arrested in November 2001 and who, in July 2001,

would have organised a meeting between al-Shibh and Mohammed Atta, one of the suicide pilots of September the 11th attacks to the United States. If, between now and December, prosecutors still do not have a firm accusation against Yarkas, according to the Spanish law which allows 4 years of detention without sentence, he will have to be released.

- On the 30th of June, the Senate and then the Cortes, approve by 187 votes to 147 the law allowing homosexuals to get married, adopt children and to inherit one from the other.

France

- On the 2nd of June, President Jacques Chirac appoints a new government with Dominique de Villepin as Prime Minister. This new cabinet marks the return of the President of the Reform Movement Union (UMR), Nicolas Sarkozy, as Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs and Regional Development. On the 8th of June, Villepin announces that his main objective will be a reduction of unemployment (10.2%) and that in 2006, a programme amounting to 4.5 billion euros, will be put in place to create new jobs. On the 6th of June, the government, which claims to intend to preserve the French social model, sells 152 million shares from France Telecom which amount to 3.4 billions, reducing the State participation to the company by 35%.

- On the 3rd of June, a court in Paris condemns *Le Monde's* editor, Jean-Marie Colombani and three of its writers because of an article published in June 2002 which linked Israeli politics towards Palestine to the Jews persecution in Europe. *Le Monde* declares that it will appeal against.

- On the 4th of June, the opposition Socialist Party (PS), decides to withdraw six members from its ranks, amongst which the former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, for having campaigned "no" to the European Constitution, going against the party's official policy, which requested a "yes" vote.

- On the 4th and 27th of June respectively, the Franco-Moroccan Hamid Bach and the Franco-Tunisian Boubaker el-Hakim, who are connected to Farid Banyettou, the spiritual leader of the

"Iraqi networks" in France, are placed in provisional detention, suspected of being members of a recruitment network for the Iraq insurgency. On the 21st of June, six other men are arrested in the cities of Limoges and Montpellier for similar reasons. On the 16th of June Ghulam Mustafa Rama is condemned to 5 years in prison for having assisted Islamic militants in Kashmir and for having morally supported Richard Reid, who attempted to detonate explosives in his shoes on a Paris-Miami flight in December 2001. Two members of Rama's group "Chemin Droit" (Straight Path) are condemned to sentences of 4 years in prison.

- On the 6th of June, the National Liberation Front of Corsica – Fighters Union (FLNC-UC) admits responsibility for 21 recent attacks, therefore confirming the end of the ceasefire. It accuses the government of not having policies addressing Corsica's needs and of treating Corsica's patriots as mafia criminals.

- On the 19th of June, the elections in the French Council for the Muslim Cult (FCMC), which is supported by the government, are marked by the moderates' progress, contrary to the previous elections in April 2003. Dalil Boubakeur is re-elected to the Council's presidency.

- On the 21st of June, a court in Lyon acquits the radical imam Chirane Abdelkader Bouziane, who was sentenced for having encouraged violence against unfaithful women in his book. According to the judge, the imam was simply explaining what is written in the Qur'an. On the 23rd of June, two prosecutors appeal.

Italy

- On the first of June, 5 members of the Red Brigades, a left wing group of violent activists, are condemned to life sentence for the murder of Marco Biagi, a government councillor, in 2002.

- On the first of June, a parliamentary committee opposes the nomination of Andrea Monochio to the presidency of RAI, the public television channels, spoiling the government's plan to privatise it.

- On the 3rd of June, the Northern League (LN), a member of the centre right coalition, declares to favour the withdrawal of Italy from the Euro zone. The Minister for Labour and Social Policy, Ro-

berto Maroni (LN) requests the organisation of a referendum on the matter. Even though the Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi criticised the Euro's high rates compared to the dollar and reproached that the European monetary policy is the cause of the Italian economic recession, on the 5th of June, after a telephone conversation with the President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, he confirms his support of the Italian participation to the Euro zone. According to the economists, the re-introduction of the Lira would increase the Italian external debt because Italy would no longer benefit from the weak interest rate of the Euro zone.

- On the 6th of June, the EU warns Italy against sanctions if its public deficit surpasses the 3% of GDP established in the EU Pact of Stability and Growth (PSG). According to the EU Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Joaquin Almunia, the excessive Italian deficit, which has lasted for 3 years, cannot be considered as exceptional. This situation would allow Italy to avoid the sanctions, according to the modifications made to the PSG in March. The European Commission decides to give to Italy some extra time (2007) to rectify its deficit, because of certain government commitments.

- On the 24th of June, a judge in Milan issues an arrest warrant against 13 CIA agents, accused of having committed a "criminal abduction" by taking the Egyptian Imam Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr, who received political asylum, on the 17th of February 2003 to Milan. This abduction is part of the CIA's "extraordinary rendition" programme, according to which suspects can be transferred to third countries, some of which are known to employ torture, in order to interrogate them and all of this without the approval of a court of justice. According to Nasr, the CIA has taken him to Cairo where he was the victim of acts of torture during his detention. CIA and the American Embassy in Rome deny these allegations.

Croatia

- On the 8th of June, the enlargement European Commissioner, Olli

Rhein, declared that Croatia made progress in its cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) but that there is still a lot of work to be done for this cooperation to become "total". On the 13th of June, the Head Prosecutor of the, ICTY Carla del Ponte, states that Croatian authorities have not fulfilled their obligations to locate, arrest and transfer General Ante Gotovina, accused of war crimes. She also affirms the necessity of a few extra months to establish whether Croatia is doing all that is in its power to arrest Gotovina. She accuses Croatia of lacking a proactive attitude, manipulating important information in the enquiry and authorising media campaigns that discredit the ICTY and its partners in Croatia.

- On the 10th of June, on the island of Brijuni, Croatia and Slovenia sign a declaration where they commit to avoid all border incidents. They also commit to an economic and cultural cooperation.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On the 7th of June, the Prime Minister Adnan Terzic announces his acceptance of the resignation of the Minister of Foreign affairs, Mladen Ivanic, which Ivanic submitted in December 2004, after the High Representative Lord Paddy Ashdown accused him of deliberately failing to cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

Serbia and Montenegro

- On the first of June, a video broadcasted during the trial of the former Yugoslavian President, Slobodan Milosevic, shows the execution of 6 Muslims on Treskavica's mountain by "the Scorpions", a group of Serb paramilitary policemen under the orders of the Serb Interior Minister's secret services and therefore under Milosevic's orders. This is the first public evidence of Milosevic's implication in the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995, which cost the life of 7,000 Muslims. On the 2nd and 3rd of June, the Serb government arrests 10 former members of the "Scorpions" who are suspected of ha-

ving taken part in the massacre shown on the video.

- On the 9th of June, the American undersecretary of state for political affairs, Nicholas Burns, announces that the United States are going to unfreeze an aid of 10 million dollars to compensate the improvement of Serbia-Montenegro's cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and adds that the government is working hard to arrest the Serb-Bosnian military commander, General Ratko Mladic. On the other hand, on the 13th of June, Carla Del Ponte declares in front of the UN Security Council that the authorities continue to fail in arresting and transferring 10 fugitives to the ICTY, amongst which Mladic, the Serb-Bosnian leader Radovan Karadzic and the Croatian General Ante Gotovina. On the 22nd of June, the government announces its attempt at contacting the network supporting Mladic, so that he gives himself up.

- On the 29th of June a Serb Court condemns 10 officials from the Milosevic's regime (amongst them the Special Police Commander, Milorad Lukovic, and the state security chief, Radomir Markovic) to prison sentences for their implication in the failed murder attempt of the opposition leader and current Serb Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vuk Draskovic, which cost the life of four people.

Macedonia

- On the 29th of June, Greece accuses Macedonia of having on the official Ministry of Foreign Affairs website a link to a map of Macedonia that includes part of Greece and Bulgaria. Macedonia denies these facts.

Albania

- On the 8th of June, the Macedonian radio reports that the Albanians from Macedonia have registered their first political party, the Macedonian Alliance for European Integration, led by Aftim Mitrevski.

Greece

- On the 13th of June, the Vouli (uni-

cameral legislative parliament) gives its support to the government plan to modify the laws of labour in order to reinforce the country's economical growth. Amongst other things, the reforms intend to change working relations in state-owned companies and to introduce flexible hours of work in private firms. After employees in public banks strike for three weeks intermittently against the pensions' reforms, on the 24th of June, public sector employees and bank employees go on general strike for 24 hours to protest against the reforms. According to the unions some jobs will be lost with the retirement age increasing and the pensions reviewed to decrease in value.

- On the 22nd of June, a "Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development" is introduced in Athens by the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development. This is the consultative body of the Mediterranean Action Plan which is in line with the United Nations Barcelona Convention on the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution. The new Mediterranean Strategy involves economic, social, ecological and political objectives; it defines its priorities and sets up indicators to measure the progress accomplished in 2010 and 2025.

Cyprus

- On the 15th of June, the United Nations Security Council introduces resolution 1604 (2005), which prolongs the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) up to the 15th of December. The Security Council welcomes the Cypriot Turkish authorities and Turkish Armed Forces decision to lift the restrictions on the UNFICYP freedom of movement and requests more cross border accesses.
- On the 30th of June, the Greek Cypriot House of Representatives (unicameral legislative) ratifies the Treaty introducing a European Constitution by 30 votes to 19.

Turkey

- During the course of the month, 87 soldiers and 41 rebels die in the South East of Turkey during violent clashes

between the Turkish Army on one side and the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK – illegal) and the People's Defence Force (HPG) on the other.

- On the 1st of June, the new Criminal Code comes into force; this was a precondition to open negotiations for Turkey's entry into the EU. On the 3rd of June, the secular President Ahmet Necdet Sezer uses his veto to stop an amendment, introduced by the party in power, the Islamist Justice and Development Party, which intends to reduce penalties for the teaching of religion in illegal religious schools.

- On the 9th of June, the Bosphore University is forced to postpone a three day conference which would gather together those intellectuals and academics that contradict the government's official position concerning the Armenians' massacre. This is after the Minister of Justice described the organisers as traitors.

- On the 16th of June, relations between Turkey and Germany become tense after the Bundestag (Lower House) unanimously adopts a resolution that condemns the Ottoman Empire for the massacre of over 1.5 million Armenians in Turkey between 1915 and 1923 and criticises the Turkish government for refusing to tackle the case.

- On the 22nd of June, the European Commission President, José Manuel Durao Barroso, asks for the organisation of a serious debate concerning Turkey's entry into the EU, as objections to Turkey's membership have played a part in the French and Dutch vote for the European Constitution. He asks the member states to respect their commitment to open negotiations with Turkey on the 3rd of October, bearing in mind that this will not automatically lead to the country joining the union. On the 29th of June, while certain states and commissioners request to replace the Turkish entry prospect with "a privileged relation" one, the EU publishes the conditions which would frame Turkey's entry negotiations. These are the strictest conditions ever imposed to a candidate state. Amongst these conditions, there is the respect of human rights and of a legally constituted state, which if breached, would result in the negotiations' being suspended. Turkey is also required to resolve the issue of Cyprus divi-

sion. Finally "permanent safeguard clauses" are put in place to prevent a large immigration of Turks in case the country becomes a member. No entry date is put forward, negotiations will last at least ten years.

Syria

- On the 4th of June, according to Israeli secret services, Syria tested three *Scud* missiles, one of which flew over the Turkish province of Hatay. According to Israel, the Syrian move intends to provoke the United States as their relations are tense since the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri in February.

- From the 6th to the 9th of June, the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party in power holds its 10th congress in Damascus. In his opening talk, President Bashar al-Assad asks the party's leaders to revive the economy and to fight against corruption. On the first day of the congress, Abdel Halim Khaddam, the Sunnite Muslim who is the highest ranking official in a regime dominated by the Alawites minority, announces his resignation from the position of Vice-President which he held since 1984 and from the duties he has within the party. He also invites his colleagues to follow his example in order to give way to the new generation. During the congress, the Party's National Command (i.e. Pan-Arab) is abolished and the Regional Command (i.e. National) is reduced from 21 to 14 members. The party's veterans supporting the former President Hafez al-Assad are replaced by young supporters of the same President.

- On the 23rd of June, the American Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, during a G8 meeting in London, warns Syria to stop islamist militants from crossing the Iraq border, as this contributes to Iraq's instability.

- On the 30th of June, tensions between the United States and Syria increase as the American Treasury Department freezes the assets of the Home Affairs Minister Maj.-Gen. Ghazi Kan'an and of Col. Rustum Ghazali, who lead the military presence and the intelligence services from Syria to Lebanon. This is a purely symbolic act, as neither of them have any assets in the United States.

Lebanon

- On the 2nd of June, the Lebanese journalist from *An-Nahar*, Samir Kassir, who is against the Syrian presence in Lebanon, is assassinated as his car explodes near his house in the Beirut Christian district of Ashrafieh. The opposition accuses Syria and its Lebanese allies, in particular the Lebanese President Emile Lahoud.
- On the 5th, 12th and 19th of June the National Assembly's (unicameral) last round of elections take place. "The anti-Syrian opposition" consisting of the Future Current, the party of the former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri assassinated in February, the Democratic Gathering, the Lebanese Forces, Qornet Shahwan and other small party blocks, wins 72 seats of the 128 in the Assembly. The two other main party blocks in the Assembly consist in the alliance between Amal (Liberation and Development) – Hezbollah (35 seats), supported by Syria and the Patriotic Movement block of general Michel Aoun, who returned to Lebanon in May after a long period of exile in France. On the 21st of June the government of Najib Mikati, formed in April, resigns. On the 28th of June, the new Assembly holds its first session and Nabbi Berri, Amal's leader, is re-elected as the Assembly's President for his fourth term in office. On the 30th of June, the Assembly elects the Future Current candidate, Fuad Siniora as Prime Minister, with 126 votes. Siniora was the former Minister of Finance and Rafiq al-Hariri's councillor.
- On the 21st of June, the former Secretary General of the anti-Syrian Lebanese Communist Party, Georges Hawi, is assassinated as his car explodes near his house in the Beirut district of Wata Museitbeh. Condoleezza Rice, the American Secretary of State declares that Syria contributes to creating a situation of instability in Lebanon, without accusing the country directly of the assassinations.
- On the 29th of June, the Hezbollah guerrilla attacks an Israeli's army outpost in the disputed region of the Shabaa Farms, causing the death of an Israeli soldier and of a Hezbollah combatant and injuring three Israeli soldiers. As a reaction, the Israeli army bomb villages un-

der the Hezbollah control, in Southern Lebanon.

Jordan

- On the 16th of June, the Minister of Finance Basim Awadallah resigns from his post in order to put an end to a crisis between Adnan Badran's government and the House of Representatives (Lower House), in which some of the opposition members are very critical towards Awadallah and other members from the government's economic department because of their economic policies. The real reason of the crisis seems to be the lack of representation within the government for the country's Southern tribes and the significant presence of Palestinians who occupy 12 of the 26 ministerial portfolios.

Egypt

- On the 1st of June, hundreds of people, amongst which numerous women dressed in black, demonstrate on the streets of Cairo requesting the resignation of the Home Affairs Minister, Abib al-Adli. They believe him responsible for the police passivity during the assault carried out by the members of the National Democratic Party (PND) against the women who were demonstrating on the day a constitutional amendment was voted, which allows a multi-party system during the September Presidential elections. Some women had their clothes ripped off on the roads.
- On the 9th of June, in its report entitled "Reading between the red lines" *Human Rights Watch* accuses the Egyptian government of stifling academic freedom by censoring certain course books, preventing research into controversial issues, intimidating student activists and forbidding certain extracurricular student activities.
- On the 13th of June, Muhammad al-Baradei is re-elected for his third 4 year mandate of Presidency in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), after the United States withdrew their objection to his re-election. The United States opposition was linked to the fact that al-Baradei did not support the Americans as they asserted the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Moreover, certain members of the Bush

administration describe his policies towards Iran as being too "soft".

- On the 14th of June, President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak's spokesman announces that the President will stand for his fifth and last term in office in the September Presidential elections. The President announces that if he is re-elected, he will appoint for the first time in 24 years, a Vice-President, inducing some people to think that he is preparing his son Gamal Mubarak to succeed him as President of the country. In Mid-June, Gamal Mubarak, leader of the political Committee of the PND in power, declares that he is not looking to fill a higher position.
- On the 20th of June, during a two-day official visit to Egypt, the American Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, calls for reforms in the Middle East in a talk to the American University in Cairo. She adds that "the United States have pursued stability in the Near East at the expense of democracy and have found neither one nor the other. Now we take another path. We support the democratic aspirations of the people."

Libya

- On the 7th of June, 9 Libyan policemen and a Libyan doctor, accused of having tortured 5 Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor to induce them to confess the infection of 426 Libyan children with the AIDS virus, are acquitted. The spokesman of the Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gergana Grancharova, question the Libyan judicial system. On the 30th of June, the Supreme Court of Libya decides to postpone its decision to the 15th of November on the appeal of the 5 Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian doctor against their death sentence. This decision is welcomed by the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Solomon Passi.

Tunisia

- On the 2nd of June, the 6th session of the Consultative Council of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) starts, under the presidency of M. Mohamed Afif Chiboub, President of the Tunisian parliamentary group. Approximately 140 deputies representing the parliaments of 5 Maghreb countries take part in it. The ac-

tive participation of the Maghreb people representatives to these meetings shows their determination in pursuing the edification of the Maghreb Union.

- From the 12th to the 14th of June, M. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, secretary general of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), visits Tunisia, where he meets the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Higher Education, Culture and the Safeguard of Heritage, the Secretary of State responsible for IT, the Internet and free software use to examine different aspects of the Tunisian cooperation with the OIC.

- On the 30th of June in Tunis, the 9th ordinary session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Communication starts. The meeting is dedicated to analysing the Arab cooperation in the new information and communication technologies sector (ICT) and to establish ways to benefit from them.

Algeria

- On the 7th of June, 13 local council guards are killed and 6 injured during the explosion of their lorry near the village of Ain Rich, which is over 400 km to the South of Alger.

- On the 29th of June, a court condemns Mohammed Meguerba to ten years in prison for having set up and being part of a foreign terrorist network. According to the United Kingdom, he would have taken part in an attack on London, employing castor-oil instead of other poisons.

Morocco

- On the 14th of June, the Moroccan monarchy recognizes a second islamist party, Al Badil Al Hadari, which was an active organisation since 1995.

- On the 17th of June, the Minister of Communication declares that Rabat intends to introduce a law liberalizing the media which would put an end to journalists' imprisonment for defamation of the monarchy and would alleviate restrictions imposed to foreign televisions and radio stations.

European Union

- On the 16th and 17th of June, negotiations on the 2007-2013 budget du-

ring the Brussels European Council, reach a deadlock following the refusal of the English Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to accept a reduction on the budget rebate (which the United Kingdom has been benefiting from since 1984) without a firm commitment on the part of other member states to modify Europe's expenses and, in particular, the expenses for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The French President, Jacques Chirac, accuses Blair of disclaiming an agreement made in 2002, which stipulates that the agricultural expenses will not decrease between 2007 and 2013. All the EU members, except for the United Kingdom, support the European Commission proposal which consists in replacing the English rebate with a "generalised corrective mechanism". This would allow other member states, which are also net contributors to the European budget, to be eligible to receive reimbursements, which will consequently reduce the English rebate. The United Kingdom, supported by some other member states, requests to transfer some expenses dedicated to agriculture to "modern" priorities such as research and increase of competition. The last proposal for a final compromise, which the President in power, Jean-Claude Juncker from Luxembourg presented to the Member States and which includes a freeze of the English rebate and a revision of the CAP, is rejected by the United Kingdom, Finland, The Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. Another point of friction within the Council is the French and Dutch opposition to the European Constitution. There are those who wish to continue national ratifications and those who believe that the document is dead, as it needs to be adopted unanimously to come into force. Finally, the 25 members accept to continue with the ratifications, with the possibility of a change of date if necessary. The 25 members agree on the need for some time of reflection and that Europe has to start listening to its citizens.

- On the 24th of June, the 25 Ministers for the Environment oppose the EC proposal of lifting the bans on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) in Austria, France, Greece, Germany and Luxembourg, in accordance with the end of the EU moratorium on the GMO, established in July 2003.

July 2005

Four months after the attack in Cairo, Egypt is again the target of a terrorist attack, which causes 88 deaths in Sharm-el-Sheikh. In Turkey, a bomb explodes in Kusadasi, causing 5 deaths, while confrontations between the Turkish army and the Kurdish rebels cause 91 deaths. In Lebanon, attacks against Pro-Syrian dignitaries continue as a new government is formed under the Anti – Syrian Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, which includes members of the Anti-Syrian coalition. For the first time in history, Hezbollah takes part in a Lebanese government and a woman was handed a ministerial portfolio. In Maghreb, Algeria proceeds on the way to national reconciliation with Kabylie, while Morocco reforms its nationality code and Tunisia provides its Parliament with a High House. In the Balkans, three bombs explode in Pristina on the day the UN launched an enquiry on the possibility of opening negotiations on Kosovo's status. In Albania, the legislative elections, criticised by Europe, mark the victory of the centre-right group of the Albanese former President Sali Berisha. In Europe, several European States face the worse drought in decades and the fires in Spanish forests kill 14 voluntary firemen. As for the EU, Malta ratifies the European Constitution and Turkey signs the Ankara Protocol specifying that it does not entail official Turkish recognition of the Republic of Cyprus. The London terrorist attack of the 7th of July leads certain European States, such as France and Italy, to take preventive measures and to reinforce their anti-terrorist laws and pushes the EU to accelerate the implementation of exceptional anti-terrorist precautions established in 2004.

Portugal

- The month of July is marked by a drought over 97% of the territory, causing a 70% decrease in the production of cereals and numerous fires in the forests which, on the 21st of July, cause one death.

- On the 15th of July, 500,000 workers protest against the tax increase and the reduction of public expenses. On the 20th of July, the Minister of Finance,

Luis Campos e Cunha, responsible for implementing these unpopular measures, resigns mentioning family reasons and tiredness as the main factors. On the same day, the Prime Minister Jose Socrates appoints Fernando Teixeira dos Santos as Minister of Finance and they both declare that they will continue following Campos e Cunha's policy.

- On the 20th of July, the EU communicates to Portugal a deadline of 2008 to adjust its public deficit to the criteria (3% of the GDP) established by the EU Growth and Stability Pact.

Spain

- During the month of July, Spain experiences the most severe drought in the last 60 years, which makes necessary to ration water. The country is affected by numerous fires in the forests; one fire in particular, in a national park at 160 Km south of Madrid, on the 16th of July costs the life of 14 voluntary firemen.

- On the 3rd of July, the Basque regional President declares that the Spanish government has started negotiations with the Basque terrorist group ETA. Representatives from the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) deny the start of negotiations. ETA claims responsibility for four bomb attacks in the north of Spain on the 12th of July and two in the south of Madrid on the 29th of July.

- On the 15th of July, the Moroccan Abdeneri Essebar is arrested, suspected of being member of a terrorist organisation and of having helped a terrorist involved in the 11th of March attacks in Madrid to escape the country. Essebar, who lost his daughter in law in the attack, denies the accusations.

France

- During the month of July, the two main branches of the National Front for the Liberation of Corsica (FNLC), the FNLC-Fighters Union and the FNLC-October 22, claim responsibility for numerous recent attacks in Corsica. The FNLC-Fighters Union accuses the French government of being reactionary and the Corsica administration of being subjugated. On the 29th of July, two Corsicans, suspected of being involved

in the FNLC-October 22 attacks in 2003, are brought to justice.

- On the 10th of July, the government imposes water rationing in half of its regions because of the drought, the worse France has experienced in the last 30 years.

- On the 12th of July, a court in Lyon confirms the expulsion of two Muslim girls because they were wearing an Islamic headscarf.

- On the 13th of July, judicial sources confirm that Athman Deramchi (Abbou Yousef), alleged member of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), has been arrested in France on the basis of an arrest warrant issued by Italy.

- On the 26th of July, in response to the 7th of July terrorist attacks in London, the Internal Security Council, led by the President of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, introduces new anti-terrorist measures (more earlier surveillance of suspected individuals, the compulsory withholding of emails and telephone calls for one year, the installation of cameras in train and bus stations in Paris) which will have to be introduced by the legislative power in Autumn. As for prevention, the government expels radical imams, withdraws from the Schengen zone in order to re-establish control over the borders and raises the level of security alert to the second highest level.

- On the 27th of July, the Mont Blanc tunnel trial ends in Belleville with the condemnation of 120 people and three companies, found guilty of murder and/or criminal negligence.

Italy

- On the first of July, the American ambassador is summoned in front of the Prime Minister Berlusconi, to clarify the American position in the kidnapping of the imam Mustafa Osama Nasr in Italy by the CIA in February 2003 and to ensure that the self-defence domestic law will be observed in the future. On the 25th of July, Italy issues six arrest warrants against CIA members. According to intelligence service experts, the CIA could not have operated without the complicity of the Italian government, which the government denies.

- On the 1st of July, the authorities de-

clare of having dismantled the "Strategic Anti-Terrorism Department" an extreme-right illegal organisation which fights against extreme left and militant Islamism. The group, which includes several police officers, tried to obtain funds from the EU and the Vatican. A deputy of Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia, has previously declared that the group had the approval of the police and the intelligence services.

- On the 7th of July, following the London attacks, Italy reinforces its police and military surveillance of potential targets and increases the attributions of the police force and the army in order to pursue and arrest suspects. On the 9th and 10th of July, 142 people, mainly illegal immigrants, are arrested in Milan. On the 29th of July, the Senate (Higher House) approves the proposals of the Minister of Home Affairs, Giuseppe Pisanu, to authorise that terrorist suspects are detained for 24 hours without charges and that the communication surveillance is reinforced. On the 13th of July, a Moroccan and a Tunisian, members of a terrorist group, are found guilty of having planned an attack against Italian interests.

- On the 8th of July, three alleged members of the Red Brigades are given a life sentence for the assassination of Massimo d'Antona, a government councillor, in May 1999.

- On the 14th of July, a great majority of prosecutors and judges in the country demonstrate against the controversial reform of a judicial law, which implicates their independence. Following the President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi's refusal to sign for this law in December 2004, on the 20th of July the Prime Minister presents a new version of the legislation.

Malta

- On the 6th of July, 65 Parliament deputies unanimously vote for the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.

- On the 9th of July, the La Vallette's forces of law and order declare that over 200 illegal immigrants, amongst which a majority of Eritreans and Ethiopians, have arrived on the Maltese island of Gozo, which represents the most significant arrival of illegal immigrants since 1991.

Slovenia

- On the 2nd of July, 7 Slovenian residents originating from other ex-Yugoslavian republics start a hunger strike in the name of approximately 18,000 people removed from the national registers by the Ljubljana authorities in 1992, one year after its independence. The group demands the granting of a right of residence to former Croatians, Bosnians and Serbs present in Slovenia, right which would allow them to find work and be covered by health insurance. In April, electors opposed a law proposal which would return the right of residence to the 18,000 people concerned via referendum.

Croatia

- On the 12th of July, the House of Representatives (Lower House) approves the nomination of Ivica Kirin as Minister of Home Affairs.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On the 11th of July, the 10th anniversary of the massacre of 7,500 Muslims in Srebrenica is commemorated in presence of the Serb President, Boris Tadic, who hasn't gone as far as to apologise for the role of the Serb forces in the massacre. On the 28th of July, the wife of Radovan Karadzic's, Serb leader responsible of the massacre, publicly asks him to give himself in.
- On the 20th and 22nd of July, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), decides to transfer the cases of five Serb Bosnians to Bosnian Courts.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On the 3rd of July, three bombs explode in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, targeting the offices of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), OSCE's headquarters and Kosovo's legislative power. These attacks coincide with the launch of an evaluation by the special UN envoy, Kai Eide, to determine if Kosovo has reached a sufficient level of democracy to start negotiating on its status.
- On the 18th of July, a special Serb Court condemns seven former mem-

bers of the Serb security system, amongst which Milorad Lukovic, leader of the Special Operations Unit "Red Berets" and Radomir Markovic, former State Security Chief, to long prison sentences for the abduction and assassination of the former Serb President Ivan Stambolicen in 2000. During the verdict, the judge declares that President Slobodan Milosevic, his successor, was behind this assassination, even though Milosevic denies these accusations.

Macedonia

- On the 6th of July, Greece announces that it will check the existence of "irredentist" maps in Macedonia's school books, the country which Greece calls "Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia" (FYROM), insisting on the fact that this is a "very serious" and recurrent problem. On the same day, the Greek newspaper *Kathimerini* states that FYROM students are taught that a part of their country is occupied by Bulgarians and Greeks.

Albania

- On the 3rd of July, the centre-right formation of the conservative former Albanese President Sali Berisha, wins the legislative elections against the Socialist Party of the outgoing Prime Minister, Fatos Nano and left-wing formations. Several formations and political parties lodge complaints denouncing the invalidity of the ballots in several constituencies. The OSCE, the European Parliament, the EU Council and the European Council criticise the elections' process, claiming that they have only partially responded to democratic criteria. On the 8th of July, socialists accuse Berisha's democratic party of having rigged the legislative elections' results in several constituencies.

Greece

- On the 3rd of July, the Greek and Turkish Prime Ministers, Costas Caramanlis and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, place the first stone of a 300 km pipeline which will connect both countries in 2006. This work will transport natural gas from the Caspian Sea to Western Europe.

- On the 27th of July the "Popular Revolutionary Action", an extreme-left unknown group, which made its first appearance two years ago, claims responsibility for three explosions which occurred during the last eight months in front of the premises of some construction companies in Athens, and announces new attacks. In a letter addressed to the Greek newspaper *Eleftherotypia*, it declares that these bomb attacks intend to denounce those enterprises that have profited from the works for the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. The explosions which caused no victims and minor damages occurred in December in front of the Technical Olympic facilities, in May in front of AVAX facilities and this month in front of the firm BTP Aktor respectively.

Cyprus

- On the 27th of July, an Imair plane, a private airplane company from Azerbaijan, which landed in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), only recognised by Ankara, represents the first non-Turkish commercial flight to the north of Cyprus in over 30 years. The plane transports a group of around 90 businessmen, bureaucrats, artists and journalist who are going there to meet the Cypriot Turkish leader Mehmet Ali Talat and other TRNC officials, as well as businessmen.
- On the 28th of July, the EU Cypriot Commissioner, Markos Kyprianou, accuses the TRNC authorities of having stopped him from entering the Northern occupied area of the island despite the diplomatic privileges in use for European diplomats. He declares that "with such decision, M. Talat is imposing confinement to the Turkish Cypriots and cannot complain as Europeans wish to see them but he refuses to let them in."

Turkey

- During the month of July, 55 soldiers and 36 rebels die in the south-east of the country following clashes between the army and the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and the Kurdish People Defence Forces. On the 1st of July, the police kill a member of the People's Liberation Front of Kurdistan, who was about to enter the Ministry of Justice in Ankara and explode himself. On the 10th

of July, 22 people are injured in an attack near Cesne, for which a branch of the PKK, the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK) claims responsibility. The PKK denies being involved. On the 16th of July, five people are killed in a bomb attack in the seaside resort of Kusadası. In front of this situation of violence, on the 19th of July, General Ilker Basbug, the second highest officer of the High Command, declares that the level of violence has not reached that of the 90's and that the armed forces have the situation under control.

- On the 29th of July, Turkey signs the Ankara protocol extending the Customs Union with the EU, to 10 new European State members, amongst which is Cyprus. By signing, Turkey fulfils the last key condition for its accession negotiations to start. Turkey specifies that this signature does not entail the country's recognition of the Republic of Cyprus. This statement concerns the European Parliament as well as Greece and the Republic of Cyprus, which threatens to vote against the opening of negotiations if Turkey does not recognise the Republic before the 3rd of October. A European survey published on the 18th of July, reveals that 65% of Europeans are against Turkey joining. On the 27th the EU President, Tony Blair, reasserts his support for Turkey's entry, underlining its importance for European security.

Syria

- On the 3rd of July, under external pressure to fight against the insurrection in Iraq and to arrest militants who use the Syrian territory to organise the Iraq resistance, the government proceeds to arrest 34 suspect militants near the Lebanese border. On the 4th of July, confrontations erupt on the mountain of Qassioun, 4 km from Damascus, between Syrian security forces and Iraqi rebels causing the death of a policeman and the arrest of a Lebanese suspect. Amongst the Iraqi rebels are the former body guards of the ex-Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein.

- On the 14th of July, the *Financial Times* reports that Syria has drastically reinforced its controls at the Lebanon border, as political tensions between the two countries increase.

Lebanon

- On the 12th of July, the pro-Syrian Minister of Defence, Elias Murr, is seriously injured by the explosion of his car. Two civilians die in this attack, which is another attack to add to the series of attacks against pro-Syrian dignitaries.

- On the 18th of July, the National Assembly (unicameral) approves a law absolving the former Maronite leader of the Lebanese Forces militia, Samir Geagea, sentenced to life in 1994 for the murder of some of his rivals and of Prime Minister Rachid Karami. Geagea, detained for 11 years in isolation, is released on the 26th of July. The Assembly also releases approximately 40 Islamic militants, some of which are suspected of having connections with Al-Qaeda; they were accused of plotting to attempt against embassies in Beirut.

- On the 19th of July, the new Prime Minister Fuad Siniora presents his new government, which consists of the members of the anti-Syrian coalition, amongst which Siniora's Future Current, led by Saad al-Hariri son of the former Prime Minister assassinated in February, the Democratic Rally, lead by the Druze Walid Jumblatt, as well as the Shiite groups Hezbollah and Amal. Hezbollah, that for the first time takes part in a government, is given the ministerial portfolio for energy and water. For the first time in Lebanese history, the government includes a woman, Na'ilah Mouawad, widow of the former President Rene Mouawad, assassinated in 1989; she becomes the Minister of Social affairs. Even though the Anti-Syrian coalition holds two thirds of the National Assembly's seats, some key positions are still in the hands of people considered to be Pro-Syrian (Ministries of Defence, Justice and Foreign Affairs). On the 22nd of July, in support of the new government, the American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice pays a surprise visit to Lebanon. She requests that the Hezbollah guerrillas are disarmed in respect of the United Nations resolution 1559 (2004).

Jordan

- On the 3rd of July, King Abdullah II embarks on a ministerial reorganisation, which is perceived as an attempt to appease conservatives and members of

tribal origins in the House of Representatives, who threatened to withdraw their confidence in the government of Adnan Badran. This is because the cabinet he formed in April did not include a member originating from the South of the country and because the economic department of the government includes Jordanians of Palestinian origins.

Egypt

- On the 2nd of July, the Cairo Judges Club publishes a report accusing the government of having falsified the numbers of those participating in the national referendum which approved the constitutional amendments in favour of a multi-party system. The report declares that officials were threatened if they did not falsify the results. The Club campaigns for a complete supervision of future Presidential elections. On the 6th of July, a court in Cairo postpones the trial of Ayman Nur, leader of the opposition party al Ghad, accused of forging signatures in order to put himself forward for Presidential elections to the 25th of September. On the 20th of July, the reformist opposition movement Kifaya calls for a boycott of Presidential elections describing them as illegal. The movement's announcement follows the withdrawal of two reformers from the electoral campaign, the feminist writer Nawal Saadawi and the human rights and sociology activist Saadeddin Ibrahim, who have been arrested on several occasions.

- On the 23rd of July, three bombs explode in Sharm-el-Sheik, causing the death of 88 people, amongst which tourists and Egyptian workers. The Al-Qaeda group in Egypt and in Syria, Abdullah Azzam's Brigades and the Saint Fighters for Egypt, immediately claim responsibility for the attack. Some time later, a third group, the Tawhid and the Egyptian Jihad claim responsibility for the attack and declare to target "crusades" in the name of Al-Qaeda. On the 24th of July, the government declares that approximately twelve Bedouins have been arrested in relation with the investigation.

Libya

- On the 1st of July, a spokesman from the prosecutor in Mannheim (Germany)

declares that a German suspected of having helped Libya between 2001 and 2003 to obtain centrifuges allowing uranium enrichment with the prospect of making nuclear weapons, is detained in Germany. The man is suspected of having been part of an international network for the traffic of high technology products, mainly operational since the 90's in the emirate of Dubai.

- On the 4th and 5th of July, during the 5th Summit of the African Union in Sirte, the African leaders attempt to show that Africa can preserve its unity on crucial issues such as the G8 or its place in the UN and that Africa prioritises the interests of the continent to national ambitions. The African leaders postpone the designation of the countries entitled to the two permanent seats in the UN Security Council, which the continent claims and for which Egypt and Libya are candidates. The leaders reiterate their commitment to an increase in political integration, a key objective for the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, whose ultimate goal is to have "the United States of Africa".

- On the 15th of July, the European Commission unfreezes one million euros, towards the long term action plan launched in Benghazi for the fight against AIDS in 2004. Here, over four hundred children and their mothers are infected with the virus.

- On the 21st of July, Omar Shaluf, father of the Libyan opponent Hadi Shaluf, resident in Paris, is assassinated in Zliten (to the East of Tripoli). The murder occurs three weeks after the first opposition congress in London. The case is followed by several NGOs and by the UN commission in Geneva.

Tunisia

- On the first of July, the Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH – legal), the National Council for Liberties in Tunisia (CNLT – not recognised), the International Association for Support for Political Prisoners in Tunisia (AIAPPT – not recognised) and the Association for the Fight against Torture (ALTT-not recognised), launch a campaign to promote a general amnesty in favour of prisoners of conscience and detainees sentenced for political offences. On the 15th of July, as launching a new web-

site on freedom of expression in Tunisia, the Tunisian Monitoring Group (TMG), a coalition of 13 organisations members of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), asks the Tunisian government to put an end to the blocking of internet before the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, in November 2005. According to the TMG website, the government systematically censors the access to no fewer than 20 websites offering independent information and providing an analysis of political issues and human rights in Tunisia. On the 18th of July, a second private radio station, "Radio Jawhara", is formed in Tunisia. On the 25th of July, Mohammed Abbou, "the lawyer for freedom" detained since the 1st of March 2005, starts a new hunger strike in order to inform the Tunisian and international public opinions on the violations of human rights in Tunisia.

- On the 3rd of July, Tunisia makes a step forward towards democracy by setting up a Higher House, two thirds of which is voted for by the Chamber of Deputies (National Assembly) and by local councillors. Following this election, President Ben Ali's party, which already controls 80% of the National Assembly's seats, reinforces its position in the Parliament by obtaining an overwhelming majority of seats in the new Higher House of the Parliament.

- On the 25th of July, in a talk during the occasion of the Republic's 48th anniversary, President Ben Ali announces a bill in favour of legal opposition. In accordance with this bill, the opposition parties who have seats in the local constituencies will occupy 20% of seats in regional councils. The future law is intended to benefit four opposition parties. During his talk, the President rules out any possibility of dialogue with the Islamist opposition, putting an end to speculations on an eventual dialogue with the Islamist party Ennahdha (Renaissance), dismantled and forbidden in 1990.

Algeria

- From the 5th to the 10th of July, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), led by President Sidiki Kaba, pays a visit to Algeria. In a joint statement, the FIDH and its affiliate Alge-

rian Human Rights League, request the removal of the state of urgency which has been in force for 13 years and express their concerns on the consequent judicial proceedings involved against journalists and press companies. They ask the government to "respect and enforce respect of press freedom" and the judicial body "to not submit to pressures from the Executive Power". As for the amnesty law, the FIDH alerts against impunity.

- On the 17th of July, the Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika orders the dissolution of local councils in Kabylia, in line with the peace plan signed in January with the Berber minority of the country. Kabylia have largely boycotted local elections in 2002 because of a disagreement with the government and since then have asked President Bouteflika to dissolve the assemblies elected in order to organise a new ballot. The Socialist Forces Front (FFS), a party essentially based in Kabylia and which are threatened to lose many of its seats during the next ballot, denounces Bouteflika's decision and threatens to organise demonstrations.

- On the 17th of July, President Bouteflika takes advantage of parliamentary holidays to let a decree pass abolishing a law that was passed the previous year on the initiative of Islamist parties, which prohibited the country to import beer and wine. This decision should facilitate negotiations to enter the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Morocco

- On the 5th of July, a Moroccan Tribunal sentence Mohcine Bouaoua and Taoufik Hanouichi, two extremist Islamists leading members of a cell affiliated to the Jihad Salafist Group to death. They are accused for the murders of five of their compatriots, amongst which a Jew trader killed in Casablanca, a former official in the Ministry of Home Affairs and a policeman. Thirty one other members of this Salafist cell receive sentences of up to 20 years of criminal reclusion.

- On the 30th of July, during the occasion of the anniversary of his enthronement, Mohammed VI announces that from now on Moroccan nationality can be passed on from the mother, putting

an end to the unequal treatment of men and women present in the nationality code.

European Union

- On the first of July, the United Kingdom takes on the EU rotating presidency again. The British presidency's main concerns are an agreement on the European budget reform and its priorities, an agreement on services liberalisation, the opening of entry negotiations with Turkey on the 3rd of October and progress on Doha negotiations in the framework of the WTO in Hong Kong next December. Progress should be based on a higher economic growth and an improved access to the markets for developing countries.
- On the 5th of July, the 5 main member states (G5: France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain) together in Evian, agree to deport repelled asylum seekers and illegal immigrants on common charter flights. On the 26th of July, the first flight, organised by France and the United Kingdom, leaves for Afghanistan.
- On the 12th of July, the Court of Justice of the European Communities (CJEC) condemns France to pay a "combined" fine without precedents of 20 million euros plus 57.8 millions every six months for future non compliance of the Common Fishing regulation.
- On the 13th of July, 6 days following the London bombings, the Council of Justice and Home Affairs urgently get together in Brussels to anticipate the implementation of anti-terrorist exceptional measures established in the November 2004 Hague's programme for freedom, security and justice. These measures include compulsory withholding of telephonic data and emails and a more systematic exchange of information between the 25 members Security Agencies.

August 2005

The 'Al-Qaeda attack in Aqaba, which was intended to hit American and Israeli targets, kills a Jordanian soldier. The new Lebanese Prime Minister goes to Syria in order to improve bilateral relations, which deteriorated because of

the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and because of the withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon. Arrests and interrogations concerning Hariri's assassination enquiry continue in Lebanon, whilst the UN criticise the lack of Syrian cooperation in the enquiry. Another bomb explodes in a Christian district of Beirut. In Algeria, President Bouteflika publishes his project "Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation". The assassination of two Serbs in Kosovo threatens the commencement of ethnic conflicts. In Turkey, while the Kurdistan's Worker's Party (PKK) is accused for having killed two civilians in an attack in Ankara at the beginning of the month, in mid August it announces a month long unilateral ceasefire. The debate surrounding the Turkish declaration on the country not recognising the Republic of Cyprus, together with signing the Ankara agreement, threaten the opening of negotiations for Turkey's entry into the EU. Finally, one of the key suspects in the terrorist attack of March the 11th 2004 in Madrid, is arrested in Algeria.

Portugal

- During the month of August, fires in the woods continue.
- On the 29th of August, the director of the Alien and Border Service, Manuel Jarmela Palos, criticises the immigration law, which according to him is "too restrictive" and "totally inappropriate for the Portuguese reality". He recommends the suppression of the obligation made to foreigners wishing to legally establish themselves in Portugal; this entailing them to get a working contract beforehand.
- On the 31st of April, the socialist Mario Soares, twice President of Portugal between 1986 and 1996, announces that he will put himself forward in the Presidential elections in January 2006. He declares the situation of crisis the country is going through and Portugal's pessimist attitude induced him to present himself as a candidate; he believes it is necessary "to fight against this mindset". The Portuguese socialist Manuel Alegre renounces to put himself forward in the presidential elections to avoid dividing the left-wing representation.

Spain

- On the 5th of August, 19 Africans wishing to emigrate illegally to Europe through the Spanish Canary Islands archipelago, die as their boat sinks off the Atlantic coast. There are two survivors.
- On the 9th of August, the Minister of economy and finances, Pedro Solbes, reveals the 2006 budget, according to which public expenses will increase of 7.6% on average and the main priorities will be social housing and research.
- On the 17th of August, the Serb police arrests the Moroccan Abdelmadjid Bouchar, one of the key suspects in the March the 11th terrorist attack in Madrid, for violating the immigration law and for holding false identity cards. The Spanish Ministry of Home Affairs tries to obtain his extradition as soon as possible.
- On the 26th of August and during the night of the 28th, hundreds of immigration candidates try to forcefully access the Spanish enclave of Melilla (in the North of Morocco). There are several injured.

France

- Between the first and the 11th of August, opponents of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) devastate 5 experimental fields in the centre and in the South of the country.
- On the 2nd of August, the Council of Ministers introduce a decree with new measures intending to create a more flexible work market and to promote the establishment of new positions for young people amongst others. The opposition parties accuse the government of not having put the measures to the vote of the legislative power before introducing them. On the 9th of August, the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) declares that two decrees violate French obligations contracted under the International Labour Organisation and the European Social Charter. During the course of August, another dispute erupts as the government announces its plan to privatise motorway operating companies, hoping to get 12 billion euros. The Minister of the Economy, Finance and Industry, Thierry Breton declares that one billion will be allocated to infrastructure projects and that

the rest will be employed to decrease national debt.

- On the 5th and 26th of August, two alleged radical islamists are deported to Algeria. One of them is Amar Heraz, who returned to France after being expelled once before, the other is Khelaf Hamam, sentenced at the beginning of the year for having helped in recruiting and training Muslims for the “holy war”.
- On the 26th and 29th of August, there are two fires in social housing estates occupied by immigrants in Paris which cause the death of 24 people, amongst which 14 are children. These intensify the polemics surrounding the immigrants’ accommodation conditions in the country.

Italy

- On the 25th of August, the Red Cross recognises that in September 2004 it let four Iraqi rebels pass through the American roadblocks in Iraq in exchange for the release of two Italian hostages. The Red Cross adds that the Italian government is not involved but that a member was warned of the operation. The Intelligence Services Agent, Nicola Calipari, took part to the exchange.
- On the 26th of August, Antonio Fazio, the governor of the Italian Bank (central bank) presents himself in front of the Ministers to face accusations according to which he helped the recovery of the 9th Italian Bank, Banca Antonveneta, through the Italian Popular Bank (BPI) against the Netherlands bank ABN Amro. Fazio is already the object of a European Commission’s investigation for the same reasons.

Malta

- On the 9th of August, an Algerian and two Maltese, who attempted to let 25 illegal immigrants pass from Malta to Sicily, are given custodial sentences ranging from 3 to 5 years.
- On the 23rd of August, the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the European Council anti-corruption mechanism, publishes the Second Round Evaluation Report on Malta with the agreement of Maltese authorities. The report indicates that Malta has introduced several ethical codes, espe-

cially within those sectors most vulnerable to corruption but that the country still does not have a global anti-corruption strategy.

Croatia

- On the 4th of August, Croatia denounced as “inappropriate” the Serb Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica’s comments describing the Croatian military operation Tempest conducted ten years ago which put an end to the Serb-Croatian war of 1991-1995 as “ethnic cleansing”. A Croatian government statement specifies that the Tempest’s operation essential goal was to free the territories occupied by Serb secessionists.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On the 8th of August, the Serb-Bosnian Milan Lukic, accused of war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for the actions committed as a member of the paramilitary group “White Eagles”, which was active in the city of Visegrad between 1992 and 1994, is arrested in Argentina. In September 2003, he was condemned in absence to 20 years of prison by a court in Belgrade.
- On the 26th of August, the arrest of the Serb-Bosnian paramilitary, Dragan Zelenovic in Russia becomes known.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On the 27th of August, 2 Serbs die and another one is seriously injured as their car is targeted by shooting in the province of Kosovo. The leader of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Soren Jessen-Peterson, shocked by the attack, urges the police to quickly arrest the culprits.

Greece

- On the 14th of August, Greece experiences its worse flight accident in Greece’s history, with the crash of a plane from a Greek-Cypriot company Helios, in the mountains to the North East of Athens, killing 114 passengers and 6 flight crew members.

Cyprus

- On the 30th of August, the Minister of finance, Makis Keravnos, resigns to accept the position of executive director of the Hellenic Bank. On the 31st of August, the Greek-Cypriot President, Tasos Papadopoulos, appoints the former director of the World Bank, Mihalakis Sarris, to fill the vacancy.

Turkey

- During the month of August, 17 soldiers and 18 rebels are killed in the east of the country during clashes between the army and the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) and the Kurdish People Defence Forces (HPG). On the 4th of August, Kurds are accused of having caused a bomb explosion in Ankara, which caused the death of a woman and her daughter. On the 6th of August, a bomb explodes in Istanbul airport, injuring three people. On the same day, 5 people are arrested, amongst which an alleged member of the PKK, as they are suspected of intending to organise an attack in the seaside city of Mersin. On the 7th of August, two people die in Ankara as a bomb that they are trying to set explodes.
- On the 2nd of August, following Turkey’s declaration on the 29th of July, stating that signing the Ankara agreement does not entail an official recognition of the Greek Republic of Cyprus, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dominique de Villepin, warns Turkey that not recognising the country could block the opening of entry negotiations, due to start on the 3rd of October. On the 4th of August, the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, declares that he will not accept new conditions for the negotiations to open and adds that the 25 members have already agreed on the opening of Turkey’s entry negotiations during the European Summit in December 2004. He specifies that in December 2004, the French President Jacques Chirac declared that signing the Ankara agreement would not imply the Republic’s recognition. On the 26th of August, the German opposition leader, Angela Merkel (CDU), in a letter addressed to EU State’s conservative leaders, declares that negotiations should not automatically lead to Turkey joining

but could rather lead towards a “privileged partnership”.

- On the 10th of August, the Syrian Hamed Obysi is arrested in Antalya and accused of being part of a terrorist organisation. On the 11th of August, the Syrian Luai Sakra, suspected of being linked to Obysi and of having planned an attack against an Israeli cruise ship as well as of being involved in attacks against Jewish and English targets in Istanbul in November 2003, is wanted by a court in Istanbul.
- On the 12th of August during a visit to the Kurdistan village in the South East of the country, the Prime Minister Erdogan recognises that the government has made mistakes concerning the treatment of Kurds and promises to be more democratic in the future. On the 17th of August, the pro-Kurdish People Democratic Party (DEHAP), dissolves to join the ranks of the Democratic Society Movement (DTH), led by Leyla Zana, a Kurdish activist who was a member of the Turkish Democratic Party, which also dissolved. On the 19th of August, the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) announces a month long unilateral ceasefire after the DTH requested to put an end to the violence.

Syria

- On the 31st of July, the new Lebanese Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora, pays an official visit to Syria with the objective of improving bilateral relations which have seriously deteriorated since the forced withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon at the beginning of the year. Siniora discusses problems that have arisen between the two countries with his Syrian equivalent, Mohammad Naji Otri and mostly about the blockade imposed since over a month ago, preventing the transit of Lebanese goods through Damascus towards Arab countries. On the first of August, Syria gives instructions to facilitate the transit of lorries at the Lebanese border.
- On the 15th of August, Ammar Kourabi, member of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights in Syria, declares that Syrian police has arrested approximately 35 Kurds near Alep, in the North of the country, following confrontations during a Kurdish demonstration, which intended to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the

Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK). This rally was forbidden by the authorities.

- On the 23rd of August, the Iraqi Minister of Transport, Salam al-Maliki, asks Iraq’s neighbouring countries to monitor the borders in order to prevent armed men from infiltrating the country. On the 25th of August, Ibrahim Gambari, the UN Under Secretary General for Political Affairs, declares in New York that Syria fails to cooperate with the UN Enquiry Commission on Hariri’s assassination. The Commission has been asking the country for documents and for the possibility to interrogate 5 Syrian witnesses for the past six weeks. Following Gambari’s statement, the Security Council publishes a declaration where, without mentioning Syria, it invites all parties and “those in particular who have not yet responded in an adequate manner” to fully cooperate with the UN enquiry. The American UN Ambassador, John Bolton, expresses his disappointment in front of “the Syrian lack of cooperation”. On the 28th of August, the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, agrees that his country will fully cooperate in the UN enquiry on the assassination of the Lebanese former Prime Minister, Rafiq Hariri.

Lebanon

- On the 22nd of August, a bomb explodes in the predominantly Christian district of Zalka in the North of Beirut, injuring 5 people.
- On the 29th of July, the UN Security Council approves resolution 1614 (2005) extending the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), until the 31st of January in 2006.
- On the 30th of August, the Major General Jamil Sayyed, Brigadier General Ali al-Hajj and Brigadier General Raymon Azar, three former members of the Security who have tight links with Syria and who resigned in April, are arrested in order to be interrogated by the UN Enquiry Commission on the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri. The Brigadier General Mustafa Hamdan, the actual Head of the Lebanese Republican Guard Brigade and President Emile Lahoud’s closest councillor, hands himself over to the Commission after being summoned by the police.

Nasser Qandil, former Pro-Syrian member of the National Assembly, is also detained.

Jordan

- On the 19th of August, a series of rockets aimed at the American warfare ship USS Ashland stationed in the port of Aqaba and aimed at the Israeli port of Eilat, miss their target killing a Jordanian soldier and injuring another. The Al-Qaeda Abdullah al-Azzam Brigades in the Levant and in Egypt, claim responsibility for the attack and threatens the Americans against carrying out other attacks against them. They also ask the King of Jordan, Abdullah II, to release their brother prisoners and to abdicate before being forced to. On the 22nd of August, the government declares that the Syrian Mohammed Hassan Abdullah al-Sihly organised an attack with his two sons and an Iraqi and that he has been arrested. On the 23rd of August, the Al-Qaeda organisation for the “Holy War” in Iraq claims responsibility for this attack.

Egypt

- On the first of August, one of the main suspects for the Sharm-el-Sheikh attacks of the 23rd of July, Mohammed Fumayfel, is killed during clashes with the security forces in Attaqa, near Suez. On the 22nd of August, following searches carried out in the main city at the North East of Sinai, El Arish, security forces detain 500 people to interrogate them about the attacks.
- On the 11th of August, the electoral commission publishes the list of ten candidates authorised to put themselves forward in the presidential elections of the 7th of September. Amongst the adversaries of President Hosni Mubarak, there is the leader of the opposition party al Ghad, Ayman Nur and the President of the opposition party Neo-Wafd, Numan Gomaa. On the 21st of August, Mohammed Mahdi Akef, the leader of the Muslim Brothers calls Egyptians to vote in droves but advises not to vote for the current President.

Libya

- On the 21st of August, the son of the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Al

Gaddafi, Seif al-Islam, announces that the government intends to free 131 political prisoners, amongst which some members of the Muslim Brothers, an organisation which is forbidden in Libya. He also announces that the government will compensate those who have had their houses or properties confiscated during the "Green Revolution" in the 70's.

- On the 21st and 22nd of August, the President of the American Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Richard Lugar, goes to Libya.

Tunisia

- On the 17th of August, President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali starts a ministerial reorganisation. The current Prime Minister Abdelkabi Hermassi is replaced by Abdelwahab Abdullah, a long-standing councillor of Ben Ali. Kamel Motjane, up to now Assistant High Commissioner for the UN Refugees Agency (UNHCR), becomes the new Minister of National Defence.

Algeria

- On the 9th of August, the Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, also Minister of Defence and Supreme Leader of the Armed Forces, appoints General Lyachi Grid as head of the Republican Guard and General Malek Necib as head of the Navy.

- On the 14th of August, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika publishes his project "Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation" which will be put to the vote on the referendum held on the 29th of September. This project, which pays tribute to the People's National Army and to the Security Services for having defended the Republic of Algeria, cancels judicial proceedings against islamists who have handed themselves over to the authorities from the 13th of January 2000 (date of statutory limitation for enforcement of the amnesty law), those who put an end to their armed activity and give up their weapons, those who are wanted and hand themselves over, and those who are involved with networks supporting terrorism and decide to declare their activities to the competent Algerian authorities. The project also pardons islamists who have been sen-

tenced and detainees. These measures are not applicable to those individuals involved in collective massacres, rapes and attacks using explosives in public places. Finally, the project forbids the practice of political activity to anyone who has taken part in terrorist actions and to anyone who still refuses to recognise his responsibility in the formation and implementation of a policy advocating the pseudo "Dijihad" against the nation and the Republic institutions; this is despite the dreadful human and material losses caused by terrorism and the instrumentalisation of religion for criminal purposes. On the 15th of August, families of people assassinated by terrorists in the 90's oppose the project. On the 16th of August, the Algerian league for the Defence of Human Rights (LADDH) demands truth and justice on the atrocities carried out during violence in Algeria, before any national reconciliation which would absolve the culprits.

Morocco

- On the first of August, a Moroccan, attempting to reach Europe illegally on board of a ship filled with dozens of immigration candidates, is killed by gunshots during clashes with the Moroccan Security forces. This death is the first one of its kind since the Moroccan authorities reinforced their suppression of illegal immigration this year following promises made to the European Union regarding this matter.

- On the 16th of August, Moroccan police arrests 13 islamist activists accused of having attempted to carry out attacks in the country with the support of Algerian rebels from the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC).

September 2005

Mohammed Hosni Mubarak is elected for his sixth consecutive term in office as President of Egypt during the first disputed presidential elections the country has experienced. While the United States removes some sanctions against Syria, international pressures against Syria in Lebanese and Iraqi records intensify. The UN Commission's enquiry investigation on the assassina-

tion of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri continues with the arrest of four high-ranking officials of Lebanese security, the interrogation of the Syrian Interior Minister and of the leader of Syrian Security Services in Lebanon. In Maghreb, an overwhelming majority of Algerians approve President's Bouteflika's "Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation". The death of 5 Subsaharians who attempted to enter the Spanish enclave of Ceuta during a collective assault, initiates the polemic on illegal immigration in the region. Relations between Europe and Turkey are tense concerning the latter's entry into the Union because of the proposal made by some European countries to only offer a "privileged partnership" to Turkey and because of the EU's official declaration stating Turkey's obligation to recognise the Republic of Cyprus before joining. Kurdistan's Worker's Party (PKK) extends its ceasefire to the third of October, the day established for the opening of Turkey's entry negotiations. The most important islamists' trial in Europe ends in Madrid with the conviction of 18 Members of Al-Qaeda. For the first time in two years, Ministers of the Serb auto governance in Kosovo, meet to discuss decentralisation.

Portugal

- On the 19th of September, the government forbids Portuguese soldiers to demonstrate in front of the Parliament on the 21st of September. Against austerity measures introduced by the government; offenders will be given disciplinary sanctions. On the 21st of September, the soldiers' wives demonstrate in the soldier's place. The government and those responsible for the Army believe that the participation of functional soldiers will call into question "the discipline and cohesion" of the armed forces. Portuguese soldiers request the mediation of the President of the Republic, Jorge Sampaio, in his capacity as Supreme Commander of the country's Armed Forces.

- On the 19th of September, European Finance Ministers formally accept, as the Commission has proposed, to give Portugal more time up to 2008 to reduce its public deficit – which should

come to 6.2% of the GDP in 2005 – under the 3% of GDP mark authorised by the Stability and Growth Pact.

Spain

- On the 15th of September, the Congress of Deputies (Lower House) introduces new legislation, which gives the government the approval of the legislative power over all deployment of Spanish troops abroad.
- On the 26th of September, the most important extremist islamists' trial in Europe ends in Madrid with the conviction of 18 Members of Al-Qaeda. The Syrian Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas, leader of Al-Qaeda in Spain, is sentenced to 27 years in prison for having organised a meeting in Spain in July 2001 during which the last preparations for the terrorist attack of September the 11th 2001 in the United States were organised. Mohammed Atta, one of the September the 11th kamikazes and Ramzi bin al-Shibh, a high-ranking member of Al-Qaeda, took part in this meeting. The other 17 people accused, mainly of Moroccan or Algerian origins, are convicted to prison with sentences going from 6 to 11 years for being part of or having helped a terrorist network.
- On the 30th of September, the Parliament of the autonomous Community of Catalonia approves the constitutional statute which allows for a legal independent system in the Catalan community, the right to raise taxes and to be considered as a "nation" by 120 votes to 15. The statute will have to be accepted by the National Congress of Deputies (Lower House), but the Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero already intimated that he will not reject the statute in its entirety.

France

- On the 9th of September, two Sikh boys are expelled from their schools in the suburbs of Paris for having refused to remove their headscarves, violating the 2004 law which forbids wearing ostentatious religious symbols in state schools. Despite some rare exceptions, from the start of the school year there has been almost full respect of the law mentioned above.

- On the 11th of September, the President of the Movement for France (MPF), Philippe de Villiers, announces that he will put himself forward in the 2007 presidential elections. He will campaign against the "islamisation of France".

- On the 16th of September, the Minister of Justice Pascal Clément, in order to fight against extremist proselytism in prisons, announces the nomination of the French Moulay el-Hassan el-Alaoui Talibi as the first Muslim chaplain in French prisons.

- On the 19th of September, people hear that the former Minister of Economy, Finance and Industry, Hervé Gaymard, will reimburse 58,894 euros to the State for having rented a luxury apartment in Paris, which led to his resignation.

- On the 26th of September, 9 alleged members of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), implied in the organisation of terrorist attacks in Paris, are arrested during police raids in the West and North West of the country. Amongst these is Safe Bourada, released in 2003, after having served half of his sentence for his involvement in the 1995 Paris attacks.

- On the 27th of September, a ferry from the National Maritime Company Corsica-Mediterranean (SNCM) is kidnapped in Marseille by 30 members of the Corsican Worker's Union in protest against the government plan of privatising the SNCM which is in deficit. On the following day, paramilitary policemen resume control of the ferry without encountering any resistance. In protest, Trade Union Members and nationalists protest violently on the streets of Corsica blocking the ports of Ajaccio and Bastia as well as the airport. The port of Marseille also experiences a block following the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) call for a strike. On the 29th of September, while the Prime Minister concedes that the State will keep 25% holdings in SNCM, trade unions are not satisfied and fear a loss of jobs.

Italy

- On the 2nd of September, the Ministerial Cabinet approves a series of reforms intending to improve the management of the Bank of Italy and to decrease its Governor term in office,

which is reduced to 7 non-renewable years. If they are approved by the legislative power, the reforms will be applied to the successors of the current Governor of the Bank of Italy, who is appointed for life, Antonio Fazio, who is involved in a favouritism scandal during the recovery of the ninth most important bank of Italy, la Banca Antonveneta. On the 22nd of September, the Minister of Finances, Domenico Siniscalco, who requested Fazio's resignation, resigns, shocked by the government's incapability of dismissing him as he damaged the Bank of Italy international reputation. The Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi asks Fazio to resign and for the European Central Bank to intervene, but the latter replies that it has no authority to do so. On the same day Berlusconi appoints the Vice-Prime Minister and former Minister of finances, Giulio Tremonti, to the vacant post. On the 24th of September, Tremonti, a long-standing adversary of Fazio, revokes the authority of the Governor to represent Italy within the Development Committee of the World Bank, obliging Fazio to withdraw from the meeting taking place in Washington.

- On the 6th and 7th of September, in virtue of the new anti-terrorist legislation introduced after the terrorist attacks in London in July, a Tunisian member of the islamist cell and a Moroccan imam are extradited to their respective countries of origin.

Malta

- On the 28th of September, the authorities of Valletta organise together with the EU British presidency, a meeting gathering the representatives of the European Commission, Cyprus, Italy, Greece and Spain "to reinforce the capacity of research and rescue in the Mediterranean region in order to reduce human life losses". Participants also encourage Malta to sign a bilateral agreement on this matter with the Libyan authorities.

Croatia

- On the 14th of September, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) accepts to transfer the trial of General Rahim Ademi and

of General Mirko Norac to a Croatian Court. This is the first time that the trial of people already indicted by the ICTY is transferred to Croatia.

- On the 20th of September, the General Prosecutor of the ICTY, Carla Del Ponte, declares in an interview to *The Daily Telegraph* that general Ante Gotovina would be hidden in a Franciscan monastery in Croatia and that therefore the Catholic Church is protecting him. She adds that the Vatican refuses to cooperate with the Tribunal. On the 30th of September, during a visit to Croatia, she describes herself as being deceived of the country's cooperation, despite certain positive developments.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On the 16th of September, the Serb-Bosnian Sredoje Lukic, who handed himself over to the authorities of the Srpska, is transferred to the ICTY, accused of crimes against humanity and of violating the rules and customs of war. This is in relation to his activities within the paramilitary group "the White Eagles", which operated together with the military units and the Serb Bosnian police in the city of Visegrad between 1992 and 1994.

- On the 29th of September, the Serb Bosnian Radovan Stankovic is transferred from the ICTY to Sarajevo to be judged by the Chamber for War Crimes in the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is the first transfer of a defendant the ICTY carries out towards this country.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On the 8th of September, Prvoslav Davinic resigns from the post of Minister of Defence following accusations of corruption.

- On the 15th of September, a Court in Belgrade issues an international arrest warrant against the wife of the former President of ex-Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, following her absence at her trial for corruption.

- On the 16th of September, the Serb Minister of State Administration and Local Self-Government, Zonar Loncar, and the Minister of Local Self-Government in Kosovo, Lutfi Haziri, meet in the Austrian capital to discuss decentralisation. This is the first high-level meeting bet-

ween the two parties since October 2003. Not many concrete outcomes result from this meeting, but the two parties commit to continue negotiations.

Albania

- On the first of September, the Central Electoral Commission (KOZ), after having verified several complaints and reorganised the elections in three constituencies, announces the final result of the 3rd of July legislative elections, marking the victory of the centre-right opposition party, the Democratic Party of Albania (PDS) and its allies (80 seats out of 140). The Prime Minister Fatos Nano resigns describing the elections as "politically unacceptable", the winners as "illegal" and declares that electoral violence is the basis of his defeat. Jozefina Tapoli becomes the first woman to occupy the Assembly President's post. The government of Sali Berisha is approved by the Assembly on the 10th of September. On the 12th of September, the EU presidency welcomes the closing of the electoral process in Albania, which marks the first pacific transfer of power since the fall of communism.

Greece

- On the 8th of September, the Greek border guards arrest 118 illegal immigrants, crammed on board a semi-trailer, along with their three alleged Greek smugglers following a car chase near the Greek-Turkish border.

Cyprus

- On the first of September, the chief of the Cypriot diplomacy, George Iacovou, requests a European response to the Turkish "provocative" declaration together with the protocol of the 29th of July expanding the Turkish customs union with the EU to the ten new state members. With respect to this document Ankara affirms that its signature does not entail recognition of the Cyprus Republic. On the 21st of September, after several weeks of discussions, the EU officially adopts a common declaration asking Turkey to recognise Cyprus before its entry into the European block and highlights that otherwise its entry negotiations might be affected.

- On the 14th of September, the spokesman of the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, announces the nomination of the Danish Michael Möller to be his special representative for Cyprus. Möller will also be the head of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). He will take up his post on the 30th of November.

- On the 18th of September, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos, states in front of the United Nations General Assembly, that any progress towards the settlement of the Cypriot affair will be difficult while the Turkish military occupation of the Northern part of the island continues and that he wishes the involvement of the European Union. On the 21st of September, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül, during his talk to the Assembly, blames the failure of the Secretary General's efforts to re-launch discussions on the basis of his peace plan, on the intransigence of the Greek Cypriot authorities which he accuses of intending to overlook the UN in their efforts to settle the Cypriot issues. Turkey adds that there will be no recognition of the Republic of Cyprus until a complete resolution is reached with regards to the United Nations.

Turkey

- On the 2nd of September, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül, threatens to abandon negotiations for his country's entry to the EU, if the EU has a different proposal other than the country fully joining the Union. On the 18th of September, the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan asks Turkish electors in Germany to vote in the federal elections against Angela Merkel, candidate for the opposition Party CDU, which favours a "privileged partnership" between the EU and Turkey, rather than its entry. On the 23rd of September, the English Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Jack Straw, declares his support for Turkey's entry which will help avoid a "clash of civilisations" and states that denying it would encourage extremist islamists. On the 29th of September, the EU ambassadors in Brussels cannot reach an agreement regarding Turkey's entry negotiations, as Austria demands that an alternative to the country's entry be in-

troduced from the beginning. Austria, which prefers to establish a privileged partnership with Turkey, accuses the 25 members of "double standards" because they suspend negotiations with Croatia while they open them with Turkey.

- On the 4th of September, the police arrests 88 people following the clashes which erupted when Kurdish separatists were prevented from joining a protest rally against the isolation of the former Leader of Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), Abdullah Ocalan in a prison on the island of Imrali. 144 sympathisers of the PKK who went to this demonstration are assaulted by nationalists and confrontations with the nationalists throughout the day cause hundreds of injured. On the 21st of September, the PKK extends his unilateral ceasefire of a month up to the 3rd of October, the date when Turkey's joining negotiations with the European Union are due to start. Despite the ceasefire, 45 soldiers are killed during the month during a confrontation with the PKK and the Turkish Army and the People's Defence Force (HPG).

- On the 23rd of September, the European Commission condemns the decision of a court in Istanbul preventing a conference from taking place in two universities on the Armenians massacre under the Ottoman Empire between 1919 and 1923. The ban is finally lifted and the conference takes place in a third university.

Lebanon

- On the first of September, Detlev Mehlis, head of the UN Enquiry Commission on the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in February, announces he suspects Major-General Jamil Sayyed, Brigadier-General Ali al-Hajj, Brigadier-General Raymond Azar and Brigadier-General Mustafa Hamdan, four high-ranking Lebanese officials currently detained in Beirut, of having played a role in planning the attack. On the 3rd of September, the magistrate Elias Id issues arrest warrants against 4 people, known to have links with Syria. On the 12th of September, Mehlis and his team go to Syria, where they interrogate amongst others, the major-general Ghazi Ka'an and the head of Syrian intelligence in Le-

banon, Col Rustum. When Mehils visits, the head of military intelligence and the Syrian President's brother in law, General Assef Chaoukat, is absent.

- During the month of September, continuing attacks in predominantly Christian districts of the capital increase since the assassination of Hariri. On the 25th of September, the Lebanese journalist and TV presenter, Mai Shidyaq is the victim of an attack in the North of Beirut, which she will survive. A few hours earlier, she led a television debate on Syria's involvement in Hariri's assassination.

- On the 18th of September, the General Commander Michel Aoun, who returned to Lebanon in May after a long exile in France, announces the transformation of the Free Patriotic Movement, in a political party for "change and reform".

Syria

- On the first of September, on the initiative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in the heights of Golan (UNDOF), some 486 Sheiks from the Druze community, living in the occupied Golan, go to Damascus and stay four days in Syria.

- During the month of September, pressures against Syria increase with regards to the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and concerning American and Iraqi accusations that Syria does not cooperate enough to put an end to the Iraqi insurrection. On the 10th of September, the Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari demands the closure of the northern part of his border with Syria and imposes a curfew in the region next to the Rabiaa frontier post. On the 15th of September, in a statement at Syria's embassy in Washington, Syria says it is ready to cooperate with the American and Iraqi authorities to bring back security and stability. On the 19th of September, Americans organise a multilateral meeting within the United Nations, with the intention of isolating Damascus more on the international scene. On the 23rd of September, Syria imputes the infiltrations of rebels in Iraq to the United States. On the 25th of September, the

Syrian President Bachar al-Assad meets his Egyptian equivalent Hosni Mubarak in Cairo to discuss diplomatic efforts intending to reduce tensions between Damascus and Washington regarding Lebanese and Iraqi dossiers and to prevent the isolation of Syria.

- On the 28th of September, exiled Syrians initiate a 2 day meeting in Paris for the political opposition to the Damascus regime, which gathers 30 participants and especially Kurd Syrians. The meeting intends to reunite Syrian opposition and to rally the International Community for its cause. The exiled demand the removal of President Bachar al-Assad from the regime without "foreign intervention", the unity of the opposition, the creation of an independent judicial system, the freedom of press and political pluralism in Syria.

Jordan

- On the 3rd of September, the Jordanian security forces arrest three members of the Islamist organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir, whose leaders have encouraged hatred against Arab governments and have praised Iraqi rebels.

- On the 7th of September, a survey on the way Jordanians perceive the application of democracy in their country carried out by the Centre for Strategic Studies of the University of Jordan (CSS) between the 26th of August and the 1st of September, shows a general optimistic atmosphere on the progress of the level of liberties during this past year.

- On the 22nd of September, two Jordanians Moussa Khedr Ramadan and Mondher Mahmoud Saada, amongst which one was extradited by Syria, are brought before the court for having organised anti-American attacks in Jordan and for having attempted to join the Iraqi insurrection.

Egypt

- On the 7th of September, the President in power Mohammed Hosni Mubarak is elected with approximately 87% of votes to his sixth consecutive 5 year term in office; these elections will go down in history as the first multi-party system Presidential elections. The electoral participation is only of 23% (the re-

forming movement Kifaya called for a boycott) and the Presidential Electoral Commission refused to authorise NGOs to monitor the election, violating a court decision. On the 27th of September, President Mubarak takes an oath and declares in front of the Assembly that he will engage upon the path of reforms and national unity.

- On the 14th of September, Israel, Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority meet in Urgada and commit to cooperate in promoting tourism projects together. This meeting is particularly dedicated to encouraging regional tourism, consulting tourism operators, coordinating security and facilitating conditions for granting visas.

Libya

- On the first of September, on occasion of the 36th anniversary of the revolution which brought Colonel Gaddafi to power in 1969, Libyan authorities grant an amnesty to 1,675 prisoners, of which 500 are foreign, who are serving sentences for minor offences.
- On the 28th of September, President George Bush lifts some of the weapon restrictions in Libya.

Tunisia

- On the 5th of September, Tunisian Justice suspends the opening of the Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH) sixth conference, due on the 9th and 11th of September, also banning any preparatory activity. A "political decision under a judiciary guise" according to Me Mokhtar Trifi, the President of the League.
- On the 13th of September, the Tunisian Minister of Development and International Cooperation, Mohamed Nouri Jouini, and the Director of the French Development Agency (AFD), Joël Daligault sign a financing convention related to projects safeguarding the Mediterranean. This is in line with the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) implemented by the UN.
- On the 28th and 29th of September in Tunis, the African Development Bank organises the first regional meeting for technical preparation to the 4th World Water Forum, whose objective is to coordinate the contribution and participa-

tion of Africa to this forum on a technical level.

Algeria

- On the 29th of September, 97.37% of Algerian electors approve via referendum the "Charter for peace and National Reconciliation" elaborated by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and made public in August. According to Algerian television, electoral participation goes up to 81.77%, figures put in doubt by human rights NGOs and some Algerian journalists. According to the Western press, participation in the region of Kabylia is very poor and reflects a rejection of the Charter by the Berber minority.

Morocco

- On the 29th of September, 5 Sub-Saharan Africans die and another 100 are injured as attempting to get over the fence marking the border between Morocco and the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. On the same day the Spanish government announces the deployment of 500 soldiers in both the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. On the 30th of September, the Spanish television announces that 5 Africans died following injuries caused by Moroccan shootings.

European Union

- On the first of September, the Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security, Franco Frattini, reveals a package of proposals regarding political asylum and immigration, which are intended to implement the priorities of the Hague programme (November 2004) at European and National levels. Amongst these proposals there are common regulations for the return of illegal immigrants and of those who have not received the status of political refugees and a vigorous integration of legal immigrants, including an allegiance to the EU and its laws.
- On the 8th of September, Ministers of Justice and Internal Affairs tear each other apart when deciding the length of the compulsory period for withholding telephonic and other types of data by telecommunication services for anti-

terrorist and anti-criminal purposes. On the 21st of September, the Commissioner Frattini presents a compromise proposal, rising the compulsory period for withholding telephonic data to 12 months and emails to 6 months.

- On the 13th of September, the European Community Court of Justice (ECCJ) decides that the European Community (EC), with the support of the European Parliament (EP), has the right to ask member states to apply European directives through National criminal law. Even though the ECCJ decision concerns environmental Directives, it is intended to establish an EC general competency, which will enable the enforcement of all European legislation through criminal law and establish penalties for non conformity. The United Kingdom declares that this only applies to domains in which the EC already has many competencies, such as the environment and the internal market, and that many member states oppose to an harmonisation of criminal law.

- On the 27th of September, President Durao Barroso and the Industry and Enterprise Commissioner, Günter Verheugen, decide that a third of legal proposals currently discussed in European Institutions will be withdrawn because of their possible negative effects on competitiveness, growth and employment. The proposals are withdrawn with the intention of launching the "Lisbon Strategy" as a response to the French and Dutch rejection of the European Constitution.

- On the 25th September, the French Minister of Home Affairs and Regional Development, Nicolas Sarkozy, proposes to unify France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom in a "group of six" most populated countries which would act as a "new engine of Europe" in order to escape from the current inertia.

October 2005

The EU opens entry negotiations with Croatia and Turkey, where the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) announces the end of its ceasefire. The European Commission, confronted with the French and The Netherlands' rejection of the European Constitution, launches its

"plan D". Still in Europe, the French suburbs explode following the death of two young immigrants, which reflects a profound social unrest within the French society. During the month of October, the avian flu H5N1 reaches Europe. In Kosovo, the UN Security Council initiates negotiations establishing the future status of Kosovo. In the Near-East, international pressures on Syria continue, as the UN Enquiry Commission on the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, presents its preliminary report. In Egypt, the opposition organises itself within a "National Front for Political and Constitutional Change" in view of the legislative elections due at the end of the year. In Maghreb, the Tunisian government faces increasing internal and external pressures demanding respect of freedom of association and expression. Six subsaharian immigrants die while attempting to infiltrate the Spanish enclave of Melilla while the EU condemns Morocco for expelling the illegal immigrants in the desert without resources.

Portugal

- On the 17th of October, the Minister of Finance Fernando Teixeira unveils a strict budget for 2006, reducing public expenses by 1.7 billion euros, in order to decrease the public deficit to 4.8% of the GDP. Portugal, which for 2005 has an estimated public deficit of 6.2%, violates the EU Pact of Stability and Growth which it has to be in line with by the end of 2008 as it is subject to sanctions.

Spain

- On the 3rd of October, in the South West of the country, the French police arrests 3 suspected members of the Basque terrorist group ETA, amongst which are Harriet Aguirre Garcia, the alleged number two in the military system of ETA and Idoia Mendizabal Mugica, suspected of being responsible for a car bomb attack in 2002, in Spain.
- On the 19th of October, after Spain twice asked the American government in vain for an explanation of the death circumstances of the Spanish cameraman José Manuel Couso Permy, killed during the bombing of his hotel near the

American tanks in Iraq, a magistrate of the National Court of Madrid issues arrest warrants against three American soldiers. The judge Santiago Pedraz Gomez describes the attack on the hotel which provided accommodation for 130 journalists, as a crime against the international community.

France

- On the 4th of October, during the police raids in Montargis, 4 people suspected of being members of the group Ansar al-Fath, a branch of the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), are arrested and two of them are placed under judicial enquiry on the 7th of October. On the 9th and 10th of October, two convicted islamist militants, Djamel Louanouci and Abde-rrahmane Sellem, are deported to Algeria.
- On the 4th of October, 1 million public and private workers go on strike to protest against the government's economic policies which intend to make the small businesses working contracts more flexible and against the government privatisation plans. On the 28th of October, the government launches the partial privatisation (15%) of the company France Electricity. The Socialist Party (PS) promises to renationalise EDF when it returns to power. On the 27th of October, the government announces that the plan of privatising 30-35% of the nuclear energy company Areva is postponed.
- On the 13th of October, the strike against the privatisation of the National Maritime Company Corsica-Mediterranean (SNCM) ends following a negotiated agreement which sees the government keeping 25% of shares and the employers receiving 9%; the two together have the possibility to form a blocking minority.
- On the 14th of October, a court in Lyon sentences the radical imam Chirane Abdelkader Bouziane to 6 months of prison and fines him 2,000 euros for encouraging violence against women in his book. A court acquitted him in June. Bouziane declares he will appeal.
- On the 26th of October, the trial for the secret financing of the Rally for the Republic (RPR), when Jacques Chirac was major of Paris, ends with the con-

viction of 38 of the 47 politicians and businessmen on the dock, amongst which the former ministers Michel Giraud, Michel Roussin and Guy Drut.

- On the 28th of October, following the death by electrocution of two young Muslims wanted by the police, a riot breaks out within the young Arab population in the Parisian suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois. During the following nights the riots extend to other suburbs and become more and more violent, setting cars and public buildings on fire. The riots intensify after a tear gas grenade was set off by the police in the hall of a mosque on the 30th of October. At the end of the month of October, there have been 50 arrests and 30 injured policemen in total. On the 31st of October, the Minister of Home Affairs, Nicolas Sarkozy, reinforces the presence of the police in the sensitive suburbs and declares he will apply a "zero tolerance" policy against the rioters who he describes as "scum". These proposals attract the criticisms of left-wing parties and of the leaders of Muslim communities, who call for confronting the underlying causes of this revolt, amongst which are unemployment, social exclusion and police brutality.

Italy

- On the 6th of October, the Senate accepts the reforms limiting the Bank of Italy Governor's term in office to 7 non-renewable years, these reforms, however, will only apply to Fazio's successors. On the 10th of October, the Governor of the bank of Italy, Antonio Fazio, suspected of favouritism in the recovery of the Italian bank Antoveneta, declares that it was his "institutional duty" to favour the recovery of Italian banks through a national bank rather than a foreign one. On the 18th of October, in protest to Fazio's refusal to resign, the parliamentary opposition leaves the parliament as Fazio was speaking to them regarding the 2006 budget.
- On the 13th of October, the Chamber of Deputies (Lower House) approves a controversial electoral reform bill reintroducing the complete proportional representation before the legislative elections of April 2006. The parties of centre-left, who have boycotted the vote, declare that this reform would discrimi-

nate against the small centre-left parties that would not obtain enough votes to win a seat. They also state that this is an attempt of the Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, to maintain his coalition in power.

- On the 15th of October, the former Vice-Prime Minister, Marco Follini, resigns as leader of the Union of Christian and Centre Democrats (UCD), in protest to the nomination of the Prime Minister Berlusconi as candidate of the current coalition in power for the elections of April 2006. On the 27th of October, Lorenza Cesa replaces Follini as head of the UCD.
- On the 30th of October, Berlusconi declares in an interview that he attempted several times to dissuade the American President G. W. Bush from invading Iraq.

Malta

- On the 4th of October, the National Republican Alliance (ANR), an extreme right party, organises an anti-immigration demonstration gathering hundreds of people together against what they describe as a "silent invasion". On the 9th of October, the Maltese authorities call on partners to provide urgent assistance to manage the problem of illegal immigrants on the island, which the Minister of Justice and Internal Affairs, Tonio Borg, describes as humanitarian crisis.

Slovenia

- On the 15th of October, during a Congress of the Liberal Democratic Party of Slovenia (LDS), opposition party of the centre-left, Jelko Kacin, former Minister of Defence and currently member of the European Parliament, is elected as President of the party.

Albania

- On the 3rd of October, the Prime Minister Sali Berisha approves the nomination of Saimir Kodra as General Inspector of the State Intelligence Service (SIS).
- On the 9th of October, the mayor of Tirana is elected as President of the Socialist Party of Albania (PSS), following the resignation of the former Prime Minister Fatos Nano in September.

Croatia

- On the 3rd of October, the EU Council accepts to open entry negotiations with Croatia, following the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia's (ICTY) recognition of Zagreb's cooperation with them. The opening negotiations were put back 7 months.
- On the 11th of October, in the ICTY starts the trial of three Serb generals from the Yugoslavian People Army, accused of crimes against humanity and violations of rights and the customs of war for the execution of 300 people in the city of Vukovar, on the 18th of November in 1991.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On the 5th of October, the Bosnian tribunal for war crimes announces its expectation of an increase in the number of trials concerning the Srebrenica massacre. This is after the result of a two year long investigation; a list containing the names of over 19,000 Serb Bosnian soldiers, policemen and officials suspected of being involved in the massacre is sent over by the Commission from the Srpska Republic (Serb entity in Bosnia).
- On the 18th of October, the Bosnian legislative power introduces a reorganisation plan for the police force, which is divided according to ethnicity. In this way, the government fulfils one of the key requirements for the opening of negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU. On the following day, the European Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, advises to open negotiations.
- On the 26th of October, the procurators of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) announce the conclusion of an agreement with the Bosnian Croatian Ivica Rajic, suspected of having directed the Croatian Defence Council's militia responsible for the death of 16 Muslims in 1993, in the village of Stupni Do. In exchange for a combined sentence going from 12 to 15 years, Rajic pleads guilty to premeditated assassination, inhuman treatment, appropriation of property and mass destruction, all crimes not linked to any military need.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On the 4th of October, the United Nations special envoy, Kai Eide, presents his global report on the status of the Province of Kosovo to the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan. In his report he criticises Kosovo's provisional government of Albanian origins, for not having worked enough to reinforce interethnic tolerance in the legal system. The report congratulates the establishment of economic and governmental structures. On the 24th of October, the Security Council follows the report's recommendation to open negotiations on the future status of Kosovo. Annan announces the nomination of the former Finnish President, Martti Ahtisaari as its special envoy to conduct negotiations.
- On the 7th of October, Serb authorities convict 5 former members of the paramilitary police, known under the name of the "Scorpions", for the murder of 6 Muslims from Srebrenica in July 2005. This is the first trial held in Serbia concerning the Srebrenica massacre. On the 27th of October, 9 Serb policemen are arrested for the assassination of 48 civilians of Albanian origins in the city of Suva Reka in Kosovo, whose bodies were found in 2001.
- On the 7th of October, President Svetovar Marovic appoints Zoran Stankovic as Minister of Defence. On the 21st of October, the legislative power approves this nomination.
- On the 10th of October, the EU and Serbia and Montenegro formally open negotiations on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, first step towards joining the Union. The Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, warns the country that negotiations could be suspended at any time if it does not fully cooperate with the ICTY.

Macedonia

- On the 26th of October, during a meeting in the White House marking the 10th anniversary of bilateral relations, George W. Bush congratulates the Macedonian Prime Minister Vlado Buckovski for the country's efforts committed to join NATO and the European Union and thanks him for Skopje strong support in the war against terrorism.

Greece

- On the 17th of October, Greece becomes the first country in the EU to be affected by the avian flu H5N1, after some tests were carried out on the island of Oinousses, near the Turkish coast.

Cyprus

- On the 16th of October, the Greek Cypriot centre right Party United Democrats, elects Mikhalis Papapetrou as President. Papapetrou criticises the government's policy concerning the reunification of the island and declares that the objective of his party will be to create a common front including all those wishing for the reunification of the island.

Turkey

- On the 4th of October, following a two day long emergency meeting, the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs open entry negotiations with Turkey. These negotiations which have to last between 10 and 15 years do not give any guarantee of membership and will be suspended if Turkey violates the European criteria concerning human rights. Austria and France promise to their citizens to organise a referendum regarding Turkey's entry and the Greek part of Cyprus threatens to use its veto at different stages of negotiations. On the 6th of October, Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), which is banned in Turkey, announces the end of its unilateral ceasefire, which it extended up to the 3rd of October. The PKK accuses the EU of ignoring Kurdish requests and declares that the opening of entry negotiations with Turkey turns the Kurdish problem into a European issue. During the month of October, 57 soldiers and 24 rebels die in clashes between the Turkish Army, the PKK and the People's Defence Force (HPG) in Eastern Turkey.
- On the 7th of October, a court in Istanbul condemns the Turkish journalist of Armenian origins, director of *Agos* newspaper, Hrant Dink, to six months suspended sentence for "having insulted and weakened Turkish identity in the media" in relation with articles published in 2004 on Armenian identity.

- On the 9th of October, Richard Howitt, member of the European Parliament delegation which went to visit to Turkey to check its progress in terms of human rights, declares to have become acquainted with shocking reports concerning murders, extrajudicial executions and mutilations carried out by the army against people suspected of sympathising with Kurdish separatists.

- On the 10th of October, the EU blocks all imports of live birds and feathers originating from Turkey. On the 13th of October, the Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, Marinos Kyprianou, confirms that the Avian flu Symptoms detected on the first of October in the city of Kiziksa on the North West coast of the Aegean sea, definitely are of the H5N1 variation which has already killed 60 people in Asia. As a precaution, from the first of October the government killed thousands of birds and placed the region under quarantine.

- On the 14th of October, 90 years after the Armenian genocide, the French Insurance Company AXA, indemnifies some of the descendants of the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian genocide who had taken out a life insurance with AXA.

- On the 24th of October, in Eskisehir, the trial starts of four policemen accused of having killed a Kurdish child with his father who, according to some relatives were disarmed and not connected to the Kurdish rebel groups the police were chasing at the time. This trial, which represents a test for Turkey's recent human rights reforms, is finally adjourned after the litigant party leaves the tribunal in protest against the police's refusal to allow NGOs in to observe the trial.

Syria

- Throughout the month of October, the United States increasingly pressurise the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad regarding the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and the Syrian lack of cooperation to fight against the insurrection in Iraq. On the 12th of October, the Minister of Home Affairs and former leader of the Syrian Intelligence Services in Lebanon, Major General Ghazi Kan'an, is found dead at

his house. According to the official Syrian Press Agency, he committed suicide. A few hours before his death, he contacted a Lebanese radio station and admitted he has been interrogated by the United Nations Enquiry Commission on the death of the former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and that he has not provided them with any information against the Syrian state. On the 16th of October, confronted with international pressures, the Syrian opposition, traditionally divided, issues the "Declaration on Damascus" requesting the end of the state of emergency and to hold a national conference for democratic reforms. A great number of opposition activists support this declaration, amongst which human right defenders, communists, Kurdish nationalists, exiled Syrians and the Muslim Brothers.

Lebanon

On the 18th of October, Lebanese authorities seek the former Secret Services Syrian agent, Zuhair Mohammed al-Siddiq, regarding the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri. On the 20th of October, the leader of the United Nations Commission Enquiry on the death of Hariri, Detlev Mehlis, presents his preliminary report to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, in which he criticises Syria for its lack of cooperation and for the probable implication of high ranking Syrians in the murder of Hariri. He adds that the decision to kill Hariri could not have taken place without the agreement of high ranking Syrians from the Intelligence Services and without the complicity of their equivalents in the Lebanese Secret Services. Syria denounces the report and the Syrian Minister of Information, Mahdi Dakhlallah, describes the report as not being very professional. A polemic breaks out as it becomes clear that several names of high ranking Syrians have been erased from the public version of the report. Amongst these is that of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's brother in law, who is also the current leader of Syrian Secret Services and that of General Asef Shawkat who would have forced Ahmed Abu Addas to claim responsibility for the attack as well as that of the Syrian President's brother, also leader of the Presidential

Guard, Lieutenant Colonel Maher al-Assad. The report also accuses the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Farouk al-Shara, of providing the investigators with false information. On the 23rd of October, the Lebanese police accuse Mahmoud Abdel-Al, a member of the Pro-Syrian Sunnite group, arrested the day before in France and who, according to the report, had phoned the Lebanese President Emile Lahoud a few minutes before the attack. On the 31st of October, the United Nations Security Council introduces resolution 1636 (2005) which drops the threat of economic sanctions against Syria (a Russian requirement amongst others), but requests Syria to arrest everyone involved in the assassination. The Council threatens to take further unspecified measures if Syria fails to cooperate with Mehlis, who finds himself given the significant authority of accessing the evidence amongst other responsibilities.

Jordan

- On the first of October, at the end of a meeting in Amman between the Iraqi Minister of Home Affairs Bayane Baqer Solagh and his Jordanian equivalent Aouni Yervas, the two countries sign an agreement protocol establishing cooperation to ensure security at their common border and to fight against terrorism and organised crime.
- On the 19th and 20th of October, the European Union External Relations Commissioner, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, goes to Jordan where she meets King Abdullah II and the Vice-Prime Minister Marwan Muasher in order to discuss setting up a Jordanian National reform plan as well as a EU-Jordan action plan with regards to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).
- On the 23rd of October, 5 islamists are condemned to sentences going from 3 to 5 years in prison each for a plot intending to attack Israeli tourists in the Hashemite Kingdom. An activist party member of a group named Islamic Jihad has been trained in Syria and Lebanon.

Egypt

- On the 8th of October, the opposition leaders announce that they have regrouped as a new coalition, the "Na-

tional Front for Political and Constitutional Change" in view of the legislative elections in November and December. The front is coordinated by the former Prime Minister Atef Sidqi, President of the National Rally for Democratic Change. This coalition consists of 10 parties, of which three are currently represented in the Assembly (unicameral): the New Wafd Party, the Arab Democratic Nasserian Party and the National Progressive Unionist Party (Tajammu). The Centre Party (al Wasat), considered by many to be a branch of the Muslim Brothers as well as the Workers Party and the Dignity Party that have not received an official status as political parties, are also part of the Front. The Muslim Brothers and the Kifaya movement are also members but will not present a candidate. The Al-Ghad Party, whose candidate came second in the presidential elections in September, has not joined the Front because of the internal conflict within the party which broke out between the supporters of the Party leader Ayman Nur and the followers of Mustafa Musa, the second of the Party. Nur accuses Musa of being supported by President Hosni Mubarak's Party, the National Democratic Party.

- On the 19th of October, the government announces the construction of a wall around the seaside resort of Sharm-el-Sheikh, targeted by a terrorist attack in July, in order to control the entries and exits well.

Libya

- On the 18th of October, Libya signs a memorandum with the United Kingdom in order to facilitate the deportation of terrorist suspects towards Libya, which promises to not torture or execute Libyans deported by the United Kingdom.

Tunisia

- On the first and 2nd of October, the 12th ministerial session of the countries members of the Mediterranean Forum (1994) is held in Hammamet and presided by Tunisia during 2005, mainly intending to prepare the summit of the 10th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, planned for the 27th and the 29th

of November. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 11 member countries (Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Turkey) informally approach the issues of security and stability in the Mediterranean region and their consequences, such as the fight against terrorism and illegal immigration. On top of political issues, they discuss the Euro-Mediterranean economic partnership and the ways to consolidate the importance of investments. They decide to put the immigration issue, which demands a global approach, at the centre of the Euro-Mediterranean summit in Barcelona in November.

- On the 14th of October, the special reporter on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression of the UN Human Rights Commission, Ambeyi Ligabo, asks Tunisia in a statement to free all opinion and press prisoners and to allow full exercise of freedom of opinion and expression in the country. On the 18th of October, eight association and opposition party leaders start an unlimited hunger strike to protest against the violations of human rights in Tunisia. Strikers demand freedom of association, freedom of the press, the release of political prisoners, islamists, net surfers, young people unjustly accused of terrorism as well as the release of the dissenting lawyer Mohamed Abbou and the introduction of a general amnesty law. Approximately one hundred political personalities and opponents declare their support to the hunger strikers, who were visited by American and European diplomats. On the 19th of October, Tunisian authorities accuse the strikers of attempting to manipulate the international public opinion and to falsify Tunisian realities. On the 29th and 30th of October, approximately 200 people in Tunisia, take part to the hunger strike and to solidarity sit-ins with the eight strikers.
- On the 28th of October, in a declaration made during a preparatory meeting of the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society, the European Union, the United States and a dozen Western countries asked Tunisia to grant freedom of expression and to allow the access of independent media to this conference.

Algeria

- On the 3rd of October, the Algerian President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, embarks on ensuring that the measures of the charter for “peace and national reconciliation” are rapidly implemented as the charter has just been approved by the referendum.
- On the 9th of October, the islamists of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) cut two people’s throats in Eastern Algeria.

Morocco

- At the beginning of October, hundreds of Subsaharians attempt to trespass across the three meter high border barriers which separate the Spanish enclave of Melilla from Morocco. On the 6th of October, 6 African immigrants die while over 400 candidates for immigration attempt to enter Melilla. The Moroccan Security Services claim to have acted in self defence when confronted with the immigrants’ violent assault and their arrest of 290 Africans. On the 10th of October, Morocco starts to send back immigrants to Mali and Senegal by plane. On the 10th of October, the Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, describes the way in which Morocco treats certain immigrants abandoning them in the desert near the Algerian border, with no water or food as shocking. On the 11th of October, the Spanish and Moroccan Ministers of Foreign Affairs ask for the organisation of a Euro-African conference to approach the problem of illegal immigration in order to establish joint mechanisms to administrate migration floods. On the 14th of October, the Polisario announces that in the freed regions of the Republic of Sahraoui, it found hundreds of immigrants who were expelled by the Moroccan government. A crisis erupts between Morocco and Algeria concerning responsibilities on illegal immigration.

European Union

- On the 11th of October, the European Commissioner for taxation and Customs Union, László Kovács, reveals measures to fight against counterfeiting and swindling.

- On the 13th of October, in the context of the French and the Netherlands’ rejection of the European Constitution, the European Commission (EC) launches its “Plan D” which intends to encourage a democratic debate and dialogue in the entire Union regarding the EU’s future.

- On the 23rd of October, a Southern American parrot dies of avian flu in the United Kingdom. On the 25th of October, the European Commission bans all imports of live birds kept in captivity except for chickens. Moreover, State Members are asked to do everything possible to avoid contact between domestic chickens and wild birds in areas at risk such as nature reserves for fear that Asian migratory birds bring the virus to Europe. The EC also supervises national emergency plans, in case the virus H5N1 mutates into a form that can be transmitted to humans.

- On the 25th of October, the 25 members and 8 countries from the South East of Europe sign an Energy Community Treaty creating the context for an integrated energy market. This has the effect of extending the domestic energy market to the whole Balkan region. The countries who are signatories of the treaty are Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and the United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo (MINUK).

- On the 27th of October, the leaders of the 25 state members hold an informal meeting in Hampton Court to discuss the strategic challenges globalisation has given the EU, on the basis of a European Commission document containing 6 priorities for future action: the creation of a “globalisation adjustment fund”, the allocation of more resources for research and innovation, the development of a common energy policy, the fight against the decline of European Universities, a solution for illegal immigration and a coordinated response to demographic change. The current British EU President, Tony Blair, confirms that countries reached a broad agreement on how to confront globalisation challenges.

November 2005

Fifty seven people die in four suicide attacks in Beirut, for which Zarqawi, the

Al-Qaeda leader in Iraq claimed responsibility. In Algeria, the partial elections in Kabylia put an end to over three years of crisis. In the context of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) taking place in Tunis, human rights organisations mobilise to denounce violations of freedom of association and expression in Tunisia. The Syrian President accuses Lebanon of conspiring against Syria, while the UN Enquiry Commission on the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri receives Syria’s approval to interrogate 6 Syrian officials in Geneva. In Europe, as riots have spread on such a large scale in the French suburbs, the French government declares a state of urgency and sends back convicted rioters of foreign nationality. The EU opens negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the European Commission, in its follow-up report of future enlargements, criticises the slowness of political reforms as well as the human rights situation in Turkey.

Portugal

- On the 11th of November, the Socialist Party (PS) in power is the only party to approve the strict budget for the financial year 2006. The opposition parties vote against describing the economic growth forecasts as doubtful (1.1%) while the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) predicts a growth of 1.4% and reflation from now to 2006.

- On the 17th of November, the Constitutional Court approves the request of two left-wing parties, the Democratic People’s Union (UDP) and the Revolutionary Left Front (FER), to be disbanded in order to convert into political associations.

Spain

- On the 4th of November, the Spanish Supreme Court condemns Arnaldo Ortegi, leader of Batasuna (Basque separatist party of ETA) to a year in prison for having called King Juan Carlos as “leader of tortures” during a press conference in 2003.

- On the 21st of November, the trial of

56 people accused of being part of or of assisting ETA through an organisations network which appeared legitimate starts in Madrid. This trial follows an enquiry conducted between 1998 and 2002 by the judge Baltazar Garzón.

- On the 23rd of November, the police arrest 10 people suspected of providing logistic and financial assistance to an Algerian radical islamist group, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), suspected of having links with Al-Qaeda.
- From the 27th to the 28th of November, the countries members of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration.
- On the 28th of November, 6 African immigration candidates drown off the coast of the Spanish archipelago of the Canary Islands, following the capsizing of their boat.

France

- Throughout the month of November, riots in the French suburbs intensify and on the 4th of November they spread to over 300 French cities that have significant minority communities. On the 4th of November a man dies after being assaulted by some rioters. On the 8th of November, the Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin declares a state of emergency, which confers to local prefects the power to impose curfews, issue warrants for home arrests and block access to places which become gathering points for rioters. The state of emergency also allows the police to arrest and detain people who have not observed the curfew and to carry out searches during the day and at night. The state of emergency comes with measures to fight unemployment and improve education conditions in 750 "sensitive" suburbs and with the creation of a National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equal Opportunity. On the 9th of November, the Minister of Home Affairs and Regional Development, Nicolas Sarkozy announces that the convicted rioters who are not of French nationality will be expelled from the country even if they have a French residence permit. In response to the riots, on the 11th and 20th of November the mosques of Carpentras and Montbéliarde are set on fire. In

Mid-November, 200 public buildings have been vandalised, 9,000 cars have been burnt and over 3,500 people have been arrested so far. On the 14th of November, President Jacques Chirac breaks the silence and declares that the government's first priority will be to re-establish order and peace, while underlining all along that the riots have revealed a "profound malaise" in the French civil society. While Chirac excludes positive discrimination in favour of minorities, on the 16th of November Sarkozy states that the riots have shown the need for positive measures to encourage the employment of minorities. On the 18th of November, the state of emergency, which was initially intended to last for 12 days, is prolonged to three months by a parliamentary decision, starting from the 21st of November. On the 18th of November, the Minister responsible for equal opportunities, Azouz Begag, requests to set up the statistics on France's racial and religious composition. On the 29th of November, in response to pressures for more control over immigration, de Villepin announces a reinforcement of the legislation concerning immigration: a reinforced supervision of procedures allowing access to territory thanks to marriage or family entry and settlement and a more rigorous selection of students wishing to come to France to follow their programme. Following the criticism of centre-right politicians that the existence of polygamous families in France is a determining factor in riots, de Villepin announces a stronger implementation of the anti-polygamy law.

- On the 4th of November, a court in Nanterre convicts the editor Abdelila Cherifi Alaoui from the publishing house al Qalam to a 3-month suspended sentence and is ordered to pay a fine of 10,000 euros for having edited the anti-Semitic work "The Other Face of Israel" which was also forbidden from sale by the justice. On the 29th of November, anti-racist groups launch judicial proceedings against the National Front leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who repeated several times on the radio that Nazi gas chambers were a small detail of history.
- On the 9th and 10th of November, the 4th conference of the member countries of the 5+5 group is held in Paris

and is centred on the theme of "Migration in the Western Mediterranean. This conference, which takes place a few days after the events in Ceuta and Melilla and while riots are still at their peak in France, is dedicated to the management of migratory fluxes, reception, integration and co-development.

- On the 30th of November, the Minister for Culture and for Communication, Renaud Donnedieu, announces the launch of the French International Information Channel (CFII), which will be financed by the government and is intended to compete with English language international channels, namely the CNN (United States) and the BBC (United Kingdom).

Italy

- On the 11th of November, it is heard that Italian prosecutors requested the extradition of 22 CIA agents who were involved in the abduction of the Egyptian imam Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr in 2003.
- On the 11th of November, in order to save the national airline Alitalia, the Minister of Finance announces the privatisation of the company which allows the Italian State to sell all or part of its holdings in Alitalia and to go under the 50% mark.
- On the 15th of November, the police in Naples and Brescia arrest three Algerians suspected of being members of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and of planning an attack in Italy.
- On the 16th of November, the Senate (Higher House) approves the project of constitutional reform by 170 votes to 132, supported by the Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and the Northern League (LN), member of the coalition in power; this gives more autonomy to the 20 Italian regions. Moreover, the new reform transfers competencies to dissolve legislative power, nominate and dismiss Ministers from the President of the Republic to the Prime Minister. Whilst supporters of the new law are convinced that it will lead to greater stability of political life, the leader of the centre-left opposition deplors this reform. In order for it to be enforced, the law has to be approved by a referendum which will take place after

the legislative elections on the 9th of April 2006.

- On the 24th of November, the European Commission announces that it will sue the Bank of Italy with regards to its management of recent bank mergers which have affected some Italian banks.
- On the 25th of November, a general strike organised by the three main trade unions in the country, in protest against the reduction on public services expenses proposed for the 2006 budget, paralyses the country.

Malta

- From the 25th to the 27th of November, the 53 Commonwealth member states' Heads of Government get together in Valletta. The main issues discussed concern global trade, at the dawn of the WTO negotiations in Hong Kong, and the fight against terrorism. The Valletta Declaration criticises the EU for its agricultural subsidies.

Slovenia

- From the 8th to the 11th of November, the Ministers of the 22 parties contracting to the "Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution" (21 coastal countries and the European Union), get together in Portoroz on the initiative of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) a United Nations Programme for the environment. Here they discuss a joint report of the European Environment Agency EEA and the MAP, "Priority Issues in the Mediterranean Environment". This report reviews the existing and emergent pollution problems in the region painting a very sombre picture.

Croatia

- On the first of November, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) officially transfers the trial of General Rahim Ademi and of General Mirko Norac to a Croatian Court. This is the first time that trials of people already convicted by the ICTY are transferred to Croatia.
- On the 22nd of November, the Grek Supreme Court approves the extradition of the Croatian Hrvoje Petrac, considered to be a close ally of the fu-

gitive General Ante Gotovina, still wanted by the ICTY.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On the 2nd of November, during a meeting in Washington marking the 10th anniversary of the Dayton Agreement signature, which put an end to the 1992-1995 civil war, the three members of the collective Presidency, under American and European pressures, agree to modify the constitution in order to reinforce the federal government from now up to March 2006. Whilst with the current constitution, the power is mainly concentrated in two federated entities (the Sprska Republic and the Croatian-Muslim Federation) and the central government is weak, the American programme intends to maintain the two entities but to transfer a great part of their powers to the central government. During this meeting, for the first time, the three members of the collective Presidency ask that the accused war criminals hand themselves over to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at once.
- On the 16th of November, the ICTY acquits General Sefer Halilovic, high command leader of the Muslim Bosnian Army wanted for the murder of 32 Croatian civilians in Grabovica, in September 1993. On the 18th of November, a court in the Republic of Sprska convicts three Serb Bosnian policemen for war crimes for the first time, in relation to the death of 6 Muslims in Prijedor, in March 1994.
- On the 21st of November, the United Nations Security Council introduces Resolution 1639 (2005), which confirms the United Nations support to the Dayton agreement and gives a 12-month mandate to the Stabilisation Force lead by the EU (EUFOR), formed in November 2004 in succession of the NATO's Stabilisation Force (SFOR).
- On the 25th of November, the negotiations with the EU on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement formally begin.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On the 4th of November, the legislative power approves an agreement signed in July between NATO's Secre-

tary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vuk Draskovic. The agreement allows NATO's troops to freely circulate in Serbia and Montenegro so that they are able to access their bases in Kosovo and in Bosnia, where NATO has peacekeeping missions.

- On the 15th of November, the Serb government introduces a resolution which opposes Kosovo's independence and describes any other solution which might be imposed as illegal and unacceptable. On the 17th of November, Kosovo's legislative power introduces a resolution in which it declares that it will not accept anything less than independence in the negotiations on Kosovo's status. In this context, on the 21st of November, the United Nations special envoy for Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari, arrives in the disputed Province to establish his first diplomatic contacts in sight of a final agreement on Kosovo's status. On the 21st and 22nd of November he meets the Albanian and Serb leaders separately before going to Serbia, Macedonia and Albania.
- On the 16th of November, the trial of the former Yugoslavian President, Slobodan Milosevic is adjourned for health reasons. On the 29th of November, Milosevic and his lawyers oppose the attempt of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to speed up the trial by separating accusations linked to the Kosovo conflict from those concerning the conflicts in Bosnia and Croatia.
- On the 30th of November, the ICTY recognises Fatmir Limaj and Isak Musliu, commanders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK), as not guilty of the accusations they were charged with, which related to the crimes in Kosovo in 1998, and orders their release. On the other hand, Haradin Bala, another UCK commander, guard in the prison of Lapusnik is recognised guilty of tortures, cruel treatments and murder and is sentenced to 13 years in prison.

Macedonia

- On the 9th of November, the Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn, declares that the European Commission has recommended granting Macedonia the candidate country status for

EU membership, without giving a date for the opening of negotiations all at once. The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomes the inclusion in the political criteria of the need to resolve the issue of the name "Macedonia".

Greece

- On the 2nd of November, 12 illegal immigrants die in the shipwreck of their boat, as they were crossing a narrow bottleneck between the port of Cesme (Turkey) and the Greek island of Chios. On the 18th of November, the Greek coast guards arrest 122 illegal immigrants on the island of Cythère (South West), where they had recently disembarked.
- From the 18th to the 20th of November, the representatives of 77 communist and labour parties from 65 countries get together in Athens to debate on "modern tendencies of capitalism and the alternative communist solution".

Cyprus

- On the 21st of November, Dervis Eroglu, leader of the main centre right opposition party, the National Unity Party (UBP), resigns to leave his place to younger people.
- On the 24th of November, authorities of the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) start to dismantle the roadblock which divided the capital Nicosia for 40 years. On the 28th of November, while the Greek authorities on the island gave the authorisation for reopening, they change opinion on the pretext that the TRNC forces were advancing beyond the ceasefire line.

Turkey

- On the 9th of November, the European Commission (EC), in its annual follow-up report on future enlargements, alerts Turkey of the unacceptable slowness of its political reforms during the year 2005 and the deplorable human rights situation, including the discrimination towards women, Kurds and religious minorities. The EC requests immediate action to put an end to torture and other abuses within two years. As per the economic criteria for entry, the EC decides to grant Turkey the status of "viable market economy", an impor-

tant prerequisite for joining the EU. On the 23rd of November, the Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn, asks Turkey to ratify and implement the Ankara protocol, which would allow the expansion of its current customs union with the EU to the ten new EU member states, including the Republic of Cyprus and to abolish the restrictions imposed to Greek Cypriot boats disembarking in Turkish ports.

- On the 9th of November, a bomb explodes in the bookshop of a convicted member of PKK, in the Kurdish city of Semdinli, causing one death and 12 injured. Protests break out after the three people responsible for the attack are arrested and identified as police intelligence agents, inducing fear of the return of extrajudicial assassinations by the security forces, carried out at the beginning of the 90's. At least 28 soldiers and 7 Kurd rebels are killed during clashes between the army and the People's Defence Force (HPG) together with the PKK during the course of the month.

- On the 10th of November, the Human Rights European Court, which does not consider the Turkish ban on wearing the islamic headscarf in universities in order to preserve the secular character of academic institutions as a human rights violation, rejects the appeal of the student Leyla Sahin, expelled from the university of Istanbul in 1998 for wearing the headscarf.

- On the 12th of November, the Pro-European Democratic Society Movement (DTH) lead by Leyla Zana, registers with the Minister of Home Affairs as a political party under the name of Democratic Society Party (DTP). On the 19th of November, the Democratic People's Party (Dehap) dissolves in order to join the DTP.

- On the 15th of November, the press agency *Anatolia* reports that two tutors of law at the University of Marmara in Istanbul are wanted for "encouraging hate and hostility" for having stated in November 2004, in a report for the Consultative Council which works for the government, that Turkish authorities should give more rights to minorities. On the 16th of November, the Supreme Court of Appeal confirms the journalist Burak Bekdil's conviction to 20 months in prison, found guilty of insulting state institutions by declaring that

ordinary people do not have much chance of receiving a fair trial in Turkey. On the 18th of November, the Turkish editor Fatih Tas declares that the government searched his publishing house Aram Publisher for having marketed a book that criticised Turkish identity, the State, the army as well as the founder of the republic, Kemal Atatürk.

- On the 16th of November, the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan boycotts a press conference with the Danish Prime Minister, after he rejected, in name of freedom of expression, the Turkish request to ban the pro-Kurdish television channel Roj-TV in Denmark, which according to Turkey supports the PKK.

- On the 19th November, the police arrests a father and his son in the city of Konya, suspected of being members of Al-Qaeda.

Syria

- On the 2nd of November, in order to mark the Muslim celebration of the Aïd al-Fitr day (the end of Ramadan), President Bashar al-Assad grants amnesty to 190 political prisoners, amongst which are opinion prisoners, including the human rights lawyer Mohammed Ra'dun, leader of the Arab Human Rights Organisations in Syria, imprisoned since May.

- On the 7th of November, Syria confirms that the Enquiry Commission on the assassination of the Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri summoned 6 Syrian officials, without specifying their names. According to the Arab newspaper based in London, *Al-Hayat*, these people are General Asef Shawkat, chief of Syrian military intelligence services and brother in law of the Syrian President; Major General Rustom Ghazaleh, chief of military intelligence services in Jordan at the time of Hariri's assassination and his assistant, General Jameh; Major General Bahjat Suleiman, former chief of internal intelligence; General Abdul Karim Abbas, a member of the Palestinian branch of the Syrian general intelligence service and general Zafer Youssef, an intelligence services official. On the 9th of November, the chief of the Syrian enquiry Commission on the assassination, Ghada Murad declares that he started to interrogate the six people and has

forbidden them to leave the country. On the 10th of November, the Syrian President al-Assad declares that his country is ready to cooperate with the commission, as long as it is not detrimental to Syria. However, he adds that no matter how many efforts Syria makes to cooperate, she will always be accused of not making enough. Finally, Assad accuses Lebanon of conspiring against Syria and describes the Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora "as a slave of slaves" referring to his close connection with Hariri's son, Saad al-Hariri and to the connections of the Hariri family with the French President Jacques Chirac and the Saudi Royal Family. On the 25th of November, Syria accepts that the 6 Syrian officials be interrogated in Vienna by the Mehlis Commission, after having received guarantees for their rights and for the respect of Syrian sovereignty. On the 27th of November, the Syrian television transmits an interview with Husam Taher Hussam, a former Syrian intelligence agent in Lebanon, who accuses Lebanese authorities of torturing him and paying him to make a false testimony to the Mehlis commission against General Shawkat and Colonel Maher al-Assad, chief of the civil guard and brother of the President.

Lebanon

- On the 21st of November, Hezbollah and the Israeli army confront each other at their common border in the South of Lebanon. Four fighters die and 11 Israeli soldiers are injured. On the 23rd of November, clashes break out after an Israeli plane dropped thousands of sheets of paper below Amman and in the South of Lebanon which said that Hezbollah is instrumentalised by Syria and Iran and causes considerable damages in Lebanon.

Jordan

- On the 9th of November, 57 people, mainly Jordanians and Palestinians, including major-general Bashir Nafeh, chief of West Bank's military intelligence services, lose their lives in four suicide attacks organised by Iraqis in three hotels of the Jordanian capital. On the 10th of November, in a statement on the internet, the Al-Qaeda Organisation

for the holy war in Iraq and its leader, the Jordanian Abu Misab Zarqawi, claim responsibility for the attacks. Abu Misab Zarqawi accuses Jordan of being a "backyard for the enemies of faith, the Jews and crusaders" and warns the United States that its "backyards" are within attacking distance. On the 10th and 11th of November, thousands of Jordanians demonstrate in Amman to protest against the attacks of Zarqawi. On the 11th of November, Jordanian police announce they have arrested 120 people, predominantly Iraqis and Jordanians.

- On the 16th of November, King Abdullah dissolves the Senate (Higher House) and appoints a new one on the following day.

- On the 16th of November, the Chief of the Royal Hashemite Court, Faysal Akif al-Fayiz, resigns and is replaced by Salim al-Turk. In a series of governmental changes, nine royal councillors resign, including the Director of National Security Sa'd Khayr, who is replaced by Marouf Bakhth. On the 24th of November, King Abdullah appoints Bakhth as the new Prime Minister. On the 27th of November the new government comes into power.

Egypt

- On the 9th, the 15th, the 20th and the 26th of November, the first two rounds of legislative elections take place in 17 electoral constituencies; the last round is planned for the 1st of December. The 26th of November is marked by violence and a great number of arrests. Two people die and over 800 members of the Muslim Brothers are arrested, as the police intervene to put an end to confrontations amongst supporters of rival candidates.

Libya

- On the 15th of November, the Supreme Court of Libya postpones the ruling on the appeal of five Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian doctor to the 31st of January, in order to leave extra time for the defence. They were sentenced to death for having deliberately infected children with HIV, according to the accusation. On the 29th of November, the Libyan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abderrahman Chalgham, declara-

res to the Bulgarian press that the death sentences could be "lifted" in exchange for a humanitarian aid to the families affected.

Algeria

- On the first of November, the Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika decides, on the day of the 51st anniversary of the start of the independence war, to pardon 6,778 convicted detainees and to grant partial sentence discounts.

- On the 24th of November, the partial elections in Kabylia take place, which put an end to a 3-year crisis. Partial elections consolidate the local pre-eminence of two main opposition parties, the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) and the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), despite the breakthrough of the National Liberation Front (only ex-party in power).

Tunisia

- From the 16th to the 18th of November, the second phase of the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is held in Tunis. Amongst other things, this Summit intends to evaluate progress with regards to the reduction of the "digital gap" between industrialised and developing countries from now to 2015. Human rights international and Tunisian organisations criticise human rights violations at the dawn of the WSIS, the participation of the government to the WSIS and deplore that the Summit was organised in Tunisia, where the liberties defended by the UN are scorned.

Morocco

- On the 18th of November, King Mohammed VI grants pardon to 10,000 detainees, including 336 foreigners, on the day of the 50th anniversary of Morocco's independence.

- On the 25th of November, Moroccan authorities keep 17 radical islamists suspected of being members of an Al-Qaeda cell and accused of organising attacks in Morocco in detention.

European Union

- On the 9th of November, the President of the European Commission re-

organises some high ranking administrative positions in the European Commission (EC), reinforcing the presence of liberal Anglophones and reducing the Franco-German influence further.

- On the 8th of November, the 25 Member states' Ministers of Finance reject the EC proposal asking the States to make an annual declaration showing that the EU funds administered by the states (over 80%) have been spent correctly. However, they commit to fight against fraud and squandering of EU expenditures in their countries. On the 15th of November, for the eleventh consecutive year, the European Court of Accounts refuses to certify the EU budgetary accounts because of irregularities. The Court's report especially highlights the weaknesses in accounts related to expenses in the agricultural, regional development, overseas aid and research areas. However, the Court indicates for the first time, that the efforts agreed by the EC and the member States to implement the Integrated System of Management and Control (SIGC), which covers 59% of agricultural expenses, has effectively reduced the risk of irregular expenditure. The report criticises the EU for its slowness in implementing a new accounting system.

- On the 21st of November, the Ministers of Defence voluntarily introduce a code of conduct for the liberalisation of defence markets through which they accept to open their defence industry to competition with other EU countries' markets. The EC had proposed a more restrictive agreement to accelerate the development of a Pan European Defence Industry.

- On the 22nd of November, the Court of Justice of European Communities (CJEC) General Lawyer decides to look into the European Parliament request of legalising the EU – United States agreement to anticipate the forwarding of transatlantic flights passengers' personal data to American authorities.

- From the 22nd to the 24th of November, during a meeting between Ministers of Agriculture in Brussels, it is decided to reform the EU sugar system which has remained unchanged for 40 years. Amongst other things, they establish a 36% reduction in the guaranteed price of sugar over 4 years, a partial

compensation to farmers affected and financial assistance to ACP countries influenced by the reform.

- On the 23rd of November, the EC puts forward a statement clarifying its interpretation of the 13th of September ECJ decision, which, with regards to the environment protection by criminal law, points out the Communities competences and not the Union's. The EC, for which the scope of this ruling largely surpasses the environmental domain, consequently lists 8 "EU crimes" in its statement. These will have to be prosecuted by the criminal law of the member States, on the basis that penalties are established by the EU and not on a national level.

December 2005

Ante Gotovina, the war criminal most wanted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), is arrested by the Spanish police in the Canary Islands. The legislative elections in Egypt mark the victory of President Mubarak's party, but also mark the significant progress of the Muslim Brothers on the political scene. ETA, the Basque terrorist group, explodes 5 bombs on motorways surrounding Madrid. In Italy, proportional representation is reintroduced by the total number of seats that will be in power during the legislative elections in April 2006. During the European Summit, the EU decides to grant Macedonia the status of "candidate country for membership" and introduces, after months of negotiations, the budget for 2007-20013. During the WTO conference in Hong Kong, the EU, pressurised by the G-20, agrees to make concessions with regards to agricultural products export subsidies. During the course of the month of December, 38 soldiers are killed in a confrontation with Kurdish rebel groups in Eastern Turkey. The UN Enquiry Commission on the Assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri presents its last report to the Security Council which states that new evidence supports the implication of high ranking Syrian leaders and the complicity of their Lebanese colleagues in the assassination of Hariri.

Portugal

- On the 7th of December, the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* affirms that some 59 flights, chartered by the American secret services (CIA) illegally carrying alleged terrorists, sometimes to third countries that practice torture, have had to stop over in Portuguese airports since June 2002. On the 13th of December, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Diogo Freitas do Amaral, makes the conclusions of a Portuguese government enquiry public, declaring that there is no evidence to support this.

Spain

- On the 6th of December, ETA, the Basque terrorist group, explodes 5 bombs on two motorways surrounding Madrid, causing significant traffic jams. A sixth bomb explodes in a post office in Alsasua in the Navarra region, without causing any injuries. The Santander airport is closed because of a bomb alert, but there are no explosions. On the 7th of December, the French police arrest Jon Koldobika Garmendia Martínez in the North of France, as he is suspected of being a member of the Donosti union, one of ETA's best organised commando groups. On the 28th of December, two other ETA suspects, Mikel Larrañaga Altuna and Arnaltz Gisasola Olaeta, are arrested in France. On the 30th of December, the High Court convicts Diego Ugarte López de Arkaute to 100 years and three months of prison for the murder of the Basque provincial Secretary General from the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party, Fernando Buesa and that of his body guard in 2000.

- On the 9th of December, 7 Algerians are arrested in the province of Malaga, suspected of giving logistics and financial support to the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which is thought to be connected to Al-Qaeda. On the 19th of December, the Home Affairs Minister José Antonio Alonso, announces the arrest of 15 people members of a group led by the Iraqi Abu Sufian and suspected of employing radical islamists for the insurrection in Iraq. Several former imams of Spanish mosques are members of this group.

France

- On the first of December, following riots in the French suburbs from October to November, the Prime Minister launches a “great national campaign” against discrimination and declares that 2006 will be the “year of equal opportunities”. Amongst measures announced by Villepin, there are fines of 25,000 euros for companies that are found guilty of discrimination, new encouragements for businesses establishing themselves in poor areas and which employ young people and finally “parental responsibility contracts” which will deprive parents who authorise their children to be absent from school of family allowance.
- On the first of December, 10 years after his arrest in the United Kingdom, the Algerian Rachid Ramda, suspected of being involved in the Paris terrorist attacks in 1995, is extradited to France. On the 7th of December his trial for “criminal association with a terrorist organisation” starts.
- On the 9th of December, President Jacques Chirac orders the revision of a controversial law made in February, which requests that history school books recognise the positive role of French colonisation, especially in Northern Africa. The left-wing opposition and the country’s Muslim leaders criticise this law and fear that it might contribute to the alienation of minorities from former French colonies.
- From the 12th to the 15th of December, in a preventive action to stop all potential terrorist acts during the Christmas period, the police arrest 28 men of Northern African origins in the Parisian region. Amongst these is the Franco-Algerian Ouasini Cherifi, sentenced to 5 years of prison in 2002 for using a false passport and released in 2004. During raids in the Parisian suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois, policemen lay their hands on weapons and materials used to make bombs. On the 16th of December, judicial investigations start against 11 people arrested.
- On the 15th of December, the trial of 24 alleged members of the Islamist Chechen cell in France starts, accused of terrorism, forgery of official documents or illegal residence.
- On the 22nd of December, the anti-terrorist law, introduced following the

London attacks in July, is approved by the French Assembly. The opposition Socialist Party declares that it will dispute the law within the Constitutional Council. The law establishes that telephone and Internet data will be withheld for one year, the police supervision of people who have resided in countries that have terrorist training camps, stricter sentences for those guilty of terrorism or who support it, the installation of cameras in sensitive locations and an increase from 4 to 6 days of preventive detention of terrorist suspects prior to any charge that is made against them.

Italy

- On the 11th of December, two North Africans are expelled from the country under the new anti-terrorist measures.
- On the 13th of December, the European Commission launches a legal proceeding against Italy, accused of protectionism for having prevented the recovery of Italian banks through foreign banks. On the 19th of December, the Governor of the Bank of Italy, Antonio Fazio, resigns under increasing pressures from the Italian government. On the 28th of December, President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi signs new legislations which intend to limit the powers of the Bank of Italy’s Governor by establishing a six year limited term in office, which is only renewable once. On the 29th of December, Mario Draghi, Vice-President of the investment bank Goldman Sachs and former General Director of the Italian Treasury (1991-2001), is appointed as governor by the government.
- On the 14th of December, the Senate (Higher House) approves the controversial electoral law which reintroduces proportional representation for the totality of seats which will be in power in the legislative elections in March 2006. Romano Prodi, leader of the centre-left opposition condemns this law as it is intended for maintaining Silvio Berlusconi’s current coalition in power.
- On the 23rd of December, a court of Milan issues European arrest warrants against 22 CIA agents, suspected of having kidnapped the Egyptian imam Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr in Milan in 2003, before taking him to Egypt where he complains of having been tortured.

- On the 29th of December, the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* announces that Berlusconi is the object of a judicial enquiry concerning allegations according to which he has bribed his English lawyer, David Mills, to present false evidence in two trials in which Berlusconi or one of his companies were involved.

Malta

- On the 2nd of December, the Minister of Justice announces that the United States and The Netherlands suggested that Malta could welcome thirty refugees that arrive on the island every year. The Maltese government recently launched an appeal to other countries in the world, especially to those in the European Union, to help Malta resolve immigration problems which it struggles to confront.

Croatia

- On the 7th of December, Ante Gotovina, the most wanted war criminal by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), is arrested by the Spanish police in the Canary Islands. On the 10th of December, he is transferred to the ICTY, who was searching for him since July 2001 and on the 12th he pleads not guilty of murder, persecution and deportation in relation to the Croatian military offensive against the Serbs of Krajina in 1995. On the 11th of December, thousands of Croats, who see Gotovina as a war hero, get together in the city of Split and request that he is provisionally released from the ICTY and that he is judged in Croatia.
- On the 7th of December, a Bosnian-Croatian, member of the armed forces’ Jockers Unit (Dzorkeri) from the Croatian Community in Herceg-Bosna, known as the Croatian Defence Council, Miroslav Bralo, is sentenced by the ICTY to 20 years in prison for murder, rape, torture, illegal confinements and inhuman treatments against Bosnian Muslim civilians, including children, in the centre of Bosnia in 1993.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- On the 8th of December, Gojko Janjovic, a Serb-Bosnian leader of a para-

military unit which invaded the city of Foca half way through 1992 and contributed to the establishment of "rape camps", is transferred to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), in the war crimes division of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Tribunal.

- On the 15th of December, the direction committee of the Peace Implementation Council for Bosnia-Herzegovina approves the nomination of Christian Schwarz-Schilling, who worked as an international mediator for the Croatian-Muslim Federation and for the Sprska Republic, as High Representative of the International Community, in succession to Lord Paddy Ashdown. On the 31st of January 2006 he will take up his post.
- On the 28th of December, the Sprska Republic introduces a law that abolishes its Ministry of Defence and of the Army. This law, which will come into force on the first of January 2006, is part of a series of reforms transmitting the authority of military affairs to the central government.

Serbia and Montenegro

- On the 9th of December, judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), in charge of the trial of the former Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic, decide to not order the British Prime Minister Tony Blair and the former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder to testify or to hold an interview before testifying, as requested by the lawyer responsible for Milosevic's defence.
- On the 13th of December, a Serb court gives sentences going from 5 to 20 years in prison for 14 former members of the Serb militia for having assassinated 200 Croatian prisoners of war near the Croatian city of Vukovar in November 1991.
- On the 20th of December, the trial of 5 former members of the paramilitary police "Scorpions" starts, accused of having killed 6 Muslims in the city of Srebrenica in July 2005. They were arrested in October, following the broadcast of a video showing the murders on Serb television in June. On the 20th of December, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) formally establishes the Ministries of Home Affairs and Justice in the

province of Kosovo conferring powers to them for which the UN was responsible for up to this moment. On the following day, the Serb government describes the creation of these two ministries as non-political, dangerous and reckless.

Macedonia

- During the European Summit in Brussels on the 15th and 16th of December, the 25 EU members decide to grant Macedonia the status of candidate country.
- On the 20th of December, the newly created party, the Party for Democratic Future (PAD), holds its first Assembly in Tetova and elects the former Tetova mayor, Alaidin Demiri, as president and Xhemel Abdiu as secretary general.

Greece

- On the 12th of December, a bomb explodes outside the Ministry of Economy in Athens, slightly injuring three people. The Revolutionary Combat, a radical left-wing group, claims responsibility for this attack. On the 22nd of December, a bomb explodes outside the Ministry of Development.
- On the 25th of December, the Minister of Justice decides to open an enquiry on allegations regarding the chief of the English Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) in Athens as well as 15 Greek officials. According to these claims they have declared themselves guilty of abduction and torture against 28 Pakistani terrorist suspects in the London attacks of July 7th.

Cyprus

- On the 14th of December, the United Nations Security Council introduces resolution 1642 (2005), which extends the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) to the 15th of June 2006.
- On the 19th of December, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) ratifies a controversial law on property, which allows Greek Cypriots to request the restitution of their goods lost during the Turkish invasion in 1974. On the 22nd of December, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) declares that Turkey is guilty of violating hu-

man rights for having prevented Greek Cypriots from accessing their properties in the TRNC. The ECHR sentences Turkey to pay compensations.

- On the 27th of December, the *Financial Times* reports that the EU has definitely abandoned its attempt to grant an allowance to the TRNC, because of the systematic opposition of the Greek-Cypriot government. Consequently, 120 million euros of the 259 million euros forecast for 2005, will no longer be paid to the TRNC.

Turkey

- During the month of December, 38 soldiers are killed in the east of the country during clashes with the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and the Kurdish People Defence Forces (HPG).
- On the 2nd of December, the *BBC* reports that 5 journalists are accused of having insulted the judicial power for applying law 301, a controversial law from the new criminal code, which convicts those who insult the Turkish identity and the organs of the State. On the 15th of December, the European Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn declares that the trial of the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk, is a trial testing Turkey's commitment in favour of the freedom of expression. The writer was accused of having insulted Turkish identity in an article published in the Swiss newspaper *Das Magazin*, in which he criticises Turkish silence on the death of thousands of Armenians and Kurds. On the 16th of December, the trial is adjourned to February 2006 in order to allow the Ministry of Justice to decide whether the trial will be carried out under the former criminal code or under the recently revised one. On the 17th of December, the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan accuses the EU of interfering with justice in order to influence the result of Pamuk's trial. On the 28th of December, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül, admits that the accusations against Pamuk have damaged Turkey's image and adds that the laws limiting freedom of expression could be modified. On the 26th of December, because of the same law 301, the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, editor of *Agos* newspaper, is wanted for having criticised her 6 month long sentence, re-

ceived in October for having insulted Turkish identity.

Syria

- On the 4th of December, Syrian Security forces and Islamist militants, members of the Jund al-Sham (Soldiers of the Levant), confront one another in the city of Alep, causing the death of two people on the Islamist front. The Jund al-Sham group was established in Afghanistan by Syrian, Palestinian and Jordanian fighters and was connected to Abu Misab Zarqawi, leader of the Al-Qaeda organisation for the Holy War in Iraq. This group, which claimed responsibility for the attacks of October 2004 in Sinai and for the attack in the theatre of Qatar in March, is suspected of planning further attacks in Damascus. On the 8th of December, 8 militants are killed in clashes with security forces in a city at the North East of Maarrat al-Numan.
- On the 7th of December, during the Organisation of the Islamic Conference Summit in Saudi Arabia, the issue of re-opening bilateral peace negotiations between Syria and Israel is approached. This is thanks to the unexpected initiative advanced by the Saudi Arabian Prince Abu Misab Zarqawi in 2002, to re-launch the proposal for global peace in the Middle East.
- On the 21st of December, the United Nations Security Council approves resolution 1648 (2005) which extends the Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF) mandate by six months. The force is stationed on the border between Israel and Syria on the Golan Heights.
- On the 30th of December, former Vice-President Abdel Halim Khaddam, who resigned in June and moved to France, declares in an interview broadcast by the Pan Arab Satellite Al-Arabiya, that the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad personally threatened the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, a few months before his assassination. On the 31st of December, the People's Assembly (unicameral), votes in favour of judicial proceedings against Khaddam for high treason.

Lebanon

- On the 5th of December, a dozen bodies are exhumed from two mass gra-

ves in the Bekaa Valley, near the city of Anjar, predominantly of Armenian ethnicity. Syrian intelligence services were based here until their withdrawal last April, but the Syrian government denies its awareness of the existence of the mass graves and declares that the bodies date back to the Lebanese Civil War.

- On the 12th of December, the politician Jibrán Tuéni, both writer and editor of the liberal newspaper *An Nahar*, known for its criticisms of Syria, is assassinated in a bomb attack in an Eastern suburb of Beirut (Mkallés), less than 24 hours from his return from France, where he took shelter after receiving some death threats. Even though an unknown group named Strugglers for the Unity and Freedom in al-Sham, claims responsibility for the attack perpetrated against Mkallés for having spread "poison and lies", the majority of Lebanese politicians accuse Syria.

- On the 12th of December, Detlev Mehlis, President of the United Nations Enquiry Commission on the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, presents his last report to the Security Council where he states that new evidence confirms the implication of Syrian High Officials and the complicity of their Lebanese colleagues in the assassination of Hariri. Mehlis also accuses Syria of attempting to block his investigation. Mehlis presents a list of 19 suspects, amongst which are 6 Syrians, of which 5 were interrogated in Vienna on the 5th of December. On the 15th of December, the Security Council introduces Resolution 1644 (2005), extending the Enquiry Commission mandate to the 15th of June 2006 and declares the Council's concerns on the Syrian lack of cooperation with the Commission. On the request of the Lebanese government, the Commission accepts the extension of its mandate to other terrorist attacks perpetrated in Lebanon since the failed attempt to assassinate the former Economy Minister Marwan Hamadeh, on the first of October 2004. On the 29th of December, the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan announces the nomination of the Belgian Prosecutor Serge Brammertz, expected to succeed Mehlis who does not wish to preside the Commission for the next 6 months.

Jordan

- On the 18th of December, the National Security Court sentences the Jordanian Abu Misab Zarqawi, leader of the Al-Qaeda Organisation for the Holy War in Iraq and two of his associates, Ismail Abu-Udah and Fahd Nouman al-Fahaiqi, to death by hanging for the missed bomb attack on the Jordanian border passage of Al-Karamah, at the border with Iraq in December 2004. The first two are sentenced in absence.
- On the 20th of December, a royal decree appoints Major General Mohammed al-Dhahabi as General Director of the Department of General Intelligence.

Egypt

- On the 7th of December, the legislative elections to allocate 444 seats out of 454 present in the People's Assembly (unicameral), which spread over a month, finish. The last round of elections is marked by violence between the electors and the police in Kafr el-Shaik amongst other places, which cause 60 injured and one death. According to the Muslim Brothers, confrontations have broken out in the entire country after the police prevented electors from accessing the polling stations. On the 7th of December, 5 people die in the Nile delta after being shot by the police. According to the Egyptian Human Rights Organisation, on that day 355 polling stations are closed by the security forces. President Mubarak's National Democratic Party (PDN) remains the main party in the country with 311 seats, 77 less compared with the elections in 2000. On the other hand, the Muslim Brothers, an illegal but tolerated organisation, which put themselves forward as independents, increase their representation sixfold winning 88 seats, forming the greatest opposition group in the Assembly. The Muslim Brothers announce that they will use their presence to put pressure for the abolition of laws restricting the activities of the opposition groups, which oblige the Muslim Brothers to work illegally. However, despite the progress of the opposition in the elections, the PDN managed to gather 3/4 of the votes necessary to amend the constitution. On the 31st of December, the Prime Minister Ahmad Mah-

mud Mohammed Nazif's new government takes the oath.

- On the 24th of December, Ayman Nur, the leader of a branch of the opposition party Al Ghad, is sentenced to 5 years in prison for having falsified signatures in order to obtain recognition of his party for the presidential election of September 2005. On the same day, the White House spokesman, Scott McClellan, declares that this conviction calls into question the Egyptian commitment to democracy, freedom and the state of law and asks the Egyptian government to release Nur.
- On the 30th of December, at least 20 Sudanese die as the Egyptian anti-riot police expel 2,000 refugees from their camp, which they built in front of the United Nations High Commissioner for the Refugees (UNHCR) in Cairo in protest against their treatment by the UNHCR.

Libya

- On the 22nd of December, Libyan negotiators, Americans and Europeans agreed on the establishment of a fund to help the families of 400 Libyan children infected with the AIDS virus. On the 25th of December, the Supreme Court decides that the 5 Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian doctor, sentenced to death in May 2004 for having infected these children, have to be juggled once again by the criminal court of Benghazi, because of irregularities in their trial.

Tunisia

- On the 15th of December, the European Parliament (EP) calls on Tunisia to respect its "commitments relating to fundamental freedoms, especially to the freedom of expression and association" in a resolution. The EP requests that the Council and the European Community reacts with regards to the Association Agreement linking the EU to Tunisia.

Algeria

- On the 5th of December, Algerian authorities start a large operation escorting several hundreds of illegal African immigrants, stationed in the frontier zone of Morocco back to the border. On the

19th and 20th of December, the authorities repatriate 556 illegal Africans by plane.

- On the 5th of December, the new law on hydrocarbons, which puts an end to the nationalisation of this market sector, comes into force with the official creation of the Agency for Hydrocarbons Resources Valorisation (Alnaft) and the Regulatory Agency for Hydrocarbons (ARH), both under the authority of the Minister of Energy and Mines.
- On the 12th of December, the Ministers of Defence of the 5+5 Group, meet in Alger. The United States help organising this meeting. Thanks to a first balance considered to be very satisfactory, the Defence Ministers of the 5+5 group (10 countries from Southern Europe and Maghreb), in view of 2006, decide to reinforce their cooperation programmes for aerial and maritime surveillance in the Mediterranean against the terrorism phenomenon and illegal immigration.

Morocco

- On the 30th of December, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs summons the Moroccan ambassador in order to complain on the flood of illegal immigrants coming from Morocco and asks Rabat to increase its cooperation to fight against illegal immigration.

European Union

- On the first of December, the European Central Bank decides to increase the interest rate by a quarter, going up to 2.25% because of inflationary pressure.
- On the 2nd of December, the Ministers of Home Affairs introduce a directive obliging telecommunication services to safeguard telephonic and email data for six months, so that they can be employed in terrorist investigations and serious crimes. On the 14th of December, the European Parliament approves the directive by 378 votes to 197.
- On the 13th of December, the Ministers of Industry introduce a regulation on the registration, the evaluation and the authorisation of chemical products (REACH), which intends to protect health and the environment more efficiently. From 2007, this directive will oblige

companies to test chemical products imported into the EU in quantities over a ton per year. The results of these tests will have to be recorded in the new European Agency for Chemical Products, which has the power to prevent any importation. The chemical industries welcome the directive while environmentalists find it too flexible.

- From the 13th to the 18th of December, during the World Trade Organisation Conference (WTO), the 25 Union countries have to confront the increasing pressure of the G20. The G20 represents developing countries that export agricultural products, including Brazil, India and Southern Africa and is tacitly supported by the United States, which requests that the EU abolishes subsidies for the export of agricultural products. Finally, the Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson accepts measures to drastically reduce subsidies for export from now to 2010 and to abolish them in 2013.

- From the 15th to the 17th of December, during the European Summit, State and Government Leaders introduce the budget for 2007-2013. The agreement reached after several months of negotiations are made after which the English government accepts a cumulative reduction of 10.5 billion euros of its rebate and after that the French government approves a complete revision of the budget from 2008, including the budget of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The total budget amounts to 862.4 billion euros, which represents 1.045% of the EU global GNP. The new German Chancellor played a significant role in helping to obtain the agreement, by convincing France to accept a complete revision of all aspects of the budget, including the CAP.

- From the 19th to the 22nd of December, the Ministers for Fishing introduce a fishing agreement for 2006, which reduces the catching of certain species up to 15% and reduces the number of fishing days by 5%. The environmentalists, who requested a total ban on cod fishing so that the stocks could regenerate, regret that the Ministers decided to reduce it by only 15%.
- On the 28th of December, the European Space Agency launches the satellite GIOVE-A from Baykonur to Kazakhstan, a test satellite for the Galileo

civil network, which will include 30 satellites and will compete with the American GPS (Global Positioning System).

Arab League

- On the 27th of December, the Arab League regional Parliament on an interim basis holds its inaugurating session in Cairo. Mohammad Jassim al-Saqr, a liberal Kuwaiti, is elected as president of the Parliament, which will be based in Syria and will meet up twice a year in order to write up the agreements necessary for the creation of a permanent legislation from now until 2011.

Gibraltar and Western Sahara

Gibraltar

- On the 8th of January, the Commander of English forces in Gibraltar, David White, is found dead in his residence's swimming pool. White was under police investigation for "personal affairs" and was recalled to the United Kingdom while he waited for the results of the investigation.

Western Sahara

- On the 28th of April, the UN Security Council, introduces Resolution 1598 (2005), extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until the 31st of October. The resolution requests the Polisario Front to immediately release all Moroccan war prisoners in line with international humanitarian rights and asks Polisario and Morocco to continue their cooperation with the International Red Cross Committee, in order to resolve the fate of people of whom there is no news since the beginning of the conflict.

- On the 24th of June, *The Middle East International* reports that some Saharians living under Moroccan law in Western Sahara and Southern Morocco, at the end of May and the beginning of June, have demonstrated against the transfer of a Sahraoui prisoner to Laayoun, the commercial capital of Western Sahara. The newspaper describes this demonstration against Moroccan domination as being political.

- On the 18th of August, the Polisario Front releases 404 Moroccan war prisoners, captured between 1975 and 1991, declaring that it was a political and humanitarian measure which intended to put an end to the conflict with Morocco.

- On the 29th of August, the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, appoints Peter Van Walsum from The Netherlands as personal envoy for Western Sahara, in replacement of Alvaro De Soto. According to the *Middle East Journal*, this nomination was welcome by the Moroccan part but it had a cold reception from the Polisario Front.

- On the 28th of April, the UN Security Council, introduces Resolution 1634 (2005), extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until the 30th of April 2006. The Resolution asks the Polisario Front and Morocco to continue their cooperation with the Red Cross International Committee.

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