

Annual report 2014/15

with accounts



Crisis Action

Helping organisations work
together to protect civilians
from armed conflict

Crisis Action

We work for and with organisations and individuals across civil society who act to protect civilians from armed conflict.

We are a catalyst and convenor of joint action, whose behind-the-scenes work enables coalitions to act quickly and effectively. As a coordinating body we seek no public profile or media spotlight; it is the voice of the coalition that matters.

We are an international organisation whose only agenda is the protection of civilians. We are open about our objectives, welcoming scrutiny from anyone who wishes to understand who we are and what we do.

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Chair's report



Crisis Action is a rare beast because so much of what it does is below the radar. The annual report is one moment when we get to celebrate the success and acknowledge the hard work of the talented staff that makes up this small, but uniquely influential organisation.

Numbering 35 in ten locations around the world, the team works tirelessly behind the scenes to convene and support effective coalitions to protect civilians in conflict. Their lack of ego makes their efforts particularly notable in this era of digital self-promotion.

For nine exceptional years Crisis Action's inimitable Executive Director Gemma Mortensen modelled this selflessness and ruthlessly strategic focus. Gemma moved on to take up a new challenge at Yale University as one of their incoming World Fellows in August. Under Gemma's leadership, Crisis Action established itself as one of the most effective, professional and respected organisations in the field. We warmly thank her for all she has done for us and wish her every joy and success.

Following a rigorous global recruitment, over 130 external applications and five rounds of interviews, it was with great pleasure that the Board unanimously agreed to appoint Andrew Hudson as Crisis Action's next Executive Director. Having demonstrated his capabilities as New York Director, Deputy and Acting Executive Director, Andrew impressed us with his vision for Crisis Action's future, his dynamism, clear sightedness, and strategic campaigning nous. He understands the model innately, and we are confident that he will lead the next phase of work brilliantly.

Crisis Action is committed to deploying resources where we can make the biggest difference for civilians. 2014/15 saw the opening of our second sub-Saharan office – in Johannesburg, South Africa - along with recruitment of additional resources in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (home of the African Union). We also moved our Middle East and North Africa office from Cairo to Beirut, and appointed an India expert as our new Emerging Powers Coordinator.

The organisation remains in good financial health. The budget for 2014/15 grew by 26%, our expenditure was within budget at £2.77 million, and cash reserves are £1 million. We continue to diversify our sources, securing support from the Irish and Swedish Governments last year to add to funding from Norway and Switzerland. We remain hugely grateful for the longstanding commitment of many of our philanthropic partners, without whom none of this work would be possible.

Crisis Action's partners and allies are at the core of the model. It is our privilege to collaborate with the world's best NGOs and civil society organisations on sharply-focused, creative campaigns that drive bigger and longer-lasting change than anyone could working alone. By curating strategic alliances, uniting unusual voices, and leveraging the talent and resources of many, Crisis Action puts the interests of citizens caught up in conflict on policymakers' agendas, and ensures their needs are taken into account.

I am proud to be Crisis Action's Chair, and grateful to have this opportunity to thank and congratulate all those who have worked with and for us this year.



Jan Egeland
Chair, Crisis Action

Outgoing Executive Director's report



It has been a great privilege to lead Crisis Action over the past six years and to have been part of the organisation's formative years since 2006. I leave immensely proud of what has been achieved so far.

I also leave chastened by the extent to which conflict continues to destroy the lives of innocent men, women and children around the world. I am convinced that Crisis Action is as needed today as the day Guy Hughes, Crisis Action's founder, set out his vision for how Crisis Action could help civil society work together strategically and effectively on conflict. It has been an electrifying experience to see that vision take shape, first alongside my predecessor Brendan Cox and then alongside colleagues who have taken Crisis Action across the world.

Most of all, I leave full of gratitude: for the act of trust that Crisis Action's partners made in us and their phenomenal expertise that drives our collective work; in Crisis Action's team, past and present, whose hard work and talent has made it all possible; to our exceptional Board members who have provided wisdom, encouragement and support at every step

along the way and to our donors, from whom we have learned a great deal as well as benefitted so much from their generosity.

Thank you all for investing your time, energy and resources into ensuring that civil society can speak with one voice when it can make a real difference for vulnerable people trapped in the trauma of conflict. I wish Andrew and you all well in your efforts to make Crisis Action even more effective in the years to come. I will be cheering you on.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gemma Mortensen". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gemma Mortensen
Outgoing Executive Director, Crisis Action

Executive Director's report



I am so excited to lead this wonderful organisation with its unique culture and ability to effect change. The recruitment process for Executive Director was extremely rigorous and provoked deep internal reflection that served to reinforce my conviction that Crisis Action is needed more than ever before.

Now into our second decade of existence, Crisis Action has developed an impressive track record of impact. Nevertheless, conflicts are intensifying and the international community is responding, perhaps, more feebly than ever. The proliferation of conflict and the inept international response is putting civilians in an increasingly precarious situation around the world.

This last year has been another horrific one for civilians caught up in conflict. The Syrian conflict entered its fifth year, more complex than ever, involving proxies and regional powers. Those same powers clashed in Yemen with the same dreadful consequences for men, women and children. The convulsions across the Middle East led to the biggest refugee crisis since World War 2, impacting Europe directly. Terrorism reared its ugly head not only in the Middle East but around the world, notably in Europe and Africa.

Nevertheless, some positives emerged: Palestine joined the International Criminal Court and the specter of accountability may deter future crimes in the region. For the first time elections and a transition of leadership passed peacefully in Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria. World powers successfully negotiated with Iran, which could be a prelude to more diplomatic victories. On Syria, Crisis Action amplified the voices of local heroes who began to take centre stage in the popular imagination. On South Sudan, we helped to highlight the huge economic cost of the war which spurred a ceasefire and tenuous peace agreement. In Burundi, we worked with influential African voices to prevent unrest developing into mass atrocities and all-out war.

Looking forward, as Crisis Action's new Executive Director I will seek to build on Gemma's wonderful legacy by: investing significantly in our Global South engagement so that we become a truly global convener of power networks, and ensuring we act even more nimbly by taking on more emergency responses, where we add significant value.

This vision for Crisis Action ensures both that we stay true to our innovative model, but that we tailor the model where it faces challenges.

Crisis Action must act nimbly and respond quickly to conflicts before and as they break out. Emergencies often present tipping points that are well-suited to being influenced via the coalitions that Crisis Action can build. I am also convinced that the Global South has the best ability to reverse the trend of the international community failing to take consistent action to protect civilians in conflict. Therefore, we must redouble our efforts at engaging with all centres of power around the world.

Crisis Action's most important assets are its irreplaceable model of working behind the scenes to amplify other voices and its team-based organisational culture. They are rare, precious and sometimes difficult to harness. I remain deeply committed to preserving these unusual ways of working. Finally, in order to be more effective, Crisis Action can better employ innovation, creativity, new technology and story-telling.

Gemma is a visionary leader of the highest order and working closely with her was a great privilege. She has left the organisation in exceptional health and I look forward to leading Crisis Action, with our extraordinary mix of wonderful people, onwards and upwards to change the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AH' followed by a stylized flourish.

Andrew Hudson
Incoming Executive Director, Crisis Action

Syria

While the conflict raged on and indiscriminate attacks by all parties to the Syrian conflict caused mounting civilian casualties, the rise of Islamic State distracted international attention from the suffering of ordinary civilians. Crisis Action worked with partners to increase humanitarian access, halt attacks and inspire renewed momentum for peace.



▲ Men search for survivors after heavy shelling in Douma, Damascus. Photo: REUTERS/Bassam Khabieh

As Syria's crisis entered its fourth year, Crisis Action continued to coordinate a global NGO coalition calling for a halt to the bloodshed. Crisis Action succeeded in bringing the heart-wrenching testimonies of local heroes and organisations before policymakers and into the global media spotlight. Despite political breakthroughs on humanitarian access and aid, governments still failed to halt barrel bomb attacks or broker a route to peace.



By 2014, the war between President Bashar al-Assad and a shifting array of rebel groups, which started as a peaceful uprising, had killed over 220,000 people, forced 11.6 million from their homes, and created the worst humanitarian crisis of the 21st century.

The priority for Crisis Action's partners remained securing humanitarian access to people inside Syria. As the warring parties ignored the UN Security Council's February resolution demanding that the Syrian government enable humanitarian aid to reach its people by whatever means possible, Crisis Action took action to increase pressure on the Council and change the debate. This included orchestrating a letter from 37 eminent lawyers, coordinating a private briefing paper by partners on how to improve cross-border access as well as public campaigning by The Syria Campaign calling on the UN to act. The result, in July 2014, was a landmark UN resolution explicitly authorising agencies to cross into Syria without the government's consent. On 24 July, the first UN-marked convoy crossed from Turkey into Syria. Diplomats and UN officials confirmed that Crisis Action's partners and collaborators had played a crucial role in this breakthrough.

Partners' cautious welcome of the resolution, which also highlighted the potential risks, was quoted on page four of the *New York Times*, by *AFP*, the *Guardian*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, and interviews were done with *NPR* and the *BBC*.



▲ Media Coverage of the UN resolution on cross border access

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) initially estimated the resolution could enable the UN and humanitarian agencies to reach up to two million people. However, an increase in indiscriminate aerial bombardment by Assad's forces, and insecurity in rebel-held areas meant convoys still had difficulty getting through. As life grew harsher for ordinary Syrians, and donors struggled to respond, public interest and sympathy waned.

ISIS distracts from ordinary Syrians' suffering

Meanwhile, the media and key UN member states turned their focus to the sudden rise of radical militant group Islamic State (ISIS), whose brutal tactics included highly publicised beheadings of British and American captives. In August 2014, as ISIS fighters took control of northern and eastern Syria, international powers abandoned flagging peace-building efforts to focus on a US-led bombing campaign against ISIS.

With Syria now at the centre of an increasingly complex political landscape, Crisis Action and partners focused on three key advocacy and campaign priorities:

- **Protecting civilians** by sending a clear message to all sides that indiscriminate attacks and blocks to aid would not be tolerated.
- **Strengthening the humanitarian response** by calling for increased aid and resettlement for refugees.
- **Promoting a negotiated political solution** with human rights at its heart.

Calling for action on barrel bombs

In the run up to the UN General Assembly in September 2014 in New York, indiscriminate rocket attacks and government barrel bombs (makeshift missiles filled with explosives, chemicals and nails) were killing more and more civilians.

Crisis Action coordinated the WithSyria coalition of 130 NGOs from around the world to demand an end to indiscriminate attacks. The campaign hinged around a powerful short film, 'In Reverse', which showed the devastating impact of a bomb falling on a schoolyard. Made by award-winning director Matt Stirling, the video was viewed almost three quarters of a million times in its first week and the campaign reached more than 13 million people on social media. An accompanying petition received over 16 thousand signatures.



▲ The film 'In Reverse' was the centre of the WithSyria coalition campaign

The video was covered by *ABC news*, *Huffington Post* (US), *RAI* (Italy), and the *Independent* (UK), and a joint press release signed by 40 partners was quoted by *Al Jazeera*, *Al Khaleej*, *Al Tahrir*, the *Washington Post* and the *BBC*, among others.

Crisis Action organised meetings for partners with key UN figures - including Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson and Syria Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura - and coordinated joint letters urging decision makers to use their speeches at the UN to press for action to protect Syrians. Policymakers praised these successful efforts to push the plight of civilians up the political agenda.

Sharing Syrians' stories

In an effort to shift the prevailing narrative from counter-terror to humanitarian concerns and drive a stronger response, Crisis Action arranged for Syrian medics, aid workers and volunteers to meet international policymakers and tell them about life in a warzone.

In October 2014, Crisis Action partnered with the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), to bring surgeon Dr Abdel Aziz, one of only 30 doctors remaining in the besieged city of Aleppo, to the US to brief politicians and diplomats. Dr Aziz told Staffan de Mistura, Security Council Ambassadors, State Department staff and members of Congress about targeted attacks on hospitals and the impact of barrel bombs.

A second delegation of medics followed in March 2015. Dr Zaher Sahloul, President of SAMS, and Dr Majed, a dentist from the besieged town of Eastern Ghouta, met with representatives from a range of UN Member States, gave a private briefing to the UN Security Council, and were interviewed by the *Associated Press*. In recognition of these efforts to push the plight of Syrians up the agenda, SAMS presented the WithSyria coalition with its 2014 Humanitarian Award.

Crisis Action also collaborated with The Syria Campaign to bring the White Helmets – volunteer rescuers who risk their lives searching bombsites for survivors – to meet senior policymakers in Europe and the US and speak to the media (including CNN). In Brussels, their testimony coincided with the EU unveiling its new strategy on Syria.

In November 2014, Crisis Action partnered with the BBC on two days of special coverage of the conflict. Interviewees Crisis Action introduced to the BBC included Mouna Ghanem; a former women's minister and opposition activist; James Le Mesurier, founder of the Syria Civil Defenders; Haid Haid, an activist speaking about peaceful resistance to ISIS; and former US Ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford.

Over the year, Syrian heroes were among the most compelling and effective advocates for greater protection of civilians and recognition of common humanity. Their testimonies moved policymakers to tears, and spurred politicians to act, though insufficient to the scale of the unfolding crisis.



▲ The White Helmets carry an injured man through the debris following a reported airstrike by the Syrian government forces. Photo: Syrian Civil Defence

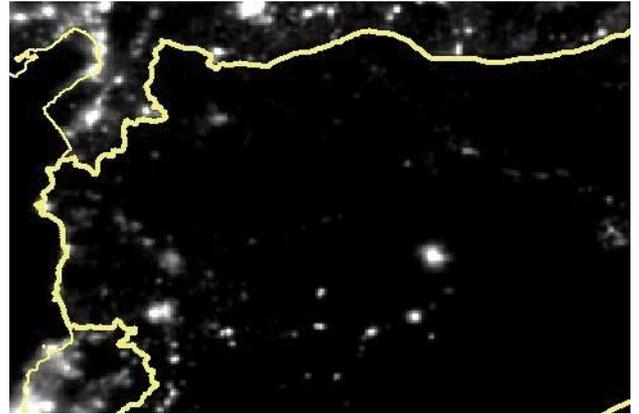
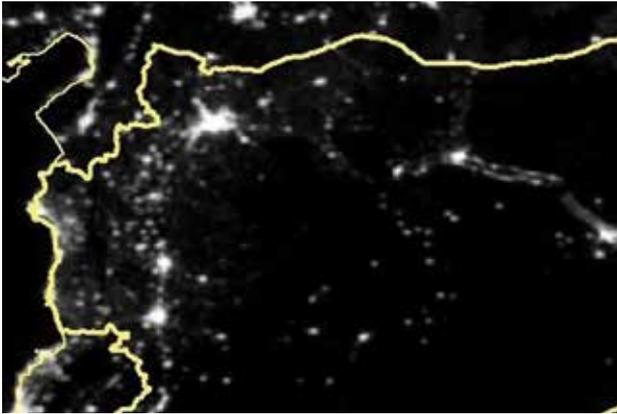
“Crisis Action saw the potential in a story of ordinary heroes and helped tell it to the world. Their support means so much to the White Helmets, and inspires us to continue our daily work rescuing innocent Syrians from the destruction caused by barrel bombs.”

James Le Mesurier, White Helmets

Pushing to maintain cross-border access

By December 2014, the breakthrough UN resolution on access that Crisis Action and partners had fought so hard to secure was due to expire. With millions of Syrians still in urgent need, Crisis Action brought together 14 humanitarian organisations to urge the Security Council to renew the mandate. The coalition also wrote to the Secretary General, agency chiefs, and donor states recommending ways to improve the humanitarian response.

Shortly afterwards, the Security Council renewed the resolution on access for another year. Diplomats confirmed that the NGOs' letter had influenced their decision. The UN also met key partner demands including moving leadership of the Syria humanitarian response from Damascus to Amman.



▲ Satellite images from researchers at China's Wuhan University, which showed that 83% of lights had gone out across in Syria since the initial protests

March 2015: Four years since the uprising

In March 2015, Crisis Action coordinated the WithSyria coalition to mark the fourth anniversary of the crisis. The “Turn the Lights Back On” campaign centred on satellite images from researchers at China’s Wuhan University, which showed that 83% of lights had gone out across in Syria since the initial protests. This startling statistic, which Crisis Action sourced by working with contacts at NASA and with the researchers themselves, combined with striking images of a country plunged into darkness to put pressure on world leaders to do more to protect civilians, mobilise aid and increase efforts to end the conflict.

Images and figures from the campaign made headlines around the globe, featuring in 270 news articles and broadcasts in more than 40 countries. These included *Al Arabiya*, *Al Jazeera Arabic* and *English*, the *Washington Post*, *NPR*, *Time*, *CNN*, the *BBC*, *Channel 4*, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro* and *France24*. A powerful opinion piece by Dr Abdel Aziz was published in the *New York Times*, describing having to operate by the light of a mobile phone on civilians injured by barrel bombs.

Crisis Action also commissioned a moving and inspirational video by award-winning agency, *Don't Panic*, which received more than half a million views and helped generate over 70,000 signatures on a petition urging world leaders to “Turn the Lights Back On”. The #WithSyria hashtag was used by 35,000 people on Twitter. Prominent political figures - including former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, UK Prime Minister David Cameron, and US Senators Chris Coons and Robert Menendez - voiced their support, as did celebrities Rashida Jones, Peter Gabriel and Cristiano Ronaldo.

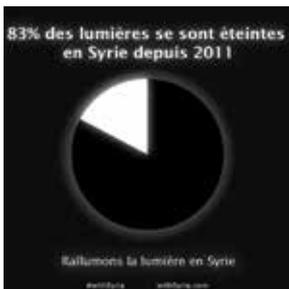
“I never expected my research would be covered by hundreds of media outlets, featured on the web and social media, and used in a global petition. Thanks to Crisis Action, our analysis of satellite images over time helped draw attention to the plight of Syrians caught up in the darkness of war.”

Xi Li, Scientific Researcher, University of Wuhan



▲ Coverage of the “Turn the Lights Back On” campaign

The 83% statistic became a central feature of the mainstream and social media narrative on Syria, and the campaign helped boost political will to address the crisis. Baroness Valerie Amos, then UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, mentioned the campaign in her 26 March address to the UN Security Council, and Council members praised the campaign that had offered both inspiration and “*the momentum that is so desperately needed.*”



▲ #WithSyria was used to drive the social media narrative on Syria and drive the public to a petition urging world leaders to “Turn the Lights Back On”. Infographics: Jack Hagley

“Syria is an intractable, complex and brutal conflict. I am grateful for the work Crisis Action and its partners do to keep the spotlight on the ordinary men, women and children whose homeland has been consumed by war, to insist on our common humanity, and to advance solutions and recommendations to end their suffering.”

Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Syria

Funding the aid response

In parallel with the anniversary campaign, and following the renewal of the mandate on access, Crisis Action worked with leading humanitarian agencies including CARE, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, Islamic Relief and IRC to urge international donors to meet the UN’s request for \$8.4bn in aid for Syria. Private letters to the UK, France, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE were backed up by a joint media statement and online campaign.



▲ Coverage of the campaign in March 2015 to put pressure on world leaders to do more to protect civilians

When donors met in Kuwait at the end of March 2015, they pledged over \$3bn. Although this fell short of what the UN had requested, it was over \$1bn more than had been pledged the previous year. In spite of political deadlock, an increasingly complex situation on the ground, and growing donor fatigue, campaigners had helped to persuade donors to be more generous than ever in their support of the Syrian people.

In her statement to the conference, America’s UN Ambassador Samantha Power referred to Dr Aziz’s *New York Times* op-ed, highlighting the power of Syrian voices to drive change.

The New York Times

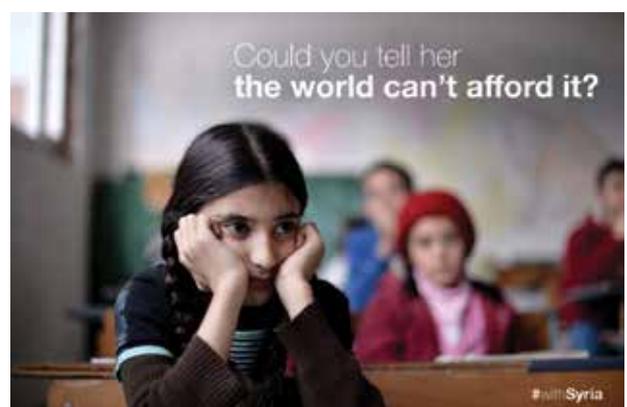
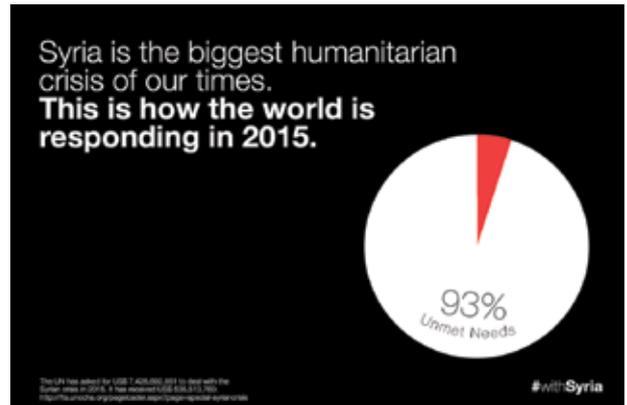
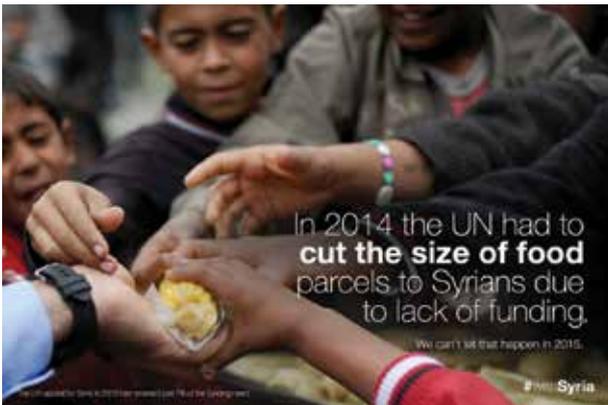
The Carnage of Barrel Bombs in Syria

By ABDEL MARCH 11, 2015
ALEPPO, Syria — MARWAN was on the operating table when the lights blinked and faded out. I turned on the headlamp I wear for situations like these, but it flickered, indicating low batteries. The nurse to my left pulled her cellphone from her pocket and turned it on, creating the only light in the pitch-black basement. Qatara in the room followed suit with their phones, shining the devices at the wound and producing just enough light to allow me to finish repairing the little boy’s broken body.
Marwan had arrived at my field hospital, which was built underground to avoid bombardment, after losing his mother, sister and both of his legs in a barrel bomb attack late last year. In recovery after the surgery, he asked me in a timid voice, “Will I be able to go to school anymore?”



▲ New York Times op-ed by Dr. Aziz of the Syrian American Medical Society

Through media work and private advocacy, Crisis Action also supported partners to influence an April 2015 Security Council Presidential Statement urging donors to provide more financial support for Syria’s neighbours.



▲ #WithSyria media work surrounding the donor conference in Kuwait in March 2015. Infographics: Jack Hagley

Signs of a breakthrough on barrel bombs?

The deaths of 70 civilians in a marketplace in Aleppo in June 2015 finally led a number of governments to call for action on indiscriminate attacks. Crisis Action forged a powerful coalition to back the plan, mobilising 81 organisations in 36 hours to issue both a private joint letter to Security Council members and a press statement lambasting the Council for its lack of action to date.

The statement called on the UN to track and publically expose indiscriminate attacks against civilians, including barrel bombs and car bombs, and to lay down clear consequences for violators. It was covered by *Associated Press*, *Reuters*, and the *New York Times* among others.

Council diplomats confirmed the coalition had strengthened the hand of those pushing for action and shortly afterwards

"I was a doctor in Aleppo, doing my job in difficult circumstances. Working with Crisis Action and SAMS, I was able to advocate for hundreds of thousands of my fellow civilians caught in conflict. To be able to tell our story, and push the UN and state governments to prevent atrocities, is incredibly important in a time of great suffering."

Dr. Abdel Aziz, Syrian American Medical Society

members confirmed their support for a discussion on the issue. At the time of writing, the French government was working on a draft resolution for a monitoring mechanism and sanctions regime for those using barrel bombs.

Maintaining a dialogue with influential figures

Throughout the year, Crisis Action facilitated meetings for partners with senior officials and staff at the UN, the US State Department, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Crucial among these was the UN Special Envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, to whom they provided information and analysis in addition to contacts for organisations inside Syria.

In Washington D.C., partners focused on urging the administration to lead the push for political progress, and develop a comprehensive strategy to end the conflict. This included organising public briefings, having private meetings with Congressional offices, working with members of Congress to get stories from Syria read in the House, and targeting decision makers via traditional and social media ahead of a Camp David meeting with the Gulf Cooperation Council. In spite of efforts, the US remained focused on securing a nuclear deal with Iran and did not take up a leadership role on Syria.

“Thank you Crisis Action for your help to show the world the horrors that indiscriminate attacks like barrel bombs dropped by the Syrian Government are having on every day Syrians. As the UN continues to fail to implement its own resolutions, this work has to continue.”

Bassam al-Ahmad, Violations Documentation Centre in Syria, Istanbul Spokesperson

An uphill challenge

Progress towards peace in Syria remains an uphill struggle. All sides persist in pursuing a military strategy characterised by grave violations of international humanitarian law. Differences and vested interests among major powers are prolonging the impasse. The terrifying growth of ISIS consumes international attention, but has yet to spur an effective response.

Millions of Syrians languish in overcrowded refugee camps and a generation of children are missing out on a proper education. Many are now risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean to Europe. The urgency for action is greater than ever for the future of Syria will affect us all. Increased cooperation, vision and leadership will be needed to break the deadlock, protect the vulnerable, and chart a path to peace.

“Crisis Action’s unique model provides policymakers with a wealth of expertise and insight on civilians at risk and how to protect them. Whether impressive individuals or well-organised NGO coalitions, the diversity of voices they amplify enhances how we understand these conflicts and how we respond.”

Hugues Mingarelli, Managing Director for North Africa, Middle-East, Arabian Peninsula, Iran & Iraq / European External Action Service

The situation for civilians in Sudan grew increasingly grim as government forces combined aerial bombardment with savage ground raids to crush rebels ahead of national elections. Crisis Action worked with partners to insist on a ceasefire before any ‘national dialogue’.



▲ Bullet shells are seen on the ground after the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) recaptured the Daldako area in South Kordofan. Photo: REUTERS/Mohamed Nureldin Abdallah

Crisis Action has worked on Sudan since 2006 and in that time has focused on protection of civilians in Darfur, preventing conflict around the referendum on South Sudan's independence and deterring violence in the border regions. More recently, Crisis Action directed its efforts towards safety of civilians in the run up to national elections.



KEY FACTS & FIGURES

6.6 million civilians are in need of humanitarian assistance in Sudan (OCHA)

4.4 million civilians are in need of humanitarian assistance in Darfur (OCHA)

2.5 million IDPs in Darfur (OCHA)

Over **2 million** civilians severely affected by the conflict in the 'Two Areas' since 2011 (OCHA)

1.7 million IDPs in the 'Two Areas' (USAID)

625,870 registered Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries (OCHA)

80,000 Sudanese seeking shelter in Yida and now Ajuong, South Sudan, with hundreds of new arrivals per week (UNHCR) and increasing

Over **3,000** bombs have been dropped on the 'Two Areas' since April 2012 (Nuba Reports)

3,324 villages destroyed by fighting in Darfur in the first 5 months of 2014 (UNPoE)

25% increase in SAF attacks on armed opposition groups in Darfur in 2014 in comparison to 2013 (UNPoE)

▲ Source: The Sudan Consortium: African and International Civil Society Action for Sudan

In January 2014, after more than a decade of conflict and ahead of national elections the following year, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir pledged to hold an inclusive national dialogue on the future of the country. However, rather than signalling a shift towards democracy, the announcement was followed by a tightening of already severe restrictions on freedoms and a scale up of military attacks on opposition-held areas.

Civilians in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile were brutally targeted by aerial bombing, while soldiers and government-backed militias on the ground razed villages, looted homes, destroyed food stocks and killed many. Throughout 2014 and early 2015, scorched earth tactics and the systematic rape of women and girls left hundreds of thousands deeply traumatised and in need of humanitarian assistance. Aid agency and media access was severely restricted.

Against this grim backdrop, Crisis Action worked with partners to call on the League of Arab States (LAS) and the African Union mediator, former South African President, Thabo Mbeki to:

- **Press the Sudanese Government, its allies and rebel groups** to halt deliberate, widespread and systematic attacks on civilians.
- **Expose the brutal military tactics being used by the government and its (Janjaweed) militias.**
- **Urge the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) to launch an independent investigation** into the aerial bombardment of civilian areas and property.

Influencing the influentials

In August 2014, Crisis Action organised a delegation from South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Khartoum to meet with the League of Arab States' Special Envoy for Sudan in Cairo. On hearing their concerns, the envoy committed to visiting South Kordofan and Blue Nile and hosting a humanitarian conference on Sudan. However, at the organisational level the LAS remained unwilling to challenge Khartoum.

In the same month, Crisis Action coordinated a briefing by 30 Sudanese, African and Arab NGOs for the AUPSC and UN Security Council ahead of meetings with President Mbeki. Their briefing raised concerns about the national dialogue process and provided the latest information on the humanitarian situation. Policymakers welcomed it as both timely and instructive.

Crisis Action also collaborated with Sudan expert, Professor Eric Reeves, to draw media and policy makers' attention to two leaked memos from different quarters of the Sudanese Government, including its National Intelligence and Security Service, confirming Khartoum's intention to starve citizens in South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

In spite of these efforts, neither the Security Council nor the AUPSC put sufficient pressure on the Sudanese Government to halt bombardment of civilians. The lack of international cooperation testified to the diverse and entrenched vested interests that enable Khartoum to persist in its lethal strategy.



▲ Coverage of the leaked memos confirming Khartoum's intention to starve citizens in South Kordofan and Blue Nile

In November 2015, in a meeting with President Mbeki, Crisis Action's partners reiterated the imperative of a ceasefire as a precondition for meaningful national dialogue. In the months after the meeting, President Mbeki urged the Government to take a more comprehensive approach to peace. Unfortunately despite his sustained efforts, President Mbeki was not able to hold the government to its commitment to launch an inclusive dialogue ahead of national elections.

“Crisis Action succeeds in getting access to decision-makers where others don't. The briefing that Crisis Action organised for Sudanese civil society representatives from rebel areas, Khartoum, myself and the Arab League's Sudan envoy was unprecedented. It was a vital, all-too-rare opportunity for officials to get first-hand accounts of the plight of the civilian populations under attack.”

Haggag Nayel, Secretary General, Arab Coalition for Sudan

Challenging the legitimacy of elections

In March 2015, as the elections approached, Crisis Action supported local NGO The Sudan Consortium to produce a hard-hitting briefing, 'We Need to Talk', which was circulated to international policymakers. The briefing outlined the human impact of the military offensives and contested the government's claim that there was sufficient security for citizens to vote. On the eve of the elections the US, UK, EU and Norway, all released uncharacteristically strongly-worded statements that credible elections were impossible.

Scaling down on Sudan

In the aftermath of the elections, hopes for an inclusive national dialogue faded, and Sudan shored up powerful new regional alliances. In recognition of the diminishing opportunities to drive change, Crisis Action made the difficult decision to scale down campaigning on Sudan. However, Crisis Action sustains its connections to courageous Sudanese and international activists seeking to counter the entrenched political dynamics surrounding the conflict and realise the hopes of the Sudanese for peace, justice and prosperity.

“Crisis Action helps us go far beyond simply coordinated action. Time and again, collaboration with them and their global network has unlocked innovative and bold tactics, driving change and promoting protection of people in the most appalling situations imaginable”.

Mohamed Ashmawey, Executive Director, Islamic Relief Worldwide

South Sudan

As bitter conflict tore apart the world's youngest nation, and regional and international powers failed to mediate a ceasefire, Crisis Action worked with partners to expose the cost of war and support ordinary citizens to speak out.



▲ A family from the Nuer rebel-controlled area, walk through flooded areas to reach a makeshift camp in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. Photo: AP Photo/Matthew Abbott

Nearly two years into what has become a brutal civil war, South Sudan is on the brink of financial collapse, famine is imminent and the killing has deteriorated along ethnic lines. By working with partners to launch a major research report and spur debate on its findings, Crisis Action focused attention on the economic imperative for peace, justice and for the safety of civilians caught in the crossfire.





▲ A press release appealing for more international help to end the conflict in South Sudan gained media coverage globally

In December 2013, a long-standing political rivalry between President Salva Kiir and his former Vice President Dr Riek Machar reached a crescendo, sparking violence that spread like wildfire across several states in South Sudan. By mid 2014, it was clear that what began as politically-motivated violence was now a civil war that was being waged along ethnic lines. With two million people displaced, thousands killed, and reports of war crimes committed by both sides, the situation for the South Sudanese people was dire.

To finance the conflict, President Kiir's government was diverting revenue from the country's lucrative oilfields, while its economy hovered close to collapse and famine loomed. An international donor conference in September 2014 put the cost of delivering adequate humanitarian aid at \$1.8bn.

In response to African demands, the UN had deferred to the African Union (AU) to lead in mediation. In turn, the AU had devolved peacebuilding to East Africa's Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), two members of which – Uganda and Sudan – were supporting parties to the conflict. IGAD's efforts to negotiate a ceasefire had repeatedly failed.

In this context Crisis Action worked with partners to pursue three objectives:

- **A sustained cessation of hostilities** to enable space for peace talks.
- **Increased humanitarian assistance** to avert the impending famine.
- **An effective accountability mechanism** to help end the culture of impunity.

Leveraging the one-year anniversary

In December 2014, one year after the outbreak of violence, Crisis Action supported South Sudanese activists, whose voices had been going unheard, to appeal for more international help to end the conflict.

The joint press release from nine NGOs was picked up by more than 30 news outlets across Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Several South Sudanese spokespeople gave interviews in spite of the climate of censorship. Soon afterwards, IGAD and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) strengthened their threats to impose an arms embargo and targeted sanctions.

Crisis Action also used the anniversary to remind wealthy international donors of their responsibilities. A piece by former UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Sir John Holmes, was placed in the prominent Middle East newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat, calling on Kuwait and Qatar to help close the yawning funding gap. Subsequent donor pledges enabled humanitarian agencies to help stave off the threat of famine.

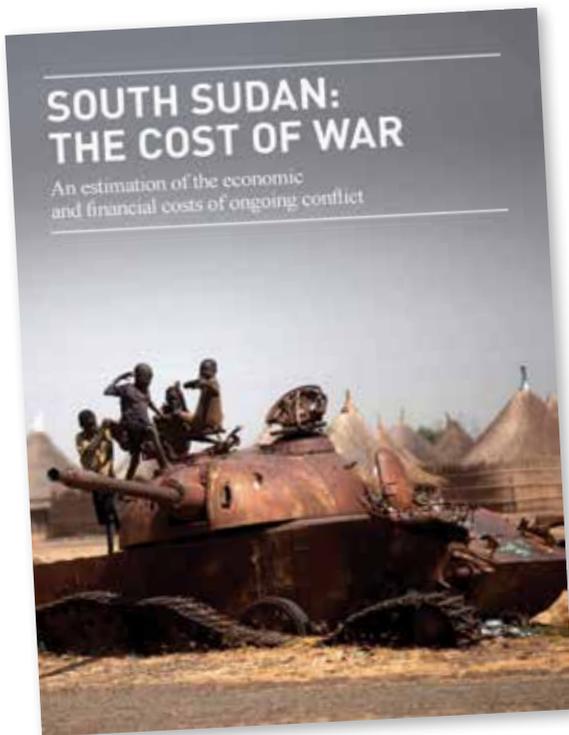


▲ Crisis Action helped Sir John Holmes, former UN Emergency Relief Coordinator place a piece in Asharq Al-Awsat calling on Kuwait and Qatar to fund much needed humanitarian aid to South Sudan.

Highlighting the cost of war

In an attempt to persuade those with influence on President Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar to use their leverage to prevent further fighting, Crisis Action worked with partners to highlight the financial costs of war for South Sudan and the wider region.

Crisis Action brought together influential African think-tanks - including the Centre for Peace and Development Studies in South Sudan and the Center for Conflict Resolution in Uganda, with the European economic consultancy Frontier Economics - to produce an innovative and ground-breaking report, *South Sudan: The Cost of War*. For the first time, the report put a price tag on continued conflict, thus providing a powerful incentive for more robust and coordinated regional and international engagement.



▲ The Cost of War – a joint NGO report coordinated by Crisis Action

Launched in Nairobi and Addis Ababa, ahead of the AU Summit in January 2015, the report revealed that failure to achieve peace in South Sudan could cost the region \$158bn over 20 years. It outlined how different scenarios would affect the economies of Ethiopia, Tanzania, Sudan, Kenya and Uganda. A foreword by Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, former Prime Minister of Tanzania and past head of the Organisation of African Unity, added weight to the findings.

“The Cost of War report offered an insightful and sobering assessment of the economic implications of continued conflict in South Sudan, thus providing impetus for renewed action by policymakers to promote peace.”

Dr Abdalla Hamdok, Deputy Executive Secretary at the United Nations Economic Commission (UNECA)

The Cost of War also set out comprehensive recommendations:

- **Establish an international contact group** on South Sudan.
- **Increase pressure on the parties to the conflict** to end the fighting and implement IGAD resolutions.
- **Insist on an inclusive approach to peace negotiations.**
- **Ensure accountability, reconciliation and healing processes** are in place.
- **Avert famine and meet the humanitarian needs of all civilians.**
- **Bring greater transparency and accountability** to government expenditure and the management of oil and mineral resources.

Crisis Action brought a delegation from South Sudan and Uganda to present the report to key African policymakers and worked with former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, to place an op-ed in South Africa's *Daily Maverick*, which called on African leaders to ensure accountability for crimes committed. In addition, a piece by Dr Salim calling on countries with leverage over South Sudan to support the establishment of a government of national unity was published in the *East African*.

The Cost of War received exceptional levels of global media coverage and an accompanying infographic was also shared widely on social media. High-level policymakers in African and Western capitals privately welcomed the report, praising its methodological rigour and clear proposals for action; some said they used it in their own advocacy. In March 2015, the UN Security Council decided unanimously to establish a targeted sanctions regime for South Sudan.



▲ Infographics shared via social media illustrating key statistics from the Cost of War report. Infographics: Miriam Hempel

Breaking the silence among civil society

In the face of government censorship and intimidation, civil society groups had placed great hope in a report from the AU Commission of Inquiry into human rights violations in South Sudan. It was rumoured that the report would be released at the January 2015 summit, but when heads of government met, a small but influential group blocked its release, claiming it could jeopardise the peace process.

Disappointment was compounded when ceasefire negotiations reached yet another impasse in early March. To create space for discussion, Crisis Action supported Dr. Luka Biong Deng, Director of the Centre for Peace and Development Studies at Juba University, to host a public forum in Juba to discuss the *Cost of War* report.

Dr. Luka assembled an impressive panel that included President Kiir's economic adviser, the prominent South Sudanese think-tank, the Sudd Institute, and local activists, including Edmund Yakani, Executive Director of Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation.

More than 120 people attended, including senior government ministers. The panellists frankly acknowledged the appalling impact of the war on their country and the changes that were needed. President Kiir's adviser attested to the damage the war was causing the economy, and agreed that ending the conflict was critical. Afterwards, the President requested a briefing on the report's findings. Coverage of the event by local print, radio and TV media opened up new space for debate.



▲ The release of the Cost of War spurred worldwide media coverage



▲ Edmund Yakani, Executive Director of Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO) highlights the Cost of War report ahead of the AU Summit in June 2014

“At CEPO we advocate passionately for peace in South Sudan and an end to impunity. Our efforts have been immeasurably enhanced by Crisis Action’s strategic support. Crisis Action truly is a catalyser for peace.”

Edmund Yakani, Executive Director CEPO

Targeting policymakers and the private sector

In May 2015, large-scale fighting resumed in South Sudan, displacing more than 100,000 civilians. The UN reported that both sides had committed gross violations of human rights law, including sexual attacks on children and women, forced child soldier recruitment, and scorched earth attacks on entire villages.

These events exacerbated the already dire humanitarian crisis, and in the context of the increasingly fragile economy and waning donor support, the country found itself facing possible famine again.

Crisis Action worked with partners to demonstrate that the predictions in the *Cost of War* report were beginning to come true, and that urgent action must be taken. This involved supporting Dr. Luka Biong Deng, and Edmund Yakani to host an expert seminar in Addis Ababa before the June AU Summit. The event brought together a diverse range of senior African policy makers and private sector representatives. Speakers urged African leaders to use the Summit to instruct the newly configured IGAD Plus to raise the pressure on all parties for an end to the conflict.

Crisis Action also facilitated private meetings for civil society members with AUPSC officials, IGAD members and other high-level stakeholders, to present their analysis and request action. Within days of these discussions, the AUPSC issued its toughest language to date, urging the UN Security Council to list individuals for targeted sanctions.



▲ Dr Abdalla Hamdok and Dr Luka Biong Deng at the June Addis Ababa expert seminar on the Cost of War report

Increasing South African engagement

As the host of the upcoming AU Summit, and the only country involved in both the IGAD peace negotiations and a parallel political dialogue to unify the political factions in South Sudan’s ruling party, South Africa was in a uniquely powerful position. To encourage South Africa to use its leverage, Crisis Action organised a delegation of two leading South Sudanese activists, partnering Edmund Yakani with international human rights lawyer Dr. Remember Miamingi.

“Thanks to Crisis Action, we were able to share lessons from our freedom fighting with fellow campaigners from South Sudan. By making such connections, Crisis Action promotes solidarity and helps strengthen global civil society.”

Yasmin Sooka, Executive Director, Foundation for Human Rights in South Africa, Former Commissioner on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Crisis Action worked with partners to organise a series of public and private advocacy meetings with South African officials, also involving other government officials and civil society organisations to discuss South Africa’s role in tackling South Sudan’s crisis. Crisis Action secured high profile print, radio and television interviews for Edmund and Dr. Remember, and supported other South Sudanese partners to reinforce their messages with timely opinion pieces in two prominent South African newspapers before and after the delegation.

The delegates urged the South African government to show leadership on South Sudan and push for the publication of the suppressed AU Commission of Inquiry report. They also appealed to the South African people to show solidarity and support their struggle for peace and reconciliation.



▲ Bishop Rubin Philip and Jens Pedersen from MSF meet with delegates Edmund Yakani and Dr. Remember Miamingi in South Africa

Over the following weeks significant policy developments reflected the delegates’ recommendations: the AU appointed former President of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konare as ‘chief envoy’ to the peace process, and the AUPSC agreed to hold a ministerial-level meeting to consider the Commission of Inquiry report.

The visit also forged strong new ties between South Sudanese and South African civil society organisations and opened up vital direct lines of communication with South African policy makers.



▲ Destroyed homes burn in Malakal, Upper Nile State, February 2014. Photo: Tim Freccia

Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory

When a sudden and devastating war broke out between Israel and Hamas in the summer of 2014, Crisis Action launched an emergency response calling for a ceasefire and the protection of civilians. Then, in the autumn, as reconstruction of Gaza began, Crisis Action focused on deterring future conflict by urging the EU to stop blocking Palestinian accession to the International Criminal Court.



▲ Palestinians look at destroyed houses which were heavily hit by Israeli shelling and air strikes during the Israeli offensive, in the east of Gaza. Photo: REUTERS/Mohammed Salem

In the summer of 2014, another 50 days of war plagued Gaza and it was, again, in ruins, desperately in need of aid and a voice. As it had in 2007 in response to the blockade of Gaza, Crisis Action launched an emergency response to support partners in successfully calling for a ceasefire. In part to deter a return to violence, Crisis Action supported partners and eminent voices to encourage Palestinian accession to the International Criminal Court. On January 7, 2015, President Mahmoud Abbas declared that Palestine would join the world court.



In June 2014, the kidnap and murder of three Israeli teenagers by the Palestinian militant group Hamas sparked renewed violence in the region. Israel launched a crackdown on Hamas in the West Bank, arresting hundreds of its members. Within a month, the situation had escalated to all-out war as Hamas launched rocket attacks and Israel responded with air strikes and a ground invasion of Gaza. The ensuing 50 days of bombing, shelling and fighting killed more than 2000 people, many of them children.

“Crisis Action’s interventions on the Israel-Palestine conflict are like precision operations by a top surgeon. Rather than seeking to influence the whole messy conflict, they intervene only where they know impact is possible, and their contribution will add value.”

Agnes Bertrand-Sanz, Middle East Policy Officer,
ACT Alliance EU

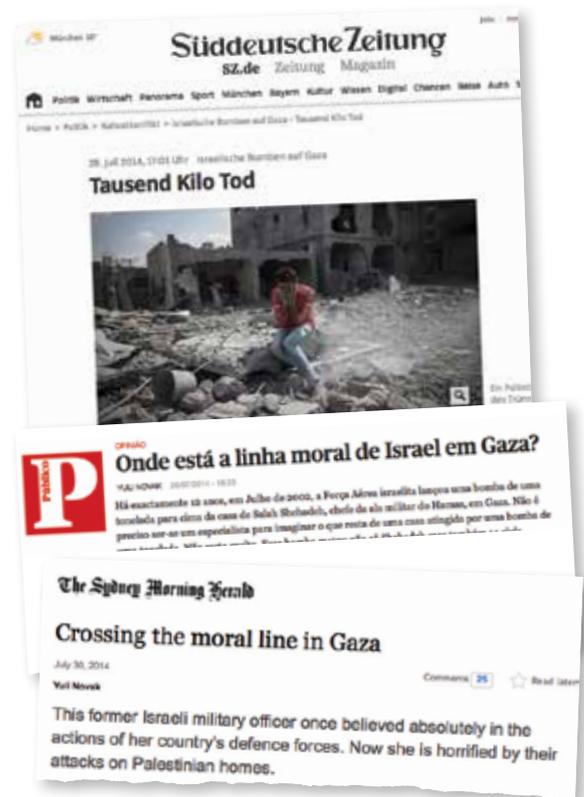
Deeply concerned for the welfare of people trapped in Gaza, and in response to requests from partners, Crisis Action launched an emergency response with three key priorities:

- **Raising calls for an immediate ceasefire** on both sides.
- **Pressuring the Israeli government to minimise civilian casualties.**
- **Pushing the EU to support accountability mechanisms** that would offer greater protection to civilians.

Leveraging European influence

Crisis Action focused on European countries with influence over both sides. Ahead of the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 22 July, Crisis Action facilitated meetings for European partner NGOs with policymakers from key member states. Following the meeting, the EU issued an uncharacteristically tough statement reflecting language partners had used in calling for a ceasefire.

The dominant narrative in the media was that Israeli forces were doing all they could to prevent civilian casualties, yet evidence from the ground suggested that this was not the case. Crisis Action worked with the Israeli organisation, *Breaking the Silence* and its CEO, Yuli Novak, a former Israeli Air Force Officer, to challenge the official story. Her powerful and very personal opinion piece argued that Israel had crossed a moral line, and that the military could do more to avoid hitting civilian homes.



▲ Coverage of the opinion piece by Yuli Novak regarding Israeli airstrikes on civilians in Gaza

It was published in *The Guardian* (UK), *Publico* (Portugal), *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany), the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia), *Aftenposten* (Norway) and a number of other international outlets, and referenced in numerous news articles in the following days.

Crisis Action also helped secure publication of another article by Idan Barir, an ex-member of the Israeli artillery corps, countering the claim that air strikes were carefully targeted and saying that the indiscriminate form of artillery fire used by Israel made its assault on Gaza “a deadly game of Russian roulette”. This was published in *The Telegraph* (UK), the US edition of the *Huffington Post*, and Denmark’s *Berlinske*, among others.

To support these arguments and help promote pluralistic and balanced media coverage, Crisis Action circulated a list of expert spokespeople, including former Israeli military officers and field-based contacts, to journalists who expressed gratitude for the important initiative. Many went on to interview the sources Crisis Action had connected them to.

Highlighting EU contradictions on the ICC

After protracted negotiations, a ceasefire was agreed at the end of August 2014 but the war had left Gaza in ruins, with an estimated \$8bn needed for reconstruction. As Palestinians faced the task of piecing back together their shattered homes and communities, a donor conference took place in Cairo. Aware that another flare-up of violence could flatten any aid-funded reconstruction, Crisis Action focused on preventing a return to conflict.

Historically, the EU had discouraged Palestine from joining the International Criminal Court (ICC), despite encouraging other countries to do so. European diplomats apparently feared Palestinian accession would provoke retaliation from Israel and damage the chances of a peaceful two-state solution. The US also opposed ICC accession (like Israel, it is not a member of the Court).

“The timing of the Crisis Action-coordinated push for Palestinian accession to the ICC was perfectly judged. By putting the spotlight on the potential for increased accountability to prevent future crimes, Crisis Action enabled a breakthrough on a conflict where positive progress is all-too rare”

Navi Pillay, Former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2008 – 2014) and former judge at the International Criminal Court (2003 – 2008)

To shift the EU position and promote greater international accountability, Crisis Action worked with eminent lawyers Sir Desmond de Silva QC, ex-UN Chief War Crimes Prosecutor in Sierra Leone, and Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, who led the prosecution of Yugoslavia’s Slobodan Milošević. In an incisive opinion piece, published in the UK *Independent*, France’s *Libération*, Germany’s *Tagesspiegel*, and the pan-Arab *Asharq Al Awsat*, Nice and De Silva argued that holding both sides to account for violations of human rights and international criminal law could help prevent future military action. Allowing the Palestinians to join the ICC would create incentives for peace on both sides and prevent aid being wasted.



▲ Coverage of the opinion piece by eminent lawyers stating that Palestinian accession to the ICC would create incentives for peace on both sides

Arguing for accession to the ICC

In the weeks following the donor conference and the publication of the QCs’ op-ed, the argument for allowing Palestinians to join the ICC gained traction. Crisis Action forged an alliance of influential human rights and conflict prevention organisations to disseminate further arguments on the benefits of accountability for both sides. Partners met with high-level European policymakers, including French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius.

With Crisis Action’s support, Amnesty International, Broederlijk Delen, Christian Aid, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Human Rights Watch and Pax Christi produced a joint paper outlining arguments for Palestinian accession and highlighting how Europe’s opposition to Palestine joining contradicted its support of ICC jurisdiction elsewhere. This was disseminated and widely discussed at a key ICC meeting in December 2014, at which the Palestinians were granted observer status to the ICC - a step towards full accession.

“Crisis Action’s campaign to promote Palestinian accession to the ICC was instrumental. The 2-page briefing they worked with the coalition to produce was in huge demand at the ICC meeting in New York, where Palestine was granted ‘observer status.’”

Stephanie Barbour, Head of Amnesty International’s Centre for International Justice (2013-2015)



▲ Palestinian Foreign Minister is welcomed to the ICC. Photo: ICC

Building on the momentum, Crisis Action worked with former ICC judge and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, on an op-ed entitled 'Europe is Blocking Mideast Peace', which was published in the *New York Times* and bolstered the already strong case for accession.

A breakthrough for accountability

In December, in spite of pressure from the US, Israel and members of his own party, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas made the landmark decision to accede to the Rome Statute and give the ICC retrospective jurisdiction over the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. According to a source close to the Palestinians, Crisis Action's work had "helped create the environment and momentum" that made this possible.

Crisis Action coordinated a joint NGO response, welcoming the move and encouraging European support. To bolster this message, Crisis Action worked with 2005 winner of the Israel Prize for photography Alex Levac on an opinion piece arguing that, rather than being an obstacle to peace, the ICC could be used by both sides to seek accountability and end the cycle of violence. This was published in the *European Voice*, Germany's *Zeit-online* and France's *mediapart*.

The only retaliation by the Israeli government was a temporary freeze on Palestinian tax revenues, not the violence many had feared.

A more accountable future

Having helped secure this protection for ordinary people in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, Crisis Action concluded this latest phase of campaigning. The accountability mechanisms now in place in the Middle East have the potential to safeguard men, women and children on both sides, and could pave the way for a lasting peace.



▲ A New York Times op-ed by Navi Pillay highlighting that Europe was a block to Palestine's accession to the ICC.

Nigeria

As tensions heightened in the run-up to Nigeria's elections, Crisis Action worked with partners to reduce the risk of violence. At the same time, as brutal attacks by Boko Haram continued in the north-east, Crisis Action supported partners to advocate for a UN mission that prioritised civilian protection.

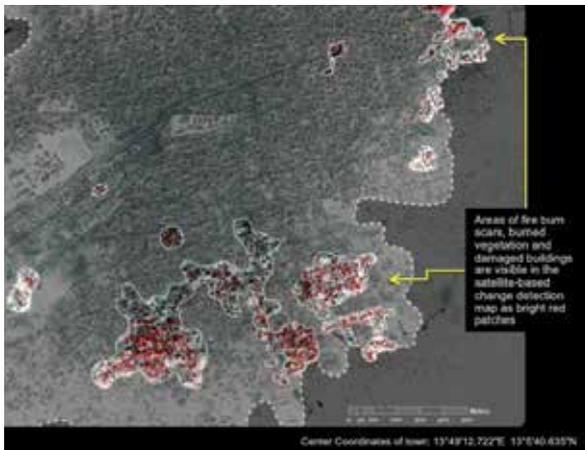


▲ Supporters of the presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari celebrate in Kano. Photo: REUTERS/Goran Tomasevic

At a time when Boko Haram was increasing its devastating campaigns, Nigeria was facing critical elections that threatened to create further instability. Crisis Action worked with prominent local voices in concert with Nigerian and international NGOs to underscore the presidential candidates' responsibility to prevent violence. The elections occurred safely – an historic success for Nigeria. The coalition also influenced the new government's policy against Boko Haram.



Since early 2014, the insurgency in Nigeria's troubled north-eastern region had been growing increasingly violent. Attacks by Boko Haram had killed an estimated 9000 people, forced 1.5 million from their homes, and resulted in the abduction of thousands of women and girls. In early 2015, reports emerged of a single massacre of 2000 people in the town of Baga. As Boko Haram began to launch incursions into neighbouring countries and evidence came to light of human rights abuses perpetrated by Nigerian and regional soldiers, human rights and humanitarian advocates pressed the UN Security Council to intervene. At the same time, in the south of the country, tension around Nigeria's impending presidential elections threatened to escalate into violence.



▲ Analysis of this satellite imagery of the town of Baga shows substantial areas of burn scars consistent with arson allegedly being conducted by Boko Haram. Source: Human Rights Watch

Crisis Action consulted local and international partners on how to strengthen and complement their existing responses. The resulting strategy had two key priorities:

- **Reducing the risk of election-related violence** through careful public and private advocacy targeting both candidates and their supporters.
- **Ensuring that any international efforts to counter Boko Haram respected human rights.**

Preventing election-related violence

Crisis Action worked with local Nigerian and international NGOs and their allies to insist on the personal responsibility of the two main election candidates, President Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari, for any violence perpetrated by their supporters or militia. This included supporting the Chair of Nigeria's Human Rights Commission, Chidi Odinkalu, to place an opinion piece in *The Huffington Post* and Germany's *Die Zeit*, and coordinating a joint briefing for journalists covering the election.

“Crisis Action has been an invaluable partner and supporter of Nigeria in confronting many of our recent challenges, including the 2015 general elections and the continuing horrors of the Boko Haram insurgency. Its approach has been truly admirable: amplifying voices from the frontlines; enabling Nigerian experiences to be heard in the corridors of decision-making nationally and beyond. Their methods reflect the values of partnership and humility in putting the organisation at the service of the strategy, backing those best-placed to understand the issues and influence those with the power to arrest crises.”

Chidi Odinkalu, Chair of the Governing Council of Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission.

On Twitter, Crisis Action worked with celebrities with Nigerian roots, including Hotel Rwanda star, Hakeem Kae-Kazim, to share messages calling for calm whatever the outcome. The elections passed peacefully, with Buhari taking the majority of the vote. This was the first democratic transition of power between political parties in Nigeria's history.

Protecting civilians under threat of Boko Haram

In order to ensure that any UN-backed force sent to tackle Boko Haram would protect civilians and respect human rights, Crisis Action convened an alliance of leading international and West African NGOs, including Human Rights Watch, Center for Civilians in Conflict and the West African Network for Peacebuilding, and coordinated a joint briefing outlining the elements a UN resolution on Boko Haram would need to include to ensure civilians were not put at greater risk. Crisis Action also organised meetings for partners with decision-makers in New York, Brussels, London, Paris and Washington, D.C. to advocate accountability for human rights abuses and a tracking unit to monitor and prevent harm to civilians.

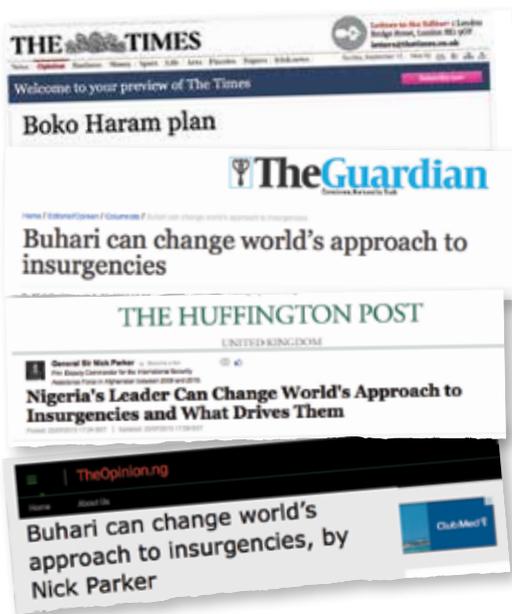
“Crisis Action's approach and their connections enabled our work in Nigeria to reach decision-makers at the Security Council. Working together we were able to influence discussions in New York.”

Idayat Hassan, Director of Centre of Democracy and Development (CDD).

In the following weeks, draft versions of the UN Resolution included several of the NGOs' recommendations. In addition, having previously downplayed the humanitarian crisis in the country's north-east, the Nigerian UN Mission cited statistics on the situation of internally displaced people in a 30 March briefing to the Security Council. These statistics had been raised in the advocacy facilitated by Crisis Action.

The change of government in Nigeria delayed Security Council negotiations but after the election, Crisis Action brought together 11 influential Nigerian and West African human rights experts to urge the new government to support a Security Council resolution backing West African forces against Boko Haram in a way that protected civilians. Crisis Action also turned to influence the government's own policy on Boko Haram. By coordinating the efforts of Nigerian and international partners and connecting them to well-placed allies with the ear of the new administration, Crisis Action ensured Nigeria's new ministers received clear and coherent messages on what a comprehensive, responsible approach to Boko Haram should look like.

On 9 June, there was confirmation that these efforts were yielding fruit. Insiders confirmed that senior figures close to the new President had submitted partners' key asks – including human rights accountability and a civilian casualty tracking unit – to the Transitional Committee deciding the government's plans.



▲ Worldwide coverage of Sir Nick Parker's opinion piece advocating for accountability for the protection of civilians by the forces fighting Boko Haram

“The work I did with Crisis Action highlighted an invaluable feature of their model: starting from an assumption that nothing can be achieved working alone, they put strategic impact above any consideration for their own profile. This approach – and the energy they assign to its application – could be a lesson across many other sectors.”

General Sir Nick Parker, KCB CBE ADC, Deputy Commander for the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan between Nov. 2009 and Sept. 2010

To consolidate this, in July 2015, in response to a positive statement about investigating human rights abuses by incoming President Buhari, Crisis Action collaborated with former British Army General, Sir Nick Parker on an opinion piece welcoming the President's statement and urging the Nigerian military to measure the success of its counter-insurgency operations on how effectively they protected civilians. The piece was placed in *The Guardian Nigeria*, *The Opinion Nigeria*, *The Huffington Post*, and as a Letter to the Editor in *The Times*.

A stronger network in the South

By the summer of 2015, Boko Haram had been pushed back into northern Nigeria by regional forces, and the momentum for change sat strongly at a national level. In this context, and judging that many partner organisations were well placed to continue their advocacy, Crisis Action took the tough decision to end work on Nigeria in order to release capacity for an emergency response on Yemen.

The work on Nigeria reinforced alliances with influential partners and led to new partnerships being established.

This strengthened Crisis Action's networks in the global South and enhanced readiness to respond to future conflicts.

“As medical workers and health facilities in conflicts around the world continue to be brutally attacked, we have been proud to partner with Crisis Action. By convening powerful voices from the field to inform policymakers, and coordinating our advocacy with others, Crisis Action leverages our work and that of many allies to make a difference to people's lives.”

Donna McKay, Executive Director, Physicians for Human Rights

Tens of thousands of people fled their homes when unrest around Burundi's elections threatened to spiral into a repeat of the country's recent bloody civil war. Crisis Action worked with partners and influential voices to encourage dialogue, de-escalate tensions and ensure the world was watching.



▲ Protesters chanting anti-government slogans in a third day of protests against President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to run for a third term. Photo: REUTERS/Thomas Mukoya

In the spring of 2015, Burundi's fragile peace was thrown into jeopardy when President Nkurunziza declared he would stand for a controversial third term. Opposition demonstrations in response sparked violence from the government and its armed youth militia. Crisis Action worked with respected and influential voices in the region to recommend measures to deter violence. This included deploying human rights monitors, which the AU did, though political leaders continued to threaten violence.





▲ Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim's powerful opinion piece called for concrete steps to de-escalate the violence in Burundi

In April 2015, Burundi's President Pierre Nkurunziza announced he would stand for a third term. This contravened the 2000 Arusha Peace Accords that had brought an end to a decade of violent factional conflict. Thousands of Burundians took to the streets and were met by a heavy-handed response. When the Constitutional Court confirmed the legitimacy of President Nkurunziza's candidacy, further public protests ensued, culminating in an unsuccessful coup attempt by senior generals.

Within weeks, opposition leader Zedi Feruzi had been shot dead and armed elements of the ruling party's youth group, the *Imbonerakure*, had begun intimidating opposition supporters and journalists. As political leaders' rhetoric began to take on ethnic overtones reminiscent of the propaganda that had fuelled the country's twelve-year civil war (1993-2005), more than 100,000 people fled fearing widespread violence.

With hate speech on the rise, youth groups being armed and signs that the police were failing to protect civilians, Crisis Action launched an emergency response to encourage dialogue between the government and opposition groups and prevent the country spiralling into deeper conflict.

Amplifying authoritative voices

Crisis Action worked with Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, former prime minister of Tanzania and former Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Unity, to produce a powerful opinion piece calling for concrete steps to de-escalate the situation and concerted regional and international action to bring Burundi back from the brink. Recommendations in his piece, published in the *East African*, South Africa's *The Daily Maverick*, the *Huffington Post*, Germany's *Tagesspiegel*, and France's *Le Monde*, included:

- Resuming dialogue to address all issues on which the parties disagreed.
- Deploying AU human rights observers.
- Disarming all armed groups and militants.
- Postponing the elections until these conditions were met.

Shortly after it was published the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) issued a communiqué echoing the proposals in strong terms.

Seeking to create conditions for peaceful elections

Crisis Action also forged a coalition of international, regional and Burundian groups to advocate for peaceful, credible, transparent and inclusive elections. The collective aims included:

- The deployment of human rights monitors.
- The release of individuals detained during peaceful protests.
- All parties disassociating from violent factions and supporting disarmament.
- The removal of restrictions on the media and internet access.

“It is always a pleasure to work with Crisis Action. They combine strategic political insight with efficient professionalism to secure protection for civilians at risk. I'm impressed how they coordinate and deploy their extensive international network and welcome being part of it. They articulate and amplify individual calls for peace to the best possible effect.”

Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Former Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity and former Prime Minister of Tanzania

Crisis Action partnered with African NGOs to target regional powers with influence over Burundi. A joint letter to the AUPSC, copied to the East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), encouraged them to push for dialogue and de-escalation. Soon afterwards, in an echo of the NGOs' language, the EAC called for the "urgent disarmament of all armed youth groups allied to political parties".

Crisis Action also coordinated a letter to high-level officials from the UN, EU, US, UK, France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands when they met as part of the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region in Brussels. A media briefing by partners, quoting local journalists and campaigners and highlighting the crackdown on media freedom that had followed the President's announcement was picked up by regional media, though overall coverage of Burundi remained low.

"International Center for Policy and Conflict consider Crisis Action a very valuable partner. On Burundi, Crisis Action did a remarkable job of coordinating and conveying civil society's recommendations on protecting civilians and preventing further conflict. Their efforts drew much-needed attention."

Ndung'u Wainaina, Executive Director, Nairobi based International Center of Policy and Conflict

Elections go ahead

As a result of regional and international pressure, supported by NGO campaigning, and in the context of continued unrest, the local and parliamentary elections were postponed. They eventually took place on 29 June, despite a boycott by the opposition. UN observers pronounced them neither free nor fair.

The date for the Presidential elections was also put back in response to international pressure. Crisis Action's partners issued a press release criticising the six-day postponement announced on 11 July as an 'insufficient gesture' that would not ensure the necessary conditions for a free and fair election.

The Presidential election went ahead on 21 July and the Electoral Commission announced President Nkurunziza had won with 70% of the vote. Immediately afterwards, the AU deployed human rights monitors and military observers to Burundi, which had been among the key campaign asks of Crisis Action's partners concerned to halt a slide to civil war or a return to ethnically-targeted violence.

"Crisis Action's work on Burundi shows the importance of collaborating to prevent conflict. The international coalition Crisis Action convened on Burundi helped alert people to the developing threat facing the country. Our message is louder, and policymakers are more compelled to listen, when we speak with one voice."

Simon Adams, Executive Director, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

While the elections were not free, fair or credible, they were relatively peaceful. But the situation remained tense, leaving people still fearful of a return to violence. Given the continuing demand for international action to prevent further conflict, Crisis Action remained engaged.

Financials 2014-15

Statement of activities for the year ended 31 May 2015

	2015	2014	2015	2014
	£	£	\$	\$
INCOME				
Funders & Donations	2,498,099	2,012,905	3,818,095	3,385,404
Partners	136,295	110,999	208,313	186,684
Interest	6,254	6,243	9,559	10,500
TOTAL	2,640,648	2,130,147	4,035,967	3,582,588
EXPENDITURE				
Salaries & Related Costs	1,807,291	1,463,286	2,762,264	2,461,028
Occupancy	153,831	151,700	235,115	255,137
Travel & Travel Related Costs	186,700	187,003	285,352	314,511
IT, Comms & Office Supplies	126,977	108,457	194,072	182,408
Publications	36,258	15,587	55,417	26,215
Events	46,696	6,431	71,370	10,816
Professional Fees	65,871	72,064	100,677	121,201
Asset Write-Off	29,031	31,429	44,371	52,859
Finance Charges	(13,858)	62,735	(21,181)	105,510
TOTAL	2,438,797	2,098,692	3,727,457	3,529,685
(Deficit)/Surplus For Year Excluding Restricted Funds	201,851	31,455	308,510	52,903
RESTRICTED FUNDS¹				
Received	390,456	274,012	596,773	460,847
Expended	(338,062)	(377,967)	(516,694)	(635,684)
TOTAL	52,394	(103,955)	80,079	(174,837)
(Deficit)/Surplus Before Taxation	254,245	(72,500)	388,589	(121,934)
Taxation	(1,252)	(1,247)	(1,914)	(2,097)
(Deficit)/Surplus After Taxation	252,993	(73,747)	386,675	(124,031)
Total funds brought forward⁴	867,490	941,237	1,325,872	1,583,019
Total funds carried forward	1,120,483	867,490	1,712,547	1,458,988
Exchange rate at 31st May 2015	1.528			
Exchange rate at 31st May 2014	1.682			

Statement of activities for the year ended 31 May 2015

	2015	2014	2015	2014
	£	£	\$	\$
Fixed Assets	268	12,444	410	20,929
Debtors	47,668	47,093	72,856	79,203
Cash at Bank	1,715,806	1,895,638	2,622,438	3,188,179
Creditors ³	(643,256)	(1,087,682)	(983,152)	(1,829,318)
Net Assets	1,120,486	867,493	1,712,552	1,458,993
Capital & Reserves				
Operating Overhead Reserve	1,016,100	845,000	1,553,008	1,421,163
Restricted Funds ¹	40,244	21,504	61,509	36,167
Unrestricted Funds ²	64,142	989	98,035	1,663
Capital & Reserves	1,120,486	867,493	1,712,552	1,458,993

1. These funds were entrusted to Crisis Action by donors and specifically designated to support joint NGO advocacy and campaign activities for particular country situations. Use of some of the funds requires authorisation from a donor and as such does not form part of Crisis Action's operations and is accounted for separately.
2. Unrestricted funds includes three shares with a nominal value of £1. These shares are owned by the directors and do not earn dividends.
3. £484,177 (\$740,016) of Creditors is the amount of deferred income carried forward into 2015-16.
4. The opening USD reserves have been revalued using the May 2015 USD/GBP exchange rate.

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We have a board of independent, unpaid directors:



Jan Egeland (Chair) is Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and was previously Deputy Executive Director of Human Rights Watch and Director of its European Operations. As UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs from 2003 to 2006, Egeland helped reform the global humanitarian system. Jan is also currently the Chairman of the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, he sits on the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers and is part of World Economic Forums' global agenda council on humanitarian response. He organised the international responses to the Asian Tsunami and crises in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Lebanon. In 2006, Time magazine named him one of the 100 "people who shape our world."



Vincent Barnouin (Treasurer) is a partner at Ecofin, an asset management business based in London, focusing on the energy, energy efficiency, renewables and cleantech sectors. He has spent all his professional career in the financial sector, notably with Goldman Sachs and Citigroup. He is the Treasurer of the Board.



Paul Fletcher is Chairman at Actis, a private equity firm investing exclusively in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Prior to Actis he spent 23 years in the financial services industry. He led the strategy unit for Citibank's emerging markets business and previously ran the bank's business in East Africa. Paul is a founding director of the Emerging Markets Private Equity Association.



Fiona Napier is based in Nairobi and advises and consults for a number of social enterprises, NGOs and donors. Prior to 2012 she was the Associate Director of Campaigns at Global Witness in London, and International Advocacy Director with the Open Society Foundations. Until 2009 she spent 15 years with Save the Children in a variety of roles including Global Advisor, Programme Director in South Africa, and Relief Co-ordinator in Iraq. During this time she co-founded the UK Campaign to Ban Landmines.



Noosheen Hashemi is a business builder, angel investor, and advisor with a focus on disruptive ideas and platforms. Noosheen has more than three decades of experience building the leadership and execution capabilities of early stage companies to deliver growth and profitability on a global scale, including in various executive management positions at Oracle Corporation and Quote.com. Ms. Hashemi is also President and co-founder of The HAND Foundation, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and has been awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, the CEDAW Human Rights Award for Philanthropy, and the Girl Scouts Forever Green Leadership Award.



Mabel van Oranje A global advocate for freedom, justice and development for over two decades, Mabel van Oranje is the initiator and chair of 'Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage' and co-founder and the executive chair of the European Council on Foreign Relations. She is a member of the (advisory) boards of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, Global Witness, the Malala Fund, the Open Society Foundations and The Elders.



Arnold Tsunga, is Africa Director for the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and is based in Johannesburg. Prior to that he was Executive Director of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Executive Secretary of the Law Society of Zimbabwe (LSZ), National Chairperson of Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) and Vice President of International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). A Humphrey Leadership Fellow and Paul Harris Fellow, Arnold is one of Africa's leading human rights lawyers and in recognition of his dedication to defending human rights in spite of the threat to his own life he was awarded the prestigious Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders in October 2006, as well as the Human Rights Watch Highest Award for human rights defenders.



Salman Shaikh is the Founder and CEO of the Shaikh Group. He has formerly served as Director of the Brookings Doha Center and fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy. He focuses on mediation and conflict resolution issues facing the Middle East and South Asia. He has held posts at the United Nations and the Office of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned in Qatar.

Other contributors:

We would like to thank the following for their contribution to Crisis Action's work over the past year:

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To ensure the organisation's financial viability and safeguard its integrity and independence, we are continuously expanding and diversifying our donor base. Crisis Action applies strict accountability and transparency standards to its funding relationships. We would like to thank the following donors for their generous support:

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Cover photo: A man reacts after a barrel bomb was dropped, reportedly by forces loyal to Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, in Aleppo, Syria.
Photo: REUTERS/Hosam Katan

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