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Press release

Civil society intelligence agency releases new forecasts for insecurity and conflict in Southern Africa in 2014

LONDON, 28 February 2014: Some narratives have painted Southern Africa as a region largely absent of conflict and insecurity. In reality, instability persists beneath the surface due to inequitable settlements following independence or struggles for national liberation.

A new study from Open Briefing, *Southern Africa: Forecasts for Insecurity and Conflict in 2014*, attempts to avoid generalisations by analysing specific factors and identifying forecasts for individual countries in the region.

Open Briefing is the world's first civil society intelligence agency. They are a unique not-for-profit social enterprise providing intelligence and research services to civil society organisations and concerned citizens.

For the past six months, Open Briefing's Africa desk has been developing forecasts for insecurity and conflict in Africa over 2014. Separate synthesis reports for West, Central and Southern Africa have been published over February 2014.

Their intelligence team has exploited the most reliable datasets and deployed Open Briefing's trademark data-driven, evidence-led analysis combined with expert experience in national and international politics and a thorough understanding of significant trends in African security. Using the cone of plausibility method and other analytical techniques borrowed from the intelligence community, analysts have developed baseline, plausible and wildcard scenarios for countries throughout Africa. The report for Southern Africa focusses on 10 countries in the region whose drivers and internal volatility may create instability and conflict over 2014.

While region has, in general, experienced around two decades of freedom and prosperity, drivers of insecurity remain. Paramount among them is the growing inequality between rich and poor. The majority of citizens in the region are unable to enjoy the same level of prosperity as the small elite that has profited from the natural resource boom in **Angola, Mozambique** and **Zambia**, or the wealthy white minority in **Namibia** and **South Africa**.

Another major concern is the extent to which the region's economies were affected by the global financial crisis, particularly the diamond exporters and tourist destinations, such as **Botswana** and South Africa, and the degree to which the emerging middle class in these countries have become dependent on credit to maintain their new lifestyles.



open briefing
the civil society intelligence agency

Open Briefing
27 Old Gloucester Street
Bloomsbury
London WC1N 3AX

t 020 7193 9805
info@openbriefing.org
www.openbriefing.org

Politics across the region continues to be dominated by an aging generation of figures involved in national liberation movements, and 'struggle credentials' will play a critical role in leadership successions in **Zimbabwe**, South Africa, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique in 2014. These qualifications contrast significantly with the priorities of the educated 'born free' generation, many of whom have no job prospects and feel disconnected from both political elites and popular narratives. A similar picture emerges in agrarian **Malawi**, where the political class is engulfed in scandal ahead of elections in 2014, and in **Swaziland**, which remains an absolute monarchy in a region that leads the continent for political participation and human rights. While **Madagascar** will pose a continued test for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and international actors in 2014.

Nick Branson, lead author of the report and a contributing analyst at Open Briefing, explained:

'Examining the underlying drivers of conflict, this timely report identifies issues that need to be addressed by incumbent national liberation movements in Southern Africa if they are to remain in power.'

Chris Abbott, founder and Executive Director of Open Briefing, commented:

'This study is a major accomplishment for Open Briefing, as it showcases our unique approach and the abilities of our analysts, while providing civil society, government and businesses with intelligence and forecasting that can inform their decision-making.'

Southern Africa: Forecasts for Insecurity and Conflict in 2014 will be of interest to those working in the media, aid and development, African politics, peacebuilding, international business and anyone with an interest in what is happening – and what is going to happen – in Southern Africa.

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Notes to editors

1. *Southern Africa: Forecasts for Insecurity and Conflict in 2014* is published on 28 February 2014 and available to download from <http://www.openbriefing.org/thinktank/publications/southern-africa-forecasts-2014/>.
2. Lead author Nick Branson is available for interview and comment. Please call **+44 (0)7919 114 512**, Skype **nickbranson1984** or email **nick.branson@me.com** to arrange. Mr Branson is based in London, United Kingdom.
3. Nick Branson is a contributing analyst at Open Briefing. He is an expert in African politics, governance and the rule of law. He has advised governments, political parties, legislatures and civil society organisations across Africa. Nick is also the Programme Manager for the Africa Justice Foundation and is a Deployable Civilian Expert for the UK government's Stabilisation Unit. He is currently undertaking a PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, and holds a MA in International Studies and Diplomacy from the same institution.
4. For more information about Open Briefing, please visit **www.openbriefing.org** or contact the Executive Director, Chris Abbott, on **+44 (0)20 7193 9805** or **chris.abbott@openbriefing.org**.