

Middle East and North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

➔ **Israel-Palestine** Clashes erupted at Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade between Muslim worshippers and Israeli police and fighting along Israel-Gaza fence area left at least nine Palestinian militants dead. In Jerusalem, tens of thousands of Muslims gathered to pray at Holy Esplanade on first day of Muslim holiday Eid al-Adha 11 Aug, which coincided with Jewish holiday Tisha B'Av. After rumours spread that police would allow Jews entry in violation of status quo, clashes broke out between Muslims and police leaving at least 61 Palestinians and four police officers injured. Later that day, police authorised Jews to enter, allowing some 1,700 Jews to be on site. Jordan, custodian of Jerusalem's sacred sites, condemned Israel's 11 Aug decision to allow Jews access on that day; Jordanian MPs 19 Aug recommended that govt expel Israel's ambassador and reconsider Israel-Jordan peace treaty. Israeli police 15 Aug shot dead Palestinian youth who stabbed policeman near Holy Esplanade. In Gaza, Israeli forces 1-17 Aug killed at least nine Palestinian militants who approached fence. Militants fired rocket into Israel 16 Aug, Israel intercepted it and same day struck Hamas targets in Gaza. Next day militants fired three rockets into Israel, two intercepted, one landed in Sderot. Two suicide bombings 27 Aug at police checkpoints in Gaza city left three officers dead; Hamas declared state of emergency throughout Gaza. In West Bank, Israel 5-6 Aug approved construction of 2,304 houses for Israelis in Area C. Following deadly stabbing 7 Aug of Israeli soldier near Migdal Oz settlement, Israeli security forces in Beit Kahel village 10 Aug arrested two Palestinians suspected of attack; Israel blamed Hamas. Suspected Palestinian bombing 23 Aug killed Israeli near Dolev settlement. Iranian-backed Iraqi paramilitary group accused Israel of conducting airstrikes on their assets in Iraq (see Iraq). Israeli airstrikes 24 Aug hit Iranian forces near Syrian capital, Damascus, leaving five dead (see Syria). Suspected Israeli drone strikes targeted Iran-backed militants in Lebanon; Lebanese President Aoun 26 Aug called attack on Beirut "declaration of war" (see Lebanon).

➔ **Jordan** Govt, as custodian of Jerusalem's holy sites, condemned Israel's 11 Aug decision to allow Jews access to Holy Esplanade on first day of Muslim holiday Eid al-Adha, which coincided with Jewish holiday Tisha B'Av. Jordanian FM 18 Aug summoned Israel's ambassador demanding end to Israeli violations at Holy Esplanade and next day MPs recommended expelling Israeli ambassador and reconsidering Israel-Jordan peace treaty. Following govt decision to impose anti-smuggling measures, demonstrators 23-24 Aug clashed with security forces in Ramtha on border with Syria.

⚠️ **Lebanon** President Aoun called suspected Israeli drone strikes on Iran-allied militias in Lebanon a declaration of war, raising risk of escalation in Sept. In capital Beirut, two Israeli drones 25 Aug attacked Hizbollah stronghold, one crashed and other exploded and damaged its media centre; attack reportedly targeted and destroyed equipment related to Hizbollah's precision-guided missiles program. Israel 26 Aug conducted drone attack on military posts of Iran-backed armed group Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine-General Command near Qusaya in east, no

reported casualties. President Aoun 26 Aug called Beirut attack “declaration of war” and PM Hariri called it “blatant violation of Lebanese sovereignty”. Hizbollah leader Nasrallah same day condemned “aggression”, pledging to down any Israeli aircraft that entered Lebanese airspace and retaliate for future Israeli killings of Hizbollah members in Syria. Political deadlock over deadly shoot-out in June involving supporters of two rival Druze parties thawed mid-Aug. Leaders of rival parties met and reconciled 9 Aug; cabinet next day convened for first time in six weeks. Following talks in Washington with U.S. Sec State Pompeo, Hariri 15 Aug expressed his commitment to U.S.-led negotiation process to resolve Israel-Lebanon land and maritime border dispute.

↓ **Syria** Fighting intensified in north west as govt forces made advances into rebel-held Idlib province and targeted Turkish military convoy, while Turkey and U.S. made progress in negotiating creation of safe zone along Turkey-Syria border. Govt declared conditional ceasefire in north west 1 Aug, but resumed bombing 5 Aug citing refusal of jihadist militants to withdraw from de-escalation zone. As pro-govt forces advanced in northern Hama province, clashes 14 Aug left fourteen pro-govt fighters and 27 rebels dead. Opposition fighters same day shot down govt warplane. Pro-govt airstrikes 16-17 Aug killed twenty civilians in Deir al-Sharqi village in Idlib province. After heavy fighting, in which at least 59 rebels and 28 pro-govt fighters killed, rebels 20-21 Aug retreated from Khan Shaykhun and neighbouring Kafr Zita and Lataminah. Turkey, facing loss of observation post in Morek, northern Hama province, 19 Aug sent military convoy to support rebel forces; govt and Russia carried out airstrikes targeting convoy, killing three Syrian civilians. Turkey same day said attacks violated Sept 2018 Sochi Agreement and threatened to use right to self-defence. At Syria-Turkey border crossings thousands of Syrian protesters 30 Aug decried Ankara’s alleged acquiescence to govt advances and demanded refuge in Turkey, Turkish soldiers used tear gas and fired shots to disperse crowds. U.S. 31 Aug said it had conducted airstrike on al-Qaeda affiliate in Idlib Hurras al-Din, killing 40 militants. U.S. delegation in Turkish capital Ankara 7 Aug said it had agreed with Turkey to form joint operation centre in Turkey to oversee creation of safe zone and carry out joint patrols there. Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) 27 Aug said they had begun withdrawal from safe zone. Islamic State (ISIS) continued attacks in north east: car bombing in al-Qahtaniya 7 Aug killed five civilians; another in Qamishli 18 Aug killed policeman. Israel 24 Aug said it had conducted airstrikes in Aqraba, south of Damascus, preventing Iranian drone strike on Israel.

Gulf and Arabian Peninsula

➔ **Bahrain** FM al-Khalifa 17 Aug attended signing of Sudanese transitional govt agreement in Sudanese capital, Khartoum. Govt 19 Aug said it would join U.S.-led maritime security initiative for Middle Eastern waterways.

➔ **Iran** Iran-U.S. tensions remained high over maritime security and Iran’s continued threat to further breach in Sept 2015 nuclear accord if European parties do not mitigate economic impact of U.S. sanctions. Iran 4 Aug said it had detained Iraqi tanker in Persian Gulf 31 July, accusing it of smuggling fuel. UK, Bahrain and Australia joined U.S.-led maritime security initiative for Middle East; Israel 6 Aug reportedly indicated it was supporting with intelligence. FM Zarif 12 Aug said naval

build-up in Persian Gulf would increase “risk of combustion”. Gibraltar 15 Aug released Iranian tanker it had detained since early July on suspicion of transporting oil to Syria; U.S. 16 Aug issued warrant for tanker’s seizure, which Gibraltar rejected 18 Aug. Iran 26 Aug said it had dispatched one destroyer and one aircraft carrier to Gulf of Aden. Iran continued to threaten that it would further breach 2015 nuclear deal on 6 Sept if agreement’s European parties failed to mitigate economic impact of U.S. sanctions. Former German ambassador to Iran who was due to head mechanism to facilitate trade with Iran bypassing U.S. sanctions (INSTEX) 8 Aug withdrew from post. After Iran breached deal’s cap on low enriched uranium stockpile in July, Iranian nuclear official 13 Aug said its stockpile was “growing rapidly”. Israeli media 5 Aug reported that Iran increased its financial assistance to Hamas to \$30mn per month. Delegation of Yemen’s Huthi movement in Tehran 11-17 Aug met FM Zarif, Supreme Leader Khamenei and Western ambassadors. Huthis 17 Aug announced appointment of ambassador to Iran. FM Zarif held discussions with French officials in Paris 23 Aug and returned to France 25 Aug for further consultations with E3 (France, Germany and UK) on sidelines of G-7 summit in Biarritz, France. President Rouhani 27 Aug said U.S. should lift sanctions as condition for talks. Kurdish militants 27 Aug killed member of paramilitary force in Piranshahr in north west; Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) next day said it had killed two militants responsible. U.S. 28-30 Aug imposed several further sanctions on Iran, including on Iranian tanker released from Gibraltar.

↓ **Iraq** Suspected Israeli drone strike on Iran-backed militia killed two, prompting Iran-allied parliamentary bloc to call it a declaration of war against Iraq, and security forces continued operations against Islamic State (ISIS). Following suspected Israeli airstrikes on assets of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Iraq late July, PM Mahdi 16 Aug banned all unauthorised military flights. Explosion and large fire in missile depot of Iran-backed paramilitary Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU) in central Baghdad 12 Aug killed one person, prompting interior minister to order investigation. Explosion of unknown cause also damaged weapons depot of PMU militia Kataib Hezbollah in al-Balad base in Salah al-Din province 20 Aug. In al-Qaim near Syrian border, suspected Israeli drone strike 25 Aug killed at least two Kataib Hizbollah fighters; parliamentary bloc Fatah Alliance 26 Aug held U.S. responsible for suspected Israeli attack, which it called “declaration of war” against Iraq, and demanded withdrawal of U.S. troops; U.S. State Department same day denied responsibility and said it would cooperate with investigations. Security forces continued operations against ISIS. In Kirkuk province, Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) 4 Aug launched New Dawn operation, deploying troops and warplanes to Hawija, al-Rashad and al-Abassi and reportedly killing several militants. In Diyala province, military 7 Aug said it had killed four ISIS militants as part of ongoing operation Will of Victory. In Anbar province, CTS 14 Aug killed ten militants. U.S. soldier 10 Aug died in gunfight with suspected ISIS militants in Nineveh province. In Daquq, south of Kirkuk city, suspected ISIS mortar fire 12 Aug killed two policemen.

➡ **Kuwait** Iranian FM Zarif met Crown Prince al-Sabah and FM al-Sabah in Kuwait City 18 Aug and advocated for regional dialogue forum and non-aggression pact between Iran and Kuwait.

➡ **Qatar** Qatar 4 Aug held 15th joint coast guard meeting with Iran in Iranian capital, Tehran. Iranian FM Zarif met Emir al-Thani and FM al-Thani in Doha 12 Aug

and advocated for regional dialogue forum and non-aggression pact between Iran and Qatar. FM al-Thani 17 Aug attended signing of Sudanese transitional govt agreement in Sudanese capital, Khartoum. FM al-Thani 19 Aug met Somalia PM Khayre in Somalia capital, Mogadishu and announced Qatari firm signed investment deal to construct port in Hobyo. Govt 20 Aug hosted talks in Doha between U.S. and Taliban.

➔ **Saudi Arabia** Govt sought to end hostilities between its allies in Yemen after United Arab Emirates (UAE)-backed southern separatists took Aden from Hadi govt, both nominally part of Saudi-led coalition opposed to Yemen's Huthis; fighting raised tensions between UAE and Saudi Arabia, which remains opposed to Yemen's partition. In Yemen, UAE-backed southern secessionists Southern Transitional Council (STC) 7-10 Aug seized control of provisional capital Aden and expelled pro-govt forces, including armed groups closely associated with Islamist Islah party (see Yemen). High-level delegations from Saudi Arabia and UAE, including Saudi King Salman and UAE Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed, met in Saudi city of Mecca 12 Aug and jointly called for parties to "prioritise dialogue and reason in interest of Yemen". Saudi Arabia same day called for emergency summit on Yemen's southern conflict in Jeddah. Saudi and UAE FMs 26 Aug issued joint statement reaffirming coalition's support to Hadi govt while condemning "defamation" of UAE. Huthis continued to launch attacks into Saudi territory: drones 9 Aug targeted Abha airport, inflicting no major damage; 17 Aug hit and started fire at Shaybah oil field near UAE border, prompting coalition to carry out apparently retaliatory airstrikes around Sanaa same day and around Saada 20 Aug. FM Jubeir and Minister of State for African Affairs Ahmed Qattan 17 Aug attended signing of Sudan's transitional govt agreement in Sudanese capital Khartoum; Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman next day called Ethiopian PM Abiy and AU Chairperson Moussa Faki to congratulate them for successful mediation. Authorities 16 Aug said they had identified 3.67mn people in Saudi Arabia lacking proper documentation, mostly Ethiopians and Yemenis, and would soon deport nearly 1 million.

➔ **United Arab Emirates** Yemen's southern separatists, trained and equipped by United Arab Emirates (UAE), seized southern city of Aden from Saudi-backed Hadi govt forces, pitting UAE interests against those of Saudi Arabia, which opposes Yemen's partition. In Yemen, UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC) 7-10 Aug seized control of provisional capital Aden and expelled pro-govt forces allied to Riyadh, including armed groups closely associated with Islamist Islah party (see Yemen). High-level delegations from UAE and Saudi Arabia, including UAE Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed and Saudi King Salman, met in Saudi city of Mecca 12 Aug and jointly called for parties to "prioritise dialogue and reason in interest of Yemen". Following Saudi call for emergency summit on matter in Jeddah, UAE 17 Aug confirmed alignment with Riyadh but did not join Saudi Arabia's calls for STC to leave Aden. Abu Dhabi 20 Aug rejected Yemeni govt's accusations that it was supporting secessionists and held Yemeni President Hadi partially responsible for clashes. Saudi and UAE FMs 26 Aug issued joint statement reaffirming coalition's support to Hadi govt while condemning "defamation" of UAE; Abu Dhabi 28 Aug denied Hadi govt's allegations of torture in secret prisons. Minister of State al-Sultan al-Jaber 17 Aug attended signing of Sudan's Transitional Government agreement in Sudanese capital Khartoum.

📌🌐 **Yemen** Southern separatists aligned with United Arab Emirates (UAE) seized city of Aden from govt forces 10 Aug and moved to consolidate control across south, raising risk that violence escalates in Sept between opposed factions in south. Fighting triggered by Huthi missile strike in Aden in south 1 Aug that killed Munir al-Mashali, commander of UAE-trained Security Belt force and prominent figure in separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC), and 29 other officers; STC alleged that members of Saudi-backed Islamist Islah faction facilitated strike. After reports emerged 7 Aug that President Hadi's guards had fired at people attending al-Mashali's funeral in Aden, STC launched offensive on city same day. STC 10 Aug said it had taken control of city, which govt confirmed. Fighting left at least 40 dead. Separatists sought to consolidate control elsewhere in south: in Abyan governorate, pro-STC Security Belt fighters 19 Aug seized military base in Zinjibar and 20 Aug captured al-Kawad military camp. Govt launched counterattacks, regaining bases in Shebwa governorate and control of Zinjibar. Govt forces 28 Aug moved on Aden, prompting clashes in eastern part. Saudi Arabia, which opposes Yemen's partition, 12 Aug called for talks in Saudi city of Jeddah. STC 15 Aug said it would attend talks, but would not cede Aden unless Islah and northerners were removed from powerful positions in govt. Govt 20 Aug refused to participate in dialogue with STC unless latter retreated from Aden. UAE same day rejected govt's accusations that it had supported separatists' capture of Aden. Govt 29 Aug accused UAE of airstrike that killed 30 govt troops between Abyan and Aden; UAE same day claimed responsibility for airstrikes but said they targeted "terrorist militias". Huthis drones 9 Aug targeted Abha airport in Saudi Arabia; airstrike 17 Aug started fire at Shaybah oil field near UAE border, prompting coalition airstrikes around Sanaa same day and around Saada 20 Aug. Huthis claimed to have made advances in north near Saudi border, including attack on coalition soldiers in Kitaf, Saada.

North Africa

➡ **Algeria** Govt took steps to initiate dialogue with civil society and prepare for presidential elections as weekly protests demanding radical political change carried on and military continued to pursue high-profile critics in courts. In capital Algiers and other cities, thousands of protesters continued to gather for weekly demonstrations, demanding departure of Interim President Ben Salah and PM Bedoui and end to de facto rule of army chief of staff Gaïd Salah. Following Ben Salah's late July appointment of panel led by former parliament speaker Karim Younes to organise dialogue between govt and civil society, Younes proposed measures to ease tensions, including freeing prisoners and allowing demonstrators free access to Algiers. Gaïd Salah late July refused to allow measures. In response Younes 1 Aug tendered resignation from panel, but withdrew it same day. Younes 4 Aug announced creation of several commissions to focus on different issues and 17 Aug appointed "committee of wise men" to prepare national dialogue that should lay groundwork for presidential elections, despite some opposition groups' preference for electing constituent assembly. Secular and Islamist opposition figures 3 Aug refused to participate in panel discussions, accusing govt of attempting to circumvent popular demands. Student protesters stormed panel's press conference 18 Aug, demanding Ben Salah's resignation. Military court 6 Aug issued international arrest warrant for former army chief of staff and defence minister Khaled Nezzar who had criticised Gaïd Salah on

grounds of “conspiracy and breach against public order”. Authorities stepped up repression: Committee to Protect Journalists 14 Aug reported that authorities had blocked five local news websites. Authorities 19 Aug detained and deported senior staff member of NGO Human Rights Watch Ahmed Benchemsi, accusing him of “serving foreign agendas aiming at infiltrating popular protests”.

➔ **Egypt** Security forces responded to deadly car bombing in Cairo by stepping up raids on suspected Islamist militants, and Islamic State (ISIS) militants maintained insurgency in North Sinai. In Cairo, car bombing killed 22 people outside National Cancer Institute 5 Aug; govt blamed Hasm, organisation allegedly linked to Muslim Brotherhood, but Hasm denied responsibility. Security forces 8 Aug carried out raids on suspected terrorist hideouts in town of Atsa, Fayoum province, about 100km south west of Cairo, and East Shorouk, about 50km north east of Cairo, killing seventeen alleged militants. In North Sinai, ISIS militants 4 Aug kidnapped young man in Bir al-Abd and 6 Aug published video which appeared to show execution of two civilians in Rafah, whom they accused of being agents for military.

⚡ **Libya** Deadly stalemate persisted in and around capital Tripoli between Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar’s Libyan National Army (LNA) and forces nominally loyal to UN-backed Govt of National Accord (GNA), and fighting escalated in south between militias allied to GNA and LNA. Fighting in and around Tripoli led to no substantial change in territorial control amid humanitarian crisis with over 100,000 displaced, many sheltering in schools. LNA airstrike 2 Aug reportedly killed three GNA fighters in al-Saddadah south east of Tripoli. LNA 15 Aug reportedly shelled Tripoli’s Mitiga airport, killing one guard, and 15-16 Aug bombed Zuwara airport west of Tripoli which it said housed Turkish drones. LNA drone mid-Aug reportedly struck field hospital in al-Aziziya south of Tripoli, drawing UN’s condemnation. After brief lull in fighting 11-12 Aug during Muslim holiday Eid al-Adha, LNA resumed attacks 13 Aug. GNA 21 Aug reportedly retook Sebea district south of Tripoli. Seventeen LNA fighters 23 Aug reportedly surrendered to GNA south of Tripoli. In south, clashes escalated in Murzuq, by late Aug leaving at least 100 people dead and 3,000 displaced. After clashes between unidentified armed groups 4 Aug left four dead, suspected LNA airstrike same day killed at least 43 in Murzuq; locals claim that LNA denied killing civilians and said airstrike targeted “Chadian opposition fighters”. GNA-allied militia known as South Protection Force 18 Aug said it had expelled LNA forces from Murzuq. LNA next day reportedly sent reinforcements to maintain control of nearby Sharara oilfield. In Misrata, about 200km east of Tripoli, LNA 6 Aug hit cargo plane landing at air college and 17 Aug bombed GNA air base; GNA next day said it had downed LNA drone. In Benghazi in east, car bomb 10 Aug killed five, including three UN staffers, prompting UN Sec-Gen Guterres to call for internal investigation.

➔ **Mauritania** In first peaceful transition since independence, newly-elected President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani took office 1 Aug.

➔ **Tunisia** Following death of President Essebsi 25 July, preparations accelerated for presidential elections 15 Sept and legislative elections 6 Oct. Electoral commission 14 Aug approved 26 of 91 candidacies submitted for 15 Sept early presidential elections, including front-runners businessman Nabil Karoui, PM Chahed, Defence Minister Abdelkarim Zbidi, former President Marzouki, and Islamist party An-

Nahda's VP Abdelfattah Mourou. PM Chahed 22 Aug said he had delegated his powers to Public Service Minister Morjane to focus on his campaign and ensure fair elections. Police 23 Aug arrested Karoui on charges of money laundering and tax evasion and banned his TV channel Nessma TV from reporting on elections; Karoui's party next day claimed PM Chahed orchestrated arrest. Electoral commission 24 Aug said Karoui's candidacy remained valid despite arrest. Interim President Ennaceur 2 Aug prolonged nationwide state of emergency for one additional month and 30 Aug extended it until 31 Dec. Govt 3 Aug said security forces had killed two suspected jihadists in Gafsa in south.