

Middle East and North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

↓ **Israel/Palestine** **Israel launched offensive against Islamic Jihad in Gaza that killed dozens in worst fighting since May 2021; Israeli forces continued lethal raids in West Bank.** Israeli military 1 Aug killed alleged teenage member of Islamic Jihad armed faction and arrested two others, including senior leader Bassam Al-Saadi, in raid in Jenin city, West Bank; Islamic Jihad same day declared “state of alertness”, while Israel imposed near-total blockade on Gaza strip, closing crossings and blocking fuel entry. Israel 5 Aug launched “Operation Breaking Dawn” against Islamic Jihad in Gaza, killing two top military commanders and around 20 militants and destroying group’s facilities; in response, Islamic Jihad fired hundreds of rockets into Israel. Following Egyptian-led mediation, sides 7 Aug agreed to immediate ceasefire and Israel next day reopened crossings into Gaza. Gaza’s health ministry reported Israeli strikes killed 49 Palestinians and injured 350, while Israeli sources claimed 34 Israelis were injured. Meanwhile, Israel continued raids in West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem, arresting over 300 Palestinians in Aug. Notably, Israeli security forces 9 Aug killed three Palestinians, including leader of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade cell Ibrahim Al-Nabulsi, and injured 60 in Nablus city; Palestinians same day staged strikes and demonstrations across West Bank. Unidentified gunman 14 Aug wounded at least eight Jewish worshippers in Jerusalem’s Old City. Israeli forces 15 Aug killed Palestinian in occupied East Jerusalem during raid; 18 Aug killed Palestinian and injured 30 others in clashes in Nablus; next day killed Palestinian in Tubas city. Israeli military 18 Aug raided offices of seven human rights organisations in West Bank, six of which Israel had labelled “terrorist organisations” in Oct 2021. Israeli forces 30 Aug exchanged fire with gunmen in Nablus city after three Israeli citizens entered city earlier in day. Ahead of Israeli elections slated for Nov, Knesset member Eli Avidar 2 Aug announced creation of new “Israel Free” party. Likud party 10 Aug elected former PM Benjamin Netanyahu to head of party list. Military continued strikes in Syria (see Syria). Israel and Türkiye 17 Aug restored full diplomatic ties after four years.

➔ **Lebanon** **Govt formation efforts continued without breakthrough as economic crisis deepened, while hopes persisted of deal to resolve maritime dispute with Israel.** Efforts to form govt following 15 May parliamentary elections made no progress. PM Mikati and President Aoun 17 Aug held consultative meetings after discontinuing such discussions after Mikati 29 June proposed cabinet lineup, citing lack of progress; progress has reportedly been hampered by disagreement on allocation of various ministries to different sectarian communities. As obstacles continue to beset legislated reforms required to unlock International Monetary Fund (IMF) financial bailout package, economic crisis continued to deepen. After intermittent bread shortages triggered fights at bakeries nationwide in mid-to-late July, civil servants during month conducted open-ended strikes for weeks, protesting their heavily devalued wages, which has brought most state institutions to standstill. In mid-month, pressure on Lebanese lira increased once more, with currency weakening from 31,000 to one U.S.-dollar on 10 Aug to 34,000 on 20 Aug. European vessel 6 Aug rescued over 75 Lebanese citizens near Turkish coast

from sinking boat, on which they had been trying to reach Europe. Amid rising tensions between Israel and Hizbollah over maritime dispute, hopes continued during month of resolution after U.S. mediator Amos Hochstein late July met with Aoun, Mikati, and House Speaker Nabih Berri, as well as Israeli leaders. Govt reportedly offered to back down from its expanded claim (known as “line 29”), thus renouncing any claim to Karish gas field, in return for solution that adopts “line 23” (which places demarcation line further north) but awards Lebanon additional 80km² that includes Qana prospect – gas deposit of unproven worth; Israel reportedly expressed willingness to accommodate proposal, subject to receiving compensation for ceding 80km² pocket. Despite reported progress, Hizbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah 19 Aug publicly accused Hochstein of wasting time, warning that “escalation will be inevitable” if negotiations do not conclude promptly and allow Lebanon to begin exploring its offshore natural gas reserves.

↓ **Syria** **Deadly clashes escalated in north between Turkish and Kurdish-led forces; Idlib ceasefire held despite violations, as skirmishes broke out between U.S. forces and Iran-linked groups.** In north, suspected Turkish drone 6 Aug killed four, including top commander of Kurdish Workers’ Party’s (PKK) Iranian affiliate Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), in Qamishli city, Hasakah province; in response, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) 8 Aug claimed three cross-border attacks into Türkiye. Turkish troops and Kurdish forces 16 Aug exchanged fire in Kobane, Aleppo province, killing one civilian, while mortar attack on border post reportedly killed Turkish soldier in Turkish province Şanlıurfa. In retaliation, Turkish defence ministry same day claimed Turkish artillery killed 13 suspected Kurdish militants. Syrian state media reported Turkish airstrike 16 Aug killed three regime soldiers and injured six in Aleppo province; Syrian army claimed to have responded by striking Turkish military sites. SDF 18 Aug claimed attacks on army sites in Turkish border provinces Şanlıurfa, Mardin and Gaziantep; Turkish media confirmed three soldiers killed and eight wounded in attacks on border posts in Şanlıurfa and Gaziantep. Kurdish-run administration 19 Aug accused Türkiye of drone attack on girls’ school in Hasakah province, killing four. Rocket attack on market same day killed at least 14 in Al-Bab city in Aleppo province, held by Türkiye-backed forces. Suspected Turkish drone 24 Aug reportedly targeted Tal Rifaat town, Aleppo province, allegedly injuring nine. Meanwhile, Turkish FM Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu 11 Aug stated need to reconcile opposition with regime, stoking unprecedented anger as thousands 11-12 Aug protested Turkish policy in opposition-held areas across north. Idlib province’s March 2020 ceasefire held despite Russian airstrikes in central desert and Idlib province. U.S.-led coalition 15 Aug repelled drones allegedly operated by Iran-linked groups targeting its al-Tanf base in Homs province; U.S. 23 Aug launched airstrikes against groups allegedly linked to Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Deir al-Zor and next day reported three injuries in subsequent exchanges with “Iran-backed militants”. State media 14 Aug claimed Israeli missiles killed three Syrian soldiers in Tartous province and near capital Damascus. Russian forces 26 Aug said Israeli jets targeted facility in Masyaf city, Hama province.

Gulf and Arabian Peninsula

➔ **Iran** **U.S. and Iran returned to EU-brokered talks in most substantive engagement to restore nuclear accord since March, leading to back-**

and-forth exchanges as prospects for final deal remained uncertain. After EU's High Representative Josep Borrell late July said he had shared text for parties' consideration that was "the best possible deal", Borrell's deputy Enrique Mora 3 Aug announced deliberations between U.S., Iran and other signatories of 2015 deal would resume next day in Austrian capital Vienna for first in-person talks since March. Borrell 8 Aug asserted "Behind every technical issue and every paragraph lies a political decision that needs to be taken in the capitals". Iran's lead negotiator, Ali Bagheri-Kani, 15 Aug briefed Supreme National Security Council in advance of Tehran communicating its response to Brussels. U.S. 24 Aug conveyed counter-proposal, which as of late Aug remained under review by Iranians. Meanwhile, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) 3 Aug informed member states that Iran had installed three cascades of IR-6 centrifuges at Natanz nuclear facility, and notified agency of its intent to install further six IR-2m centrifuge cascades. In fourth set of U.S. energy-related sanctions since late May, U.S. 1 Aug sanctioned six companies engaged in petroleum and petrochemical sales to East Asia. Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran same day said it would "launch and inject gas into hundreds of centrifuge machines, including advanced machines"; FM Hossein Amir-Abdollahian framed move as direct reaction to U.S. designations. U.S. forces and "Iran-backed militia groups" conducted tit-for-tat attacks in Syria (see Syria). U.S. Department of Justice 10 Aug charged Iranian national, identified as member of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), over plot to kill former U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton; White House warned of "severe consequences" in event of attack against U.S. citizens, while Iran's foreign ministry denounced accusations as "threadbare and baseless myths". U.S. Sec of State Antony Blinken 14 Aug denounced Iranian govt's incitement of violence against Salman Rushdie as "despicable" following 12 Aug attack against author, who was subject of 1989 fatwa by Ayatollah Khomeini. Both incidents could fuel political opposition in U.S. to negotiating with Tehran.

➔ **Iraq Unrest escalated further in capital Baghdad, where armed clashes between rival Shiite factions killed 30; ruling Kurdish parties quashed protests in Kurdistan.** After supporters of populist Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr stormed parliament in capital Baghdad in late July, thousands of anti-Sadr protestors 1 Aug demonstrated outside Baghdad's Green Zone. Sadr 3 Aug called for protestors to continue sit-in outside parliament, demanded dissolution of parliament, constitutional amendments and early elections; rival Nuri al-Maliki 8 Aug refused demands. Rival bloc Shiite Coordination Framework 12 Aug began sit-in outside Green Zone, demanding govt formation and resumption of parliament meetings. Sadrist protestors 22-23 Aug gathered outside Supreme Judicial Council in Green Zone after Sadr 10 Aug had called on body to dissolve parliament. Shiite leader Kazem al-Haeri 29 Aug announced retirement and encouraged his own followers to support Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei; in response, Sadr announced retirement, leaving his supporters to demonstrate without guidance. Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) that night fired on Sadrist protestors in Green Zone; Saraya Salam, armed wing of Sadr movement, deployed in response, leading to violent fighting that killed 30 and wounded over 200. Sadr supporters attacked PMF offices across southern provinces. Sadr next day called for calm and supporters' withdrawal. Deadly clashes night of 31 Aug reportedly spread to southern city Basra. In Kurdistan region, ruling Kurdish parties Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) 6 Aug quashed protests called by leader of New Gen-

eration Movement against delayed govt salary payments, rising food prices and unemployment; in PUK-dominated areas, security forces 6 Aug raided houses of political activists and New Generation Movement headquarters, reportedly arresting at least 40 party members. In KDP-dominated areas, security forces in days before 6 Aug arrested activists and journalists. Meanwhile, protests over electricity shortages 6 Aug erupted in southern Basra, Maysan, Wasit and northern Diyala governorates. Unidentified drone strike 1 Aug targeted Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) in Ranya district of Sulaymaniyah governorate. Turkish defence ministry 27 Aug said it killed nine PKK militants in north. Low-scale Islamic State (ISIS) attacks continued; notably, suspected ISIS attack 2 Aug killed five soldiers in Diyala governorate.

➔ **Saudi Arabia Govt welcomed truce extension in Yemen.** Riyadh 3 Aug welcomed truce extension in Yemen, saying deal "primarily aims to reach a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire" (see Yemen). Terrorism suspect wanted in connection with 2015 bombing of Mosque in Abha city 10 Aug detonated explosive belt in Jeddah city as security forces attempted to arrest him, killing himself and injuring four. U.S. State Dept 2 Aug approved potential sale of Patriot missiles in \$3bn arms deal. Saudi and U.S. 9 Aug announced joint military drills "Native Fury 22" in Yanbu and al-Kharj governorates for eighth time beginning mid-month. In effort to quash domestic dissent, court 15 Aug sentenced women's rights activist Salma al-Shehab to 34 years in prison for tweets critical of govt; U.S. 22 Aug raised "significant concerns" over sentencing. Iranian foreign ministry 5 Aug issued public statement demanding release of Iranian national detained by Saudi Arabia during hajj pilgrimage.

➔ **Yemen Warring parties agreed two-month truce extension, while deadly clashes in Shebwa among rival anti-Huthi factions widened cracks within Political Leadership Council.** Govt and Huthis 2 Aug for second time agreed to extend UN-mediated April truce for another two months; UN's failure to secure six-month extension may signal warring parties' reluctance both to return to frontline fighting and to transform truce into permanent ceasefire. Huthis same day demanded disbursement of salaries to public sector employees in Huthi-controlled areas, which they said was precondition for further truce extension, and opening of ports and airports. Govt refused salary payments before Huthis reopen roads in Taiz city; Taiz issue remained deadlocked despite rounds of talks in recent months in Jordanian capital Amman. Govt 29 Aug claimed Huthi attack killed 10 soldiers near Taiz city in "dangerous escalation". On diplomatic front, UN Military Advisor Antony Hayward 4 Aug travelled to Ibb and Taiz governorates and met Huthi and govt representatives to discuss reopening roads in Taiz; UN envoy's representative in Aden 10 Aug visited Mokha city in Taiz governorate to discuss opening roads local authorities. Meanwhile, tensions escalated within Political Leadership Council established in April. In Shebwa governorate, United Arab Emirates (UAE)-backed groups and Islah-aligned factions came to blows after Shebwa Governor and General People's Congress Party member Muhammad bin al-Wazir al-Awlaki 6 Aug removed local commander of paramilitary Special Security Forces (SSF) and Islah party loyalist Abdi Rabbi Lakaab. Fighting between UAE-aligned Giants Brigades and Shebwa Defence Forces (SDF) on one side and SSF on other 7 Aug erupted in provincial capital Ataq; Giants Brigades and SDF 10 Aug reportedly took over city with dozens killed in fighting. Islah forces said Giants Brigades 20 Aug took over parts of oil field in Shebwa's Ayaz. In neighbouring Abyan governorate, Political Leadership Council leader Rashid al-Alimi 22 Aug ordered Southern Transition Council (STC, backed by

UAE and aligned with SDF) to cease its military operations, which STC next day described as “anti-terror” operation. Earlier, Al-Alimi 1 Aug appointed STC leader as governor of Socotra island and General People’s Congress official with purported STC ties as governor of Hadramawt.

North Africa

➔ **Algeria** **Govt ruled out reconciliation with Morocco, while French President Macron visited country in bid to mend strained relations.** On occasion of newly-instituted National Army Day, army chief of staff, Gen Saïd Chengriha, 4 Aug extolled unity and cohesion between armed forces and Algerians against external threats; new public holiday epitomizes military institution’s growing influence on country’s politics. Authorities 23 Aug detained former interim PM Noureddine Bedoui on corruption charges, making him third ex-premier to face jail on corruption charges since late President Bouteflika resigned in 2019. Govt in August edition of its defence magazine *El Djeich* said there will be “no peace with Morocco”, citing neighbouring country’s “occupation” of Western Sahara; statement comes after Moroccan King Mohammed VI late July called for Algeria to engage in dialogue to restore “normal [bilateral] relations” one year after Algiers severed diplomatic ties with Rabat. Amid tense relations with European countries, President Tebboune early Aug suggested Algeria may apply to join BRICS bloc of emerging economies that includes Russia, Brazil, China, India and South Africa. French President Macron 25-27 Aug visited Algeria for first time since 2017 and met with Tebboune; leaders signed joint declaration calling for “new and irreversible dynamic” in bilateral relationship. In following days, several media outlets reported French energy group Engie and Algerian public oil and gas group Sonatrach nearing agreement for Algeria to increase natural gas exports to France by 50%.

➔ **Egypt** **Amid growing economic hardship, President Sisi reshuffled cabinet and Central Bank governor resigned; govt forces engaged in days-long clashes with Islamic State-affiliated militants near Suez Canal in Sinai Peninsula.** Govt 11 Aug approved plan to ration electricity in order to save more natural gas for export amid severe shortage of foreign currency. Sisi 13 Aug replaced 13 ministers, including tourism portfolio, citing need to improve his administration’s performance, and Central Bank Governor Tarek Amer 17 Aug resigned. Issue of political prisoners continued to impede preparations for Sisi-sponsored national dialogue. National dialogue board of trustee member, Amr Hashem Rabie, 3 Aug called for more prisoner releases to “create an atmosphere of trust between the regime and activists”; another board member, Negad El Borai, 10 Aug presented Dialogue Coordinator Daa Rashwan with letter from 19 rights defenders warning that dialogue cannot succeed unless authorities first commit to upholding human rights. In response, Rashwan 12 Aug reiterated that over 700 prisoners have been released or given presidential pardon since Sisi called for national dialogue in April. Amid continued violence in North and Central Sinai, Islamic State-affiliated Sinai Province (SP) moved toward Suez Canal. Govt forces and Sinai Tribal Union fighters on one hand, and SP operatives on the other, 11 Aug exchanged fire around Jilbana village (North Sinai), about 20km east of Suez Canal. In following days, clashes reportedly reached as close as 5km from canal and left several dead, with army forces blocking Al-Arish-Al-Qantara highway, while SP operatives planted mines around Jilbana to

hinder govt forces' advance. Situation in area unclear in late Aug. Meanwhile, NGO Human Rights Watch 30 Aug urged authorities to investigate videos circulating on social media platforms since July and apparently showing military and pro-govt militias committing extrajudicial executions of suspected SP militants in North Sinai.

↓ 🇱🇻 **Libya Worst fighting in years broke out in capital Tripoli between forces loyal to rival govts, raising prospect of a return to full-blown war.** Fighting 26-27 Aug raged across Tripoli as forces aligned with Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR)-appointed PM Bashagha failed to take control of capital and oust Tripoli-based govt of PM Dabaiba; 32 people reportedly killed and 159 injured. Flare-up followed days of escalating tensions between rival factions. Smaller-scale clashes 5-6 Aug opposed Bashagha-aligned forces and militia loyal to Dabaiba near airport road in Tripoli. Amid build-up of forces outside Tripoli, UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) 23 Aug called for "immediate de-escalation", warned that "current political stalemate [...] cannot be resolved through armed confrontation". Bashagha 24 Aug called on Dabaiba to step down and peacefully hand over power to avoid bloodshed; Dabaiba rejected call, denounced "threats to ignite war" and vowed that no one would be allowed to meddle with security of Tripoli. Dabaiba 25 Aug urged head of Tripoli-based consultative High State Council, Khalid Al-Mishri, and HoR Speaker Aguila Saleh to approve constitutional basis for elections. Meanwhile, Supreme Court 18 Aug announced decision to reactivate its Constitutional Chamber, which had been inactive since 2016. Dabaiba same day welcomed move, saying it could act as "deterrent" to "abuses and violations" of 2015 power-sharing agreement. Opponents however denounced political manoeuvring in reaction to HoR session held 16 Aug, during which lawmakers voted on amending statutes of Supreme Court and ruled it could appoint advisers to top court. After Dabaiba in July changed oil leadership, Central Bank 2 Aug reportedly disbursed 8.5bn dinars to National Oil Corporation as part of 15bn "urgent and temporary financial arrangement" concluded in mid-April. Libya's envoy to UN, Taher El-Sonni, 15 Aug said Dabaiba's govt had rejected UN proposal to appoint Senegalese former Minister Abdoulaye Bathily as new head of UNSMIL; move came after UN Security Council late July extended UNSMIL's mandate for only three months amid Russian insistence that new UN mission head is chosen before it agrees to longer extension.

➔ **Tunisia New constitution giving President Saïed nearly unchecked powers came into force, and administrative court dealt blow to Saïed's moves to control judiciary.** After administrative court early to mid-Aug dismissed all three appeals against results of 25 July constitutional referendum, electoral commission 16 Aug announced final results, saying 31% of electorate took part in referendum with 94.6% of them voting yes. Saïed next day ratified new constitution, which expands presidential powers, and pledged in televised speech to establish constitutional court and to issue new electoral law ahead of legislative elections set for Dec; electoral commission 18 Aug said electoral law must be promulgated by mid-Sept for elections to be held on time. Opposition coalition National Salvation Front 18 Aug rejected new constitution, deeming it and all laws and institutions that emerge from it as illegal; also reiterated its call for "rescue government" to lead country into early presidential and legislative elections. Meanwhile, administrative court 9 Aug suspended dismissal of 49 of the 57 judges whom Saïed had unilaterally fired in June, citing "lack of legal and factual grounds" for dismissal. Govt in following days worked to block implementation of court's ruling, claiming on 14 and 20 Aug

that all 57 judges face criminal charges. Crackdown on dissent continued. Authorities 3 Aug arrested member of dissolved parliament, Rached Khiari, on charges including “insulting the army” and “conspiring against state security”; Khiari went into hiding in 2021 after accusing Saïed of receiving U.S. funding during his 2019 presidential campaign. Military court 16 Aug sentenced journalist Salah Attia to three months in prison on charges including “accusing a public official of illegal acts without proof” and “denigrating the army”. Govt and country’s main workers’ (UGTT) and employers’ (UTICA) unions 15 Aug started talks over economic reforms required by International Monetary Fund for rescue program. Morocco 26 Aug recalled ambassador to Tunisia hours after Saïed met with Western Sahara independence movement leader, Brahim Ghali, in capital Tunis (see Western Sahara).

➔ **Western Sahara Diplomatic row erupted between Morocco and Tunisia over Western Sahara; UN warned of serious food insecurity in Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria.** Moroccan King Mohammed VI 20 Aug called on international partners to offer “unequivocal” support for Morocco’s autonomy plan for Western Sahara, suggesting friendship with Rabat will be measured by diplomatic stand on dispute. Polisario Front independence movement 22 Aug responded Western Sahara’s status is “clearly and explicitly defined” as country “separate and distinct” from Morocco. Morocco 26 Aug recalled ambassador to Tunisia hours after Tunisian President Saïed met with Polisario leader and Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic President Brahim Ghali in Tunis ahead of development conference; Tunisian govt next day recalled ambassador to Rabat for consultations, reaffirmed Tunisia’s “neutrality over Western Sahara issue”. UN team in Algeria 24 Aug warned Sahrawi refugees in Algeria’s Tindouf province at risk of serious food insecurity and malnutrition after funding gaps forced World Food Programme to cut food rations in camps by 75%.