

Middle East and North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

➔ 🇮🇱* **Israel-Palestine Clashes continued in occupied territories while tensions between Israeli govt and Palestinian Authority (PA) remained high and could escalate further in July amid possible Israeli annexation of portions of the West Bank.** Clashes 2-15 June between Israeli security forces and Palestinians in West Bank left 25 Palestinians injured, including nine children; Israeli forces 26 June shot and injured nine Palestinians in Kufur Qaddoum in West Bank during protest against Israeli settlements. Israeli police officers 23 June shot dead Palestinian driver near East Jerusalem. Meanwhile, PM Netanyahu's annexation plans – cabinet discussions over which can begin 1 July – prompted criticism at home and abroad: settler leader David Elhayani 3 June publicly criticised U.S. President Trump for endangering existence of Israel; United Arab Emirates Ambassador to U.S. 14 June warned annexation would jeopardise Israel's efforts to improve relations with Arab countries; over 1,000 parliamentarians from 25 European countries 23 June signed joint letter describing plan as “fatal to the prospects of Israeli-Palestinian peace”. Following President Abbas's mid-May suspension of all agreements with Israel, PA reportedly shut down channels of communication. After PA 3 June rejected tax revenues Israeli authorities collected on its behalf, PM Shtayyeh 9 June announced PA would be unable to pay civil servants' salaries. PA 15 June announced it will start issuing personal documents for Palestinians without validation by Israeli authorities. PM Shtayyeh 9 June said PA had submitted counter-proposal to U.S. peace plan to international mediators; proposal reportedly includes establishment of demilitarised, sovereign Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as capital. United Arab Emirates 9 June sent second shipment of COVID-19 aid to Palestinian territories via Israeli airport; PA next day condemned move. In Gaza, Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) 15 June launched airstrikes in southern Gaza strip in retaliation to rocket fired from Gaza. Hamas 25 June called Israeli annexation plan “declaration of war”. Militants in Gaza 26 June reportedly launched two rockets into Israel, IDF next day launched airstrikes in southern Gaza strip. In Syria, Israel reportedly launched numerous airstrikes throughout month on suspected Iranian and Iran-linked targets (see Syria).

➔ 🇯🇴 **Jordan Israel-Jordan relations continued to worsen amid possible looming Israeli annexation of West Bank.** King Abdullah mid-June reportedly refused phone call from Israeli PM Netanyahu; 16 June warned U.S. lawmakers that any unilateral Israeli move toward annexation would be “unacceptable”. Meanwhile, FM Safadi 18 June met with Palestinian Authority's President Abbas in occupied West Bank to coordinate response to possible annexation; said annexation would endanger peace process and “kill” two-state solution (see Israel-Palestine).

⚡ **Lebanon Unprecedented currency collapse sparked renewed anti-govt protests while negotiations with International Monetary Fund (IMF) stalled due to disagreement between govt and banks over magnitude of financial losses.** As anti-govt protests 6 June erupted in centre of capital Beirut, clashes fuelled by sectarian invective broke out as some protesters

called for disarmament of Hizbollah, leaving 48 demonstrators and 25 soldiers reportedly injured; political and religious leaders next day called for calm. Hizbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah 17 June reaffirmed group's resistance to any attempt to coerce party into disarming through economic pressure. Exchange rate on black market 11 June for first time crossed 5,000 Lebanese lira to the dollar and stood above 8,000 on 30 June, despite govt's new pricing system aimed at gradually reducing rate; currency depreciated by more than 80% since beginning of crisis in Oct 2019. Following currency crash, anti-govt protesters across country including in cities of Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon 11-13 June took to streets; some rallies turned violent, with protesters attacking banks and commercial property. PM Diab 12 June held emergency meeting, announced Central Bank will inject dollars into market to mitigate currency collapse. Meanwhile, negotiations with IMF over rescue package stalled due to disagreement between govt and banks over scale and distribution of financial sector losses; banks insist on repayments of internal debt and deposits through selling state assets whereas govt previews "bail-in" solution affecting shareholders of banks and depositors alike. PM Diab 10 June announced senior govt appointments widely seen as controversial due to background of appointees, sparking doubts that govt is serious about installing technocratic experts to address economic crisis. IMF 19 June emphasised need for consensus to move reforms forward, warned of "deeper-than-expected" GDP contraction in second quarter of 2020. President Aoun 25 June convened national dialogue despite opposition's boycott and protests; warned of "atmosphere of civil war". Govt 30 June raised price of partially subsidised bread, sparking further protests in Beirut.

➡ **Syria Cross-line assaults between jihadist and govt forces early June continued to strain Idlib ceasefire, while economic crisis sparked protests in south and intra-Kurdish negotiation in north east yielded preliminary agreement.** In Idlib, fighting between al-Qaeda linked group Hurras al-Din and govt positions in Sahl Al Ghab area 8 June left 19 govt soldiers and 22 militants dead. Russian fighter jets next day delivered the first confirmed airstrikes on Idlib since Russia-Turkey ceasefire was agreed in March; Turkey next day condemned govt's alleged increasing provocations; Turkish President Erdoğan and Russian President Putin 10 June discussed tensions in Syria. Meanwhile, Russia and Turkey 16 June conducted longest patrol (40km) to date along M4 highway, fourth during June, bringing total patrols to 17 since March. In north east, Democratic Union Party (PYD) and Kurdish National Council (KNC), umbrella group of Syrian Kurdish opposition parties, 16 June announced initial agreement aimed at "Kurdish unity", agreeing that 2014 Dohuk Agreement on governance and defence should form basis for ongoing dialogue. Islamic State (ISIS) detainees in provincial capital Hassakeh 29 June staged riot against People's Protection Units (YPG) guards, demanding fair trial and family visits. Amid worsening economic crisis, hundreds of protesters 7-15 June in Sweida in south west demonstrated against soaring food prices and govt corruption; clashes 15 June erupted between pro-govt protesters and anti-govt demonstrators before security forces arrested at least eight. President Assad 11 June dismissed PM Khamis, reportedly in bid to placate protesters. Moscow 30 June announced 1 July videoconference on Astana settlement with Turkey and Iran. Israel reportedly launched numerous airstrikes on suspected Iranian and Iran-linked targets: 4 June in centre, reportedly killing nine people; 23-24 June in south, east and centre killing two govt soldiers; 27-28 June near border with Iraq reportedly killing fifteen members of pro-Iranian militias. U.S. govt 17 June rolled out new

sanctions against individuals and organisations under Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, including President Assad, Iranian militia, and division of Syrian army. UN Emergency Relief Coordinator 29 June asked UN Security Council to extend authorisation to deliver cross-border aid through Turkey ahead of 10 July expiration.

Gulf and Arabian Peninsula

➔ **Iran** **Dispute continued between Iran and UN's nuclear watchdog and European signatories of 2015 nuclear deal over Iran's past and present nuclear activities, while Iran and U.S. made rare diplomatic breakthrough on prisoner exchange.** International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) 5 June issued quarterly report on Iran's compliance with 2015 nuclear deal, documenting Iran's continued uranium enrichment and stockpiling beyond deal's limits; second report same day noted "serious concern" over Iran's lack of cooperation on access to two sites; Iran's IAEA envoy 17 June said country had maintained "constructive engagement" with IAEA's requests for access but cited concern about "endless process of verifying and cleaning-up of ever-continuing fabricated allegations." IAEA Board of Governors 19 June passed resolution, submitted by France, Germany and UK (E3) and voted against by Russia and China, urging Tehran "to fully cooperate with [IAEA] and satisfy [IAEA's] requests without further delay"; E3 foreign ministers same day issued joint statement calling for ministerial meeting with Iran. In rare instance of constructive diplomatic engagement, U.S. and Iran 4 June exchanged prisoners: Tehran released Michael White, U.S. citizen detained in 2018, while U.S. allowed Majid Taheri, Iranian-American dual national jailed for sanctions violations, to visit Iran; in purportedly unrelated act, U.S. 2 June released Iranian national Sirous Asghari detained in 2017. U.S. Sec State Pompeo 4 June said "while we are pleased that Iran was constructive in this matter, there is more work to do"; President Trump next day tweeted "Thank you to Iran, it shows a deal is possible!". U.S. sanctions against shipping company Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines and China-based E-Sail Shipping Company, announced in Dec 2019, came into effect 8 June. U.S. 24 June sanctioned captains of five Iranian vessels who delivered fuel to Venezuela and next day sanctioned nine companies linked to Iranian metal industry. In joint news conference 29 June, Saudi FM and U.S. Iran envoy called for extension of UN arms embargo on Iran, due to expire in Oct. Israel PM Netanyahu 25 June said Israel "taking action without respite" against Iran and Iran-allied forces in Syria (see Syria).

➔ **Iraq** **Iraqi security forces conducted military operation against Islamic State (ISIS) in north, suspected Iran-backed militias stepped up attacks on U.S. targets, and PM Kadhimi's reforms to address dire economic conditions sparked protests.** ISIS activity decreased but individual attacks continued; ISIS fighters 13 June attacked Kakai villages near Khanaqin in Diyala province (east), killing six and wounding six more. Security forces early June launched military operation against ISIS in disputed Kirkuk province in north, reportedly killing at least two ISIS fighters; 21-25 June reportedly destroyed over 30 ISIS targets between Diyala and Salah al-Din. Meanwhile, Parliament 6 June approved final seven ministers of PM Kadhimi's new cabinet; 10 June voted against PM Kadhimi's reform to reduce salaries for ministers and parliamentarians; govt

reduction in citizens' pensions sparked protests in following days in capital Baghdad and southern governorates; armed men 9 June reportedly killed one protester in Najaf city. Following first round of U.S.-Iraq "strategic dialogue" 10 June, U.S. representative announced reduction of military presence over coming months and support for Iraq's energy sector while Iraqi delegation reaffirmed commitment to protect U.S. and coalition forces. Suspected Iran-backed militias 10-18 June launched rocket attacks targeting Baghdad International Airport, Camp Taji and Baghdad's Green Zone near U.S. embassy; no casualties reported. New Shiite militia Zulfiqar Forces 13 June issued statement in name of "Islamic Resistance", condemning U.S.-Iraq "strategic dialogue" and threatened to attack U.S. targets; marks seventh new pro-Iranian militia since U.S. killing in Jan of Iran's Quds Force chief Qassem Soleimani and Popular Mobilisation Unit deputy chief Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis; U.S. General McKenzie 18 June said U.S. will not succumb to Iranian pressure. Kurdistan Regional Govt 3 June lifted COVID-19 lockdown imposed 1 June after protests in Sulaymaniyah province erupted over lack of work opportunities. Turkey mid-June launched airstrikes and ground offensive against Kurdistan Workers Party in north, leading to death of one Turkish soldier 28 June and at least one civilian; Iraq's Joint Operations Command 15 June condemned violation of its territory (see Turkey).

➡ **Qatar Tensions between Saudi Arabia and Qatar continued amid new legal development coinciding with three-year anniversary of Gulf crisis.** Regional dispute that led Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and Egypt to break off diplomatic relations with Qatar entered its fourth year on 5 June. World Trade Organization (WTO) 16 June issued verdict in dispute between Qatar and Saudi Arabia; WTO said Saudi Arabia had breached obligations to protect intellectual property of Qatari-owned broadcaster by actively supporting Saudi pirate broadcaster.

↓ **Saudi Arabia Huthis intensified attacks against Saudi-backed Yemeni govt forces in northern Yemen as well as cross-border strikes into Saudi Arabia.**

Huthis mid-June intensified cross-border attacks into Saudi Arabia: Saudi-led coalition 13, 22, 23 June reportedly intercepted Huthi drones and missiles they claimed were aimed at civilian targets in provinces along border; no casualties reported but one attack allegedly left some people injured. Huthi forces 23 June reportedly launched airstrikes on Saudi Defence Ministry, military base in Riyadh and military positions in Jizan and Najran; no casualties reported (see Yemen). In north Yemen, Huthi forces mid-June stepped up attacks in Marib and al-Bayda, pushing toward Marib city while consolidating control over northern territory despite Saudi airstrikes. In Yemen's south, after Saudi Arabia 18 June reportedly presented new proposal to Hadi govt and Southern Transitional Council (STC) on implementation of Nov 2019 Riyadh Agreement, tensions escalated when STC forces 19 June captured Hadibo, capital of contested Socotra island in Gulf of Aden. Hadi govt and southern separatists 22 June agreed to ceasefire in Abyan province, de-escalation in Socotra and talks on implementation of Nov 2019 Riyadh Agreement in Saudi capital Riyadh. Coinciding with three-year anniversary of Gulf crisis, World Trade Organization (WTO) 16 June issued verdict in dispute between Saudi Arabia and Qatar; WTO said Saudi Arabia had breached obligations to protect intellectual property of Qatari-owned broadcaster by actively supporting Saudi pirate broadcaster. Saudi authorities 25 June reportedly fired warning shots and forced three Iranian vessels from its waters after they did not respond to repeated warnings.

➔ **United Arab Emirates New signs emerged of apparent ongoing warming relations between United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel.**

UAE 9 June sent second shipment of COVID-19 aid to Palestinian territories via Israeli airport after Palestinian Authority (PA) had rejected aid in May on grounds of "normalisation" with Israel; PA 10 June again condemned UAE's move. Yousef al-Otaiba, UAE ambassador to U.S., 12 June published op-ed in Israeli news outlet, warning Israeli annexation of West Bank would jeopardise Israel's efforts to improve relations with Arab countries; first time Arab diplomat publicly acknowledged warming ties between Israel and UAE. Israeli PM Netanyahu 25 June announced new cooperative effort between UAE and Israeli companies to jointly develop research and technology to fight COVID-19, stating agreement was "the result of extensive and intensive contacts in recent months"; UAE Foreign Ministry same day confirmed initiative.

↓ **Yemen Amid rapid spread of COVID-19, Huthis stepped up attacks in north as well as cross-border strikes into Saudi-Arabia, while govt forces and southern separatists forged ceasefire after renewed fighting.**

In north, Huthi forces mid-June pursued offensive in west of Marib, pushing toward Marib city while consolidating control over territory in north despite Saudi airstrikes; Saudi-led coalition 26 June carried out series of airstrikes targeting al-Bayda and Marib. Govt forces 25 June reportedly surrounded Huthi-held al-Hazm in al-Jawf governorate. Meanwhile, simmering tensions between Huthis and local tribes in north of al-Bayda escalated mid-June; Huthis took control of village after clashes 17-18 June reportedly killed at least 23 people from both sides. Huthis mid-June intensified cross-border attacks into Saudi-Arabia: Saudi-led coalition 13, 22, 23 June reportedly intercepted Huthi drones and missiles they claimed were aimed

at civilian targets in provinces along border; no casualties reported but one attack allegedly left some people injured. Huthi forces 23 June reportedly launched missiles at Saudi Defence Ministry, military base in Saudi capital Riyadh and military positions in Jizan and Najran cities; no casualties reported. In south, after Saudi Arabia 18 June reportedly presented new proposal to govt and Southern Transitional Council (STC) on implementation of Nov 2019 Riyadh Agreement, tensions escalated when STC forces 19 June captured Hadibo, capital of contested Socotra island in Gulf of Aden. Govt and southern separatists 22 June agreed to ceasefire in Abyan province, de-escalation in Socotra and talks on implementation of Nov 2019 Riyadh Agreement in Riyadh; President Hadi 27 June urged STC to adhere to agreement and “stop the bloodshed”. Meanwhile, UN Envoy Martin Griffiths 21 June condemned military escalation across Yemen, urging parties to “engage constructively with the UN efforts to reach an agreement”. Health authorities as of 21 June recorded over 1,000 COVID-19 cases and 250 deaths; fatality rate four times higher than global average. Donor countries 2 June pledged \$1.35bn in funding for UN humanitarian projects in Yemen, falling \$1bn short of what UN aid agencies sought.

North Africa

➔ **Algeria** **Anti-govt protests erupted throughout month as govt eased COVID-19 restrictions on movement, while crackdown on journalists and civil society activists continued unabated.** Hundreds 11 June protested in village of Tizirt in north following 8 June arrest of civil society activist Amrani Mohamed Arezki on charges of undermining national interests. In Ouargla city in south, protesters 14 June denounced economic marginalisation and unregulated gold mining by state-owned companies. Clashes between local youths and security forces next day killed man in Tin Zaouatine village in south near border with Mali; violence erupted following construction of wall to prevent smugglers from crossing border. Govt 14 June eased partial lockdown for 29 provinces, including Algiers, and lifted all COVID-19 lockdown measures elsewhere, prompting anti-govt protest movement (*hirak*) to consider restarting weekly protests 19 June; influential lawyer Mustapha Bouchachi and human rights organisation Rassemblement Action Jeunesse 17-18 June urged activists to wait, citing persistent risk of COVID-19 contagion; several demonstrations however took place in various regions 19 June, gathering hundreds, with protesters reportedly clashing with police in city of Bejaia in north. Court in city of Mascara 17 June sentenced journalist Ali Djamel Toubal to two years in prison on charges of insulting state institutions and distributing publications harmful to national unity. Algiers court 21 June sentenced figure of protest movement Amira Bouraoui to one-year imprisonment on charges of insulting Islam and President Tebboune, and incitement to violate COVID-19 lockdown. Algiers court 24 June sentenced several former ministers under former President Bouteflika for corruption; notably, former PM Ahmed Ouyahia received 12-year sentence and former Industry Minister Abdeslam Bouchouareb received 20 years. Military 21 June said soldier was killed previous day in military operation against jihadists in Ain Defla province, south west of capital Algiers. Homemade explosives 27 June reportedly killed two soldiers in Medea province south of Algiers.

➔ **Egypt** **President Sisi 20 June threatened to intervene militarily in neighbouring Libya, while talks on Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project suffered new setback.** As UN-recognised Govt of National Accord (GNA)-aligned forces made gains against Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar's Arab Libyan Armed Forces (ALAF) in Libyan capital Tripoli, Sisi 6 June proposed roadmap for political settlement between Libya's rival factions, including UN-supervised elections, withdrawal of foreign forces and adherence to arms embargoes. Turkey and GNA immediately rejected initiative as pro-Haftar and signalled that they would continue offensive into central and eastern Libya. In televised speech 20 June, Sisi warned that advances by Turkey-backed GNA-aligned forces on strategic city of Sirte were "red line" and would prompt Egypt to intervene militarily in Libya, citing threat to national security. Technical negotiations on GERD between Cairo, Addis Ababa and Khartoum resumed 9 June but broke down 17 June due to disagreements over drought mitigation, arbitration mechanism and legal status of final agreement (see Nile Waters). International Monetary Fund 5 June announced one-year \$5.2bn financial package to support Egyptian economy on top of already-agreed \$2.8bn fund. Court in capital Cairo 21 June sentenced 13 to life imprisonment and three others to 15 years in prison for alleged membership with Syrian jihadist group Al-Nusra Front.

➔ **Libya** **Tides turned in battle for capital Tripoli and front line shifted eastward around strategic city of Sirte, raising risk of escalation there in coming weeks, while political negotiations remained stalled.** Forces loyal to UN-recognised Govt of National Accord (GNA) 5 June reclaimed control of capital Tripoli and took Tarhuna, last outpost of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar's Arab-Libyan Armed Forces (ALAF) in west, reportedly after ALAF and Russian military aides pulled out without fighting. GNA 11 June reported discovery of several mass graves in Tarhuna. GNA Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha 7 June signalled intention to continue military offensive eastward to capture strategic city of Sirte and nearby Jufra airbase, which serves as ALAF's operations base. ALAF and its foreign backers 12-13 June repelled GNA offensive on Sirte; airstrikes killed over 40 GNA fighters and 19 civilians. Egypt President Sisi 20 June threatened military intervention in Libya over "red line" of Sirte. Turkey tried to strike deal with Russia over Sirte, but Russia's foreign and defence ministers 14 June postponed visit to Turkey in last-minute move. Meanwhile, attempts at restarting negotiations failed. UN mission, which remains weakened by absence of special representative, held separate consultations on ceasefire with GNA and ALAF delegations throughout month. Sisi 6 June proposed roadmap for political negotiations, which was welcomed by allied states but rejected by GNA and Turkey. After National Oil Corporation and local guards 6-7 June agreed to restart oil production at Sharara and El-Feel oil fields in south, armed Haftar-allied military commanders 8 June ordered employees to halt production. UN Human Rights Council 22 June ordered fact-finding mission in Libya to investigate alleged violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law since early 2016.

➔ **Tunisia** **Political tensions, fuelled notably by ongoing conflict in Libya, continued within ruling coalition.** Parliament 3 June held plenary session on allegations that parliamentary speaker Rached Ghannouchi, president of

Islamist-inspired party An-Nahda (member of ruling coalition), undermines Tunisian neutrality in Libya's conflict; allegations fuelled by Ghannouchi's May phone call with Libya's Turkey-backed PM Serraj and his continued good relationship with Turkish President Erdoğan. During session, opposition Free Destourian Party tabled motion to refuse any military intervention in Libya; motion was rejected but gathered support from ruling coalition members Long Live Tunisia and Movement of the People. In 8 June interview, Ghannouchi called for cabinet reshuffle to remove both parties from ruling coalition. Following weeks of peaceful demonstrations over dire economic situation in southern city of Tataouine, hundreds of protesters 21-22 June threw stones at police and blocked roads there to demand jobs and release of local protest movement figure Tarek Haddad, arrested 20 June; police fired tear gas while authorities deployed army outside state institutions.