

# Middle East and North Africa

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## Eastern Mediterranean

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➔ **Israel-Palestine Suspected Hamas gunman conducted first deadly shooting in Jerusalem in years, while Israeli settler violence and Palestinian protests continued in West Bank.**

In occupied East Jerusalem, security forces 17 Nov killed Palestinian teenager after he attacked two border police officers with knife in Jerusalem's Old City. Palestinian resident of Shuafat refugee camp identified as member of Hamas 21 Nov shot five people in Jerusalem's Old City, killing Israeli man. Meanwhile, four Palestinian families facing forced eviction in Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood 2 Nov rejected "compromise deal" offering protected tenancy status for 15 years in exchange for recognising settler organisation's ownership of land. Israeli police 22-23 Nov raided home of Palestinian Authority's Jerusalem Governor Adnan Ghaith; Ghaith was summoned for interrogation 25 Nov and placed under renewed house arrest. In West Bank, Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians during olive harvest continued; notably Bat Ayin settlers 12 Nov injured three in attack in Surif city. Settlers 15 Nov injured six Palestinian farmers in armed attack in Al-Qibabat near Israeli settlement Homesh. Palestinian health ministry 5 Nov announced Israeli troops killed 13-year-old Palestinian during weekly protest against expansion of illegal settlements near Elon Moreh; clashes in Beita town same day wounded two Palestinians. *The Washington Post* 9 Nov published report detailing Israel's surveillance system of Palestinians across West Bank. Israeli forces 16 Nov killed Palestinian belonging to Islamic Jihad militant group in Tubas city during raid. In Gaza, Qatar and Egypt 17 Nov signed agreement to supply fuel and building materials to Gaza. UK 19 Nov moved to ban Hamas, whose military wing is already prohibited, in its entirety, sparking condemnation from Hamas. EU diplomats 24 Nov visited Gaza strip to assess humanitarian situation. Israel's parliament 4 Nov approved first budget in over three years. Internationally, Israel, U.S., United Arab Emirates and Bahrain 10-15 Nov held first joint military naval exercise in Red Sea. Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz 24 Nov signed memorandum of understanding with Morocco, formalising existing unofficial security cooperation. Syrian state media reported Israeli airstrikes on 3, 8, 17, 24 Nov; notably airstrike 24 Nov killed two and injured seven (see Syria).

➔ **Lebanon Standoff over investigation into Aug 2020 Beirut port explosion continued, while economic decline triggered protests across country.**

Shiite groups Hezbollah and Amal maintained demand to remove investigative judge Tarik Bitar. Cabinet meetings remained suspended since 12 Oct due to political divisions; attempt by Maronite patriarch to mediate compromise solution to standoff failed to achieve breakthrough and judiciary faced increasing paralysis while facing political pressure amid flurry of procedural objections and counter-suits by some of politicians Bitar seeks to question. Work on measures to alleviate worst symptoms of economic crisis, in particular to increase electricity supplies and release rationing card to support poorest citizens hit by removal of subsidies, continued throughout month but without significant breakthroughs. Govt also continued consultations with International Monetary Fund on financial assistance. Protesters 26

Nov broke into ministry of social affairs building in capital Beirut citing further economic decline and continuing currency collapse. Protesters 29 Nov constructed roadblocks in central Beirut, northern city Tripoli and southern city Sidon, calling on govt to act to address collapsing currency. UNICEF 23 Nov reported “dramatic deterioration of living conditions” as over 50% of families had at least one child who skipped meal by Oct 2021. After diplomatic spat late month erupted with Gulf states after footage emerged of Information Minister George Kordahi criticising Saudi-led war in Yemen, relations with Gulf continued to face strains and deepened govt paralysis. Affair worsened 2 Nov when leaked statements of FM Abdallah Bouhabib (appointee of President Aoun) revealed minister criticising Saudi positions. After Riyadh declared ban on all commercial transactions with Lebanon, govt faced prospect of obliterating export earnings from Saudi Arabia, which already fell from \$250mn in 2020 to \$100mn this year, thus increasing economic and financial hardship at home; Aoun 29 Nov expressed desire for reconciliation with Riyadh.

➔ **Syria Idlib ceasefire continued to hold despite violations, prospect of imminent Turkish cross-border incursion abated, and Israel reportedly launched series of strikes.** In Idlib in north west, March 2020 ceasefire held despite violations. Notably, Russian air raids 11 Nov killed at least five civilians and injured six in Brouma farms north of Idlib city. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) continued last month’s crackdown on opposing jihadist groups, primarily Jund Allah, in Jabal al-Turkman area in western Idlib and eastern Latakia province, taking control of Tal al-Mashafa, Tal al-Abraj, Tal Abu Afer and Salour villages. While reports of Turkish forces’ build-up in north west continued early month, media reports mid-month quoted anonymous diplomatic Turkish sources who said new Turkish military operation was suspended “for the time being” reportedly amid U.S. and Russian pressure. Meanwhile, Turkish shelling continued, notably around Tel Tamr. In Daraa in south west, targeted assassinations and insecurity persisted; notably, IED explosion 7 Nov killed two regime soldiers between Ezr’a and al-Sheikh Meskeen towns. In Deir ez-Zor governorate, Islamic State (ISIS) 12 Nov killed at least 13 regime-backed militants in Masrab desert. Car explosion 22 Nov killed four regime soldiers in al-Qusoor neighbourhood of Deir ez-Zor city. Regime forces 29 Nov shelled Nawa city in Daraa governorate, killing at least two civilians, following IED attack on regime vehicle which reportedly killed three soldiers. In central desert, Russian fighter jets continued airstrikes on ISIS targets throughout month. Israeli airstrikes 3 Nov reportedly targeted Zakia area in outskirts of capital Damascus, 8 Nov targeted areas in Homs governorate, including Shayrat Airport and around Tartous city, injuring two soldiers. Syrian state media 17 Nov reported two Israeli missiles targeted building south of capital Damascus and said Israeli airstrikes 24 Nov killed two civilians and injured seven in Homs. President al-Assad 15 Nov abolished position of grand mufti, delegating tasks to Council of Jurisprudence Scholars, prompting controversy among Sunni majority. In sign of improving ties between Assad govt and Arab states, United Arab Emirates FM Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan 9 Nov met Assad in Damascus; U.S. same day voiced “concern” over visit.

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## **Gulf and Arabian Peninsula**

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➔ **Iran** **Tehran and world powers resumed talks on restoring nuclear deal after five-month-long hiatus, while Iran continued to expand nuclear programme amid flurry of diplomatic activity.** After months-long pause in indirect talks between U.S. and Iran in Austrian capital Vienna, EU-coordinated negotiations resumed 29 Nov with meeting of nuclear deal's current signatories. In lead up to talks, Deputy FM Ali Bagheri during second week of Nov undertook visits to UK, France, Germany and Spain while mid-month engaging with Russia and China. In likely attempt to underscore dividends of successful talks, U.S. and Gulf Cooperation Council 17 Nov issued statement that alluded to "efforts to build effective diplomatic channels with Iran" and prospect of "deeper economic ties" in event of deal's revival, points which were stressed again next day with endorsement of UK, France and Germany following talks in Saudi capital Riyadh. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi underscored concerns around agency's ability to monitor and verify nuclear activities; Grossi 2 Nov likened situation to "flying in a heavily clouded sky" and 12 Nov described lack of high-level contact with Tehran as "astonishing"; Tehran subsequently extended invitation to Grossi, who 23 Nov met FM Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and nuclear chief Mohammad Eslami. Grossi described discussions as inconclusive. IAEA Board of Governors next day convened in Vienna; ahead of meeting, agency mid-month reported significant expansion of enriched uranium stockpiles at 20 and 60 per cent over last quarter and objections to "excessively invasive physical searches" of inspectors. Tehran avoided censure resolution despite growing concerns, but U.S. told IAEA 25 Nov that emergency Board session may be required by end of year if Iran continues to stymie agency. Meanwhile, U.S. 2 Nov reported "unsafe interaction" in Strait of Hormuz involving suspected Iranian drones and amphibious assault ship USS *Essex*; U.S. 15 Nov reported second "unsafe" incident involving Iranian helicopter and USS *Essex*. Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps 3 Nov claimed to have thwarted U.S. attempt "to confiscate [Iran's] oil" in Sea of Oman; U.S. called accusation "totally false". Washington 18 Nov sanctioned seven Iranian persons and entities "for attempting to influence the 2020 U.S. presidential election".

➔ **Iraq** **PM al-Kadhimi survived assassination attempt, protests against election results turned violent in capital Baghdad, and Islamic State (ISIS) continued deadly attacks.** Three explosive-laden drones 7 Nov targeted PM al-Kadhimi's residence in capital Baghdad's Green Zone, injuring six guards; while unclaimed, Iraqi security and militia sources reportedly attributed attack to Iran-backed paramilitary groups. Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Ismail Qaani 8 Nov visited Baghdad in show of support to al-Kadhimi. Attack followed weeks-long sit-in outside Green Zone by Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)-affiliated parties in protest of parliamentary election result; notably, protesters 5 Nov tried to breach Green Zone and clashed with security forces; according to health ministry at least 150 were injured, while paramilitary group Asaib Ahl al-Haq claimed two were killed. Amid ongoing appeals against 10 Oct election result, losing parties continued call for vote recount; notably, prominent Shiite coalition Fateh Alliance 18 Nov filed lawsuit with Federal Court to annul election results. Final results released 30 Nov confirmed victory of Muqtada al-Sadr's movement with 73 seats, followed by Sunni Taqaddum Party with 37 seats. Leader of Sadrist movement

Muqtada al-Sadr, whose bloc increased parliamentary seats in election, 18 Nov called on PMF to purge “undisciplined elements” and urged armed factions to disband and come under control of PM and Hashd al-Shaabi Commission (organisation under PM’s nominal control set up in 2014 in attempt to institutionalise paramilitary groups, but which prompted recruitment drive by paramilitary groups in defiance). Sadr next day announced dissolution of Promised Day Brigade armed faction as “goodwill gesture”. Meanwhile, Iraqi security source reported ISIS attack 6 Nov killed two coal workers in Hawija district, Kirkuk governorate; ISIS 9 Nov attacked fishing boats on Zarka River in Tuz district, Salah al-Din governorate, killing two; ISIS next day attacked police unit in same area, killing two; ISIS 28 Nov killed five Peshmerga in northern Diyala governorate. Military 23 Nov announced foreign combat troops would leave Iraq within 15 days, while small foreign presence would remain at Ain al-Assad base. Meanwhile, Turkish security forces targeted alleged Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) militants in northern Iraq throughout month.

➔ **Saudi Arabia** **Cross-border Huthi drone attacks continued throughout month.** Saudi-led coalition announced destruction of alleged Huthi drones and ballistic missiles targeting Khamis Mushait and Abha airport in ‘Asir province, Jazan in Jizan province and Najran airport in Najran province throughout month. Huthis 20 Nov claimed they fired 14 drones at military targets in Riyadh, Jeddah, Abha, Jizan and Najran cities and Saudi Aramco facilities in Jeddah; Saudi-led coalition responded by striking targets in Yemen’s Sanaa, Saada and Marib provinces (see Yemen). U.S. Biden administration 4 Nov announced second arms deal since taking office with govt, specifically \$650 mn of air-to-air missiles. U.S. Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking 16 Nov travelled to capital Riyadh to discuss peace process in Yemen.

➔ **Yemen** **Withdrawal of Saudi-led coalition-aligned troops from Hodeida prompted Huthis to seize territory on Red Sea coast and close in on Marib city, raising prospect of imminent offensive or siege.** Saudi-led coalition-aligned Joint Resistance Forces 12 Nov withdrew from Hodeida city to military bases in southern Hodeida and northern Taiz governorates, citing UN-brokered 2018 Stockholm Agreement; UN Mission on Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA) denied knowledge of redeployment, 15 Nov called withdrawal “major shift” in front lines. Huthis immediately seized vacated areas, reopened road connecting Hodeida and capital Sanaa, and clashed with rival forces in al-Fazih, al-Tuhayta, al-Haima and Hays districts; local medical workers reported highest casualties on Red Sea coast since 2018. Saudi-led coalition 14 Nov launched airstrikes in Hodeida to protect aligned forces, which later initiated renewed offensive in southern Hodeida. In Marib governorate, Huthis 2 Nov announced capture of al-Jubah and Jabal Murad districts; by end of Nov, Huthis surrounded Marib city from al-Jodeida in south east, al-Jubah in south, Sirwah in west and Meghdal in north west with forces 20km from city, raising prospect of imminent offensive or siege. Elsewhere, anti-Huthi forces stepped up military campaign in western Taiz governorate, seizing territory in northern Maqabana district; Huthis 10 Nov fired missiles on Mokka city. In north, Huthis continued cross-border attacks into Saudi Arabia (see Saudi Arabia); Saudi-led coalition launched airstrikes, notably announcing strikes on Sanaa, Saada and Marib governorates 20 Nov. In south, security situation worsened; notably car bomb 9 Nov killed pregnant Yemeni journalist in Aden city. Protesters rallied in Lahij, Taiz, Abyan and Shebwa governorates over deteriorating

economy and fuel prices. Tensions between Southern Transitional Council (STC) and govt continued, notably in Shebwa governorate. Amid stalled implementation of 2019 Riyadh Agreement, STC leadership 9 Nov stated “our patience has reached its limits”; most Saudi-led coalition forces 11 Nov vacated Aden – further Saudi withdrawal risks collapse of Riyadh Agreement. On diplomatic front, UN Envoy Hans Grundberg continued regional listening tour in Aden, Taiz governorate and Iranian capital Tehran. Economic situation worsened with Riyal falling to record-low, passing YR1,500 to U.S. dollar, and fuel prices reaching all-time high in south.

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## North Africa

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➔ **Algeria Tensions with Morocco over Western Sahara conflict continued to run high; parliament voted end of generous state subsidies on basic goods.** President Tebboune 3 Nov accused Moroccan forces of killing three Algerian truck drivers in Polisario Front independence movement-controlled Western Sahara 1 Nov; said possible drone attacks “will not go unpunished”. In official letters to international organisations including African Union and UN, Algiers 4 Nov condemned “terrorist act”, stressed Algeria’s “willingness and ability to assume its responsibilities in protecting its citizens and their property in all circumstances”. Morocco did not comment. Meanwhile, around 40 civil society activists 13 Nov met in capital Algiers in bid to relaunch Hirak protest movement, called for liberation of 235 prisoners of conscience. In accordance with 2020 constitutional revision, Tebboune 17 Nov appointed members of new Constitutional Court, notably naming magistrate and former member of parliament’s Upper House Omar Belhadj as president. Campaign for 27 Nov early local elections sparked little public interest, illustrating break between citizens and politicians; turnout low at 35.97%. Meanwhile, lawmakers 17 Nov adopted 2022 Finance Law including direct handouts to eligible families in lieu of state subsidies for basic goods; measure aimed at alleviating state budget deficits in context of historically low oil and gas revenues could, if applied, fuel social tensions and riots.

➔ **Egypt Rights groups accused President Sisi of replacing recently lifted state of emergency with new civil rights restrictions.** After Sisi late Oct lifted nationwide state of emergency, parliament 31 Oct approved amendments to counter-terrorism law, Penal Code and public infrastructure law, de facto expanding executive and military powers. NGO Human Rights Watch 5 Nov said amendments “incorporated many emergency-law-like provisions in other laws” and demonstrated govt’s “lack of genuine commitment to ending undue restrictions on basic human rights”. Among few security incidents reported in Sinai Peninsula, Islamic State (ISIS)-affiliated Sinai Province combatants around 4 Nov killed two soldiers in ambush west of Al-Arish town; 15 Nov reportedly launched rocket attack on army armoured vehicle in southern Sinai, killing two soldiers; also allegedly planted mine, which around 21 Nov killed three members of pro-govt tribal militia south of Rafah town. Egypt and Israel 7 Nov agreed to strengthen Egyptian military presence near Rafah border crossing with Gaza Strip; move amounts to amendment of 1979 peace treaty excluding Egyptian military deployment in that area. U.S. daily newspaper *The Wall Street Journal* 3 Nov revealed Sudan coup leader Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan held secret meeting with Sisi day before 25 Oct Sudanese coup. U.S. and

Egyptian officials 8-9 Nov held strategic dialogue in Washington DC, discussed human rights, water and regional security. French govt 22 Nov called for investigation after investigative website Disclose alleged Egypt misused French intelligence – intended to track jihadist militants – to kill civilians.

➔ 🌟\* **Libya Registration of polarising presidential hopefuls amid heated controversy over electoral framework could presage mobilisation of rival forces around 24 Dec polls.** Several controversial figures submitted presidential candidacies to electoral commission throughout Nov: son of late dictator Muammar Qadhafi, Saif al-Islam Qadhafi, who is wanted by International Criminal Court, 14 Nov; eastern strongman Khalifa Haftar 16 Nov; and PM Abdulhamid Dabaiba 21 Nov. Election commission 24 Nov disqualified 25 out of 98 registered candidates, including Qhadafi. Qhadafi's lawyer late-Nov tried to appeal decision, but Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) forces impeded access to Sebha courthouse where appeal should be filed; LNA 30 Nov reportedly withdrew. Tripoli court 28 Nov accepted appeal submitted by presidential hopefuls against Dabaiba's candidacy, while Benghazi court same day rejected appeal against Haftar's candidacy. Electoral Commission expected to release final list of presidential candidates in early Dec. Meanwhile, several Tripoli-based anti-Haftar and anti-Qadhafi constituencies voiced opposition to presidential and parliamentary election laws unilaterally adopted by House of Representatives (HoR) in Sept-Oct. Notably, some 25 mayors 9 Nov signed petition against electoral framework; in following days, some 40 HoR members, and separately military coalition of anti-Haftar forces, endorsed petition. French President Emmanuel Macron 12 Nov hosted international conference for Libya; world powers reaffirmed need to hold elections on time and vowed to push for sanctions against anyone who disrupts electoral process, but some cracks appeared among foreign stakeholders and within UN over current electoral framework. Both UK and Italy's representatives stressed need for consensus on election legislation, while Egypt and France did not express any concern on current electoral framework. UN Sec-Gen António Guterres same day urged Libyans "to come together in a spirit of national unity" and "forge a consensus on the legal framework for the elections"; statement departed from line of UN Envoy Ján Kubiš, who in recent weeks rubberstamped HoR's electoral laws; Kubiš 23 Nov offered his resignation which Guterres accepted. UN Security Council next day threatened sanctions against those "obstructing or undermining the elections".

➔ **Tunisia Opposition to President Saïed continued to gain steam and rights groups expressed concern over military trials of civilians.** Thousands 14 Nov gathered in front of suspended parliament in capital Tunis to protest Saïed's special powers, as hundreds of police blocked off area; protesters tried to remove barriers and briefly clashed with police. Newly created "Citizens against the Coup" platform, which 8 Nov released roadmap calling for parliament to be reinstated and early presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in 2022, had initiated demonstration. Meanwhile, authorities 8 Nov ordered reopening of landfill in Agareb locality near Sfax city, prompting local residents to protest citing health and environmental concerns; National Guard fired tear gas, reportedly leaving one demonstrator dead. Tensions remained high in following days, with clashes between security forces and protesters reported in Agareb 9-11 Nov. NGO Amnesty International 10 Nov warned of "alarming increase" in number of civilians facing military courts since Saïed's power grab in July, with more cases recorded in past three

months than between 2011 and 2018; also highlighted cases of four civilians brought before military courts for “peacefully expressing opinions critical of the govt”. Judiciary 4 Nov issued international arrest warrant for former President Marzouki on charges of “plotting against the external security of the state”; Marzouki in Oct pressed France, where he lives, to oppose Saïed’s rule. Saïed 18 Nov said he will organise electronic referendum on constitutional revisions. Macro-economic situation remained dire. Following credit downgrading of main public banks by credit-rating agency Moody’s in Oct, some foreign suppliers demanded 50% cash down payment, which could lead to shortages of basic goods, inflation and drop in foreign exchange reserves.

↓ **Western Sahara Tensions escalated over reported deadly drone attacks by Moroccan forces on both Algerian and Western Saharan civilians.** Algerian President Tebboune 3 Nov accused Moroccan forces of killing three Algerian truck drivers in Polisario Front independence movement-controlled Western Sahara 1 Nov; said possible drone attacks “will not go unpunished”. In official letters to international organisations including African Union and UN, Algiers 4 Nov condemned “terrorist act”, affirmed Algeria’s “willingness and ability to assume its responsibilities in protecting its citizens and their property in all circumstances”. Morocco did not comment. Polisario mid-Nov accused Moroccan military of killing 11 civilians in 14-15 Nov drone attacks in Miyek area, Polisario-controlled Western Sahara. Meanwhile, Polisario 1 Nov named Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic’s former PM Mohamed Wali Akeik, who in recent months has called for escalating offensive against Morocco, as Sahrawi People’s Liberation Army chief of staff; Akeik’s appointment came days after UN Security Council resolution renewing UN Mission (MINURSO)’s mandate failed to emphasise self-determination process. Responding to EU Court of Justice’s Sept ruling against inclusion of Western Sahara in EU-Morocco trade deals, Moroccan King Mohammed VI 5 Nov said Morocco refuses any “economic or commercial deal that excludes the Moroccan Sahara”.