



Middle East and North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

⬇️ ⚡ **Israel-Palestine** **Qatar-brokered truce won pause in Israel’s war in Gaza amid humanitarian crisis, but efforts to extend deal may falter and see return to onslaught; West Bank violence escalated amid hostilities with Hizbollah.**

First respite in Israel’s pummelling of Gaza, which killed over 15,000. Israel and Hamas 22 Nov agreed to Qatar-mediated four-day truce beginning 24 Nov that was extended until 30 Nov, pausing hostilities in Gaza to exchange over 100 women and children captured by Hamas with 240 Palestinian women and children detained in Israel; truce held but Israeli forces 24, 26 Nov reportedly killed three Palestinians in Gaza trying to move north. Ahead of pause, Israel escalated bombing campaign and broadened ground incursion, bringing Palestinian death toll to over 15,000, including 6,150 children, with at least 75 Israeli soldiers killed. Despite announcing “safe corridors” for civilians to leave north, Israel bombed evacuation routes and so-called “safe areas” in south, and 15-16 Nov dropped leaflets on eastern Khan Younis calling for evacuation ahead of potential operations that could commence after truce in Gaza’s south. In north, health infrastructure collapsed amid shortages and Israeli assault on hospitals; malnutrition and dehydration killed at least dozen, as UN warned disease could kill more than bombardment. Israel 15-24 Nov conducted ground operations inside al-Shifa hospital in Gaza city, making unverified claims that it contains Hamas command centre.

Conditions in West Bank continued to deteriorate sharply. Since 7 Oct, Israeli forces killed over 240 Palestinians and Israeli settlers – launching almost 300 attacks on properties and individuals – killed at least eight and forcibly displaced fifteen Palestinian communities. Palestinians killed seven Israelis; Hamas 30 Nov claimed gun attack in West Jerusalem that killed three. Palestinian armed groups began to reestablish in north and spread into Bethlehem, Hebron and Ramallah, clashing with Israeli forces; in Jenin, Israeli forces 9 Nov killed fourteen and 29 Nov killed four, including eight-year-old boy.

Border clashes with Hizbollah continued, underscoring risk of wider war. Cross-border attacks penetrated further into respective territories, killing civilians and risking spiral of escalation that could trigger all-out war. Israel-Hamas pause was upheld along Israel-Lebanon front late Nov (see Lebanon).

➡️ **Jordan** **Kingdom slammed Israel for its “barbarism in Gaza”, recalling its ambassador and ruling out any further cooperation.**

Kingdom 5 Nov recalled its ambassador from Israel in protest of Israeli military operations in Gaza, which killed over 14,800 Palestinians as of late Nov (see Israel-Palestine). PM Bisher Khasawneh next day declared “all options are on the table” in dealing with “Israeli aggression on Gaza”. FM Ayman Safadi 16 Nov declared kingdom would not sign any cooperation deals with Israel amid its “barbarism in Gaza”, saying: “Can you imagine a Jordanian minister sitting next to an Israeli minister to sign a water and electricity agreement, all while Israel continues to kill children in Gaza?”; Safadi also accused Israel of not upholding its part of 1994 peace treaty, namely to establish a two-state solution, “so the peace deal will have to remain on the back burner gathering dust for now”; he also asserted “Israel’s aggression and crimes [in Gaza] can no longer be justified as self-defence”. Further, Safadi 27 Nov said Israeli actions in Gaza constituted genocide.

➡ **Lebanon** **Deadly border clashes between Hizbollah and Israel expanded in scale and scope, further underscoring looming risk of full-scale war.**

Hostilities continued in southern Lebanon amid risk of wider conflict. Border clashes persisted between Hizbollah and Israel throughout Nov, with intensity of fighting and casualty count increasing and operations from both sides penetrating deeper into other’s territory, although both appeared keen to avoid massive expansion of conflict; fighting since 7 Oct has killed over 80 Hizbollah fighters and at least ten Israeli soldiers, while displacing over 46,000 residents in south. Notably, Israeli strike in south 5 Nov killed four civilians, including three children. Israeli forces same day claimed Hizbollah killed Israeli civilian with anti-tank missile. Hizbollah’s cross-border attacks 12 Nov reportedly wounded seven Israeli military personnel and ten others. In sign of expanding theatre of fighting, Hamas 6 Nov claimed to have launched rockets from inside Lebanon towards Israeli cities of Haifa and Nahariya, and Israeli drones 11 Nov struck target more than 40km from border. In one of its largest salvos, Hizbollah 23 Nov fired some 50 rockets at Israel after Israel killed five fighters. Such strikes risk high number of casualties, which may unintentionally trigger spiral of escalation toward all-out war. Alternatively, either side may opt to escalate conflict intentionally: if Israeli campaign in Gaza were to pose existential threat to Hamas, Hizbollah’s stance may turn more aggressive, while Israel faces domestic pressure to confront Hizbollah. After ceasefire between Hamas and Israel 24 Nov began (see Israel-Palestine), Hizbollah signalled it would honour ceasefire as long as Israel did. Clashes between group and Israel also occurred in Syria (see Syria).

Executive vacuum and parliamentary paralysis continued. Presidential vacuum prevailing since 1 Nov 2022 persisted with little apparent prospect of resolution. Likewise, parliament remained at virtual standstill as several political parties argue it cannot meet for legislative sessions until it has elected new president. Leading Christian party Lebanese Forces 13 Nov proposed exceptional legislative session to parliament speaker solely to extend term of army chief Joseph Aoun, who is scheduled to retire on 10 Jan 2024.

➡ **Syria** **Hostilities in north west and Türkiye’s operations in north east continued at lower intensity, Islamic State (ISIS) maintained deadly desert insurgency, and Israel, U.S. and Iran-backed groups traded fire amid Gaza war.**

In north west, fighting eased. Hostilities between Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and regime gradually returned to levels before escalation triggered by 5 Oct attack on Homs military academy. Nevertheless, Russian airstrikes 11 Nov continued in Idlib province, regime continued shelling south of M5 highway and suspected HTS suicide drone attacks on army positions persisted; drone attack 18 Nov killed regime colonel at Aleppo military college.

In north east, Türkiye continued intermittent strikes. After ending major air campaign late Oct against Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)-affiliated targets, Turkish drone strike 15 Nov reportedly killed three militants near Kobane city, Aleppo province. Türkiye 17 Nov announced killing PKK's "ideological division manager". Four drone strikes 23-25 Nov hit vehicles across north east, killing veteran PKK commander.

ISIS exacted high toll on regime forces in centre. ISIS maintained high-level of attacks, making Nov deadliest month for pro-regime security forces in central desert in 2023. Notably, fighting around Doubayat gas field, Homs province, early Nov killed over dozen Iran-backed Afghan fighters. Two ISIS attacks 8 Nov killed at least 30 pro-govt militants and soldiers. ISIS cells expanded operations to Kawm axis between Sukhnah town, Homs, and Resafa town, Raqqqa, and 11 Nov besieged regime forces. ISIS militants 22, 24 Nov conducted rare attacks inside regime-held towns along Euphrates.

Syria saw Israel-Hizbollah clashes and hostilities between U.S. and Iran-backed forces. Suspected Hizbollah drone from near Homs city 9 Nov targeted school in Israeli city Eilat; in response, Israeli airstrikes 10 Nov killed at least seven Hizbollah members south of Homs. Rockets 11, 14 Nov targeted northern Israel, triggering retaliatory shelling. Israeli airstrikes 22 Nov reportedly killed two Hizbollah affiliates near Damascus. Israel 26 Nov again incapacitated Damascus International Airport. Meanwhile, Iranian and Iran-backed forces continued dozens of attacks on U.S. positions, including rocket strike 29 Nov; U.S. 8, 12 Nov retaliated by striking two targets in Deir ez-Zor, killing at least eight in latter.

Gulf and Arabian Peninsula

➔ **Iran Hostilities between Iran-backed groups and U.S. forces across region underscored risk of escalation amid Israel's onslaught in Gaza, while UN's nuclear watchdog voiced concern over Tehran's nuclear activities.**

Tit-for-tat attacks between Iran-backed groups and U.S. continued across region. String of attacks since mid-Oct attributed to Iran-linked factions against U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria continued during Nov amid Israel's onslaught in Gaza (see Israel-Palestine), further eroding relative quiet stemming from informal diplomatic understandings between Tehran and Washington; as of 29 Nov, U.S. tallied approximately 74 incidents and around five dozen casualties, though pace of attacks fell as Gaza truce took effect late Nov. Notably, U.S. 8 and 12 Nov launched retaliatory airstrikes in eastern Syria against facilities allegedly linked to Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) (see Syria), and 20-21 Nov launched first deadly retaliatory strikes on Iran-backed targets in Iraq (see Iraq). FM Hossein Amir-Abdollahian 15 Nov maintained perpetrators were making "own decisions"; attacks

seem intended to dissuade Israel from deepening campaign in Gaza and to signal to Washington risks of association with Israel but any attack claiming significant casualties could trigger escalatory spiral. Meanwhile, Iranian officials sought to push for Israel's diplomatic isolation, including during President Raisi's attendance at summits 11 Nov (see Saudi Arabia).

Concerns over Iran's uranium enrichment resurged. International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) quarterly report 15 Nov showed further growth of Iran's enriched uranium stockpiles and continued impasse over safeguards concerns and transparency; Iran has amassed total enriched uranium stockpile of almost 4.5 tonnes, including 6.7kg enriched to 60%, closest to weapons grade. IAEA at 22 Nov board meeting reiterated criticism of Iran's 16 Sept decision to bar top inspectors and reported no progress in investigations into past activities at undeclared sites.

U.S. sanctioned Iran-affiliated militias and military financial networks. Washington and UK 14 Nov blacklisted Gaza- and Lebanon-based entities linked to Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas. U.S. 17 Nov sanctioned six individuals linked to Kata'ib Hizbollah militia in Iraq and another group linked to IRGC. U.S. 29 Nov designated more than twenty persons/entities part of "financial facilitation networks" benefitting Iranian military.

↓ Iraq U.S. launched first deadly strikes on Iran-backed militias after facing dozens of attacks since Israel-Hamas war; Supreme Court removed Parliament Speaker amid forgery scandal.

U.S. forces struck Iran-backed militias in first airstrikes since Israel-Hamas war. U.S. as of 29 Nov tallied around 74 attacks against its forces in Iraq and Syria since 17 Oct – of which approximately half occurred in Iraq – that injured around 60 personnel. Notably, two drone attacks 9 Nov targeted Ain al-Asad airbase, Anbar governorate, and al-Harir airbase, Erbil governorate. IED same day struck U.S.-led coalition convoy near Mosul Dam. Two drones 20 Nov targeted Harir air base in Erbil. Close-range ballistic missile 20 Nov struck Ain al-Asad airbase, injuring eight, which prompted U.S. to use airborne gunship to respond, killing at least one alleged militant of Kata'ib Hizbollah – associated with Iran-backed umbrella group Islamic Resistance in Iraq. In further escalation, U.S. 21 Nov carried out second series of airstrikes, killing eight Kata'ib Hizbollah members in Jurf al-Sakhar area; group vowed retaliation. While pace of attacks on U.S. declined as Gaza truce took effect late Nov (see Israel-Palestine), further attacks claiming significant casualties could trigger escalatory spiral toward wider conflict.

Federal Supreme Court suspended Parliament Speaker. Supreme Court 14 Nov terminated Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi's tenure following accusations that he forged resignation letter of MP from Halbousi's Taqqadum party, Layth al-Dulaimi, who was also suspended; Sunni parties are expected to appoint new speaker before Dec provincial elections. In response, Taqqadum party same day announced resignation of three govt ministers and boycott of parliament; PM Sudani 20 Nov rejected resignations. In separate case, Halbousi faces investigation for alleged relations with company tied to former Israeli PM Ehud Barak, illegal under anti-normalisation law.

In other important developments. Islamic State (ISIS) bomb and gun attack 30 Nov killed eleven civilians in Muqdadiah city, Diyala province. Türkiye 13 and 17 Nov claimed operations killed total nineteen PKK members and its intelligence services 17 and 20 Nov reportedly eliminated senior PKK members; PKK attack 26 Nov killed three Turkish soldiers. Unknown gunmen 20 Nov reportedly attacked office of Kurdish politician Shakhawan Abdullah in Kirkuk city.

➡ **Saudi Arabia Saudi Arabia hosted Arab-Islamic diplomatic initiative amid Israel's onslaught in Gaza, while leaving door open to resume normalisation process with Israel.**

Riyadh hosted summit on Gaza, stopping short of concrete steps against Israel. After noticeable absence from humanitarian and diplomatic initiatives, govt 2 Nov launched humanitarian aid campaign for Gaza. Riyadh 11 Nov hosted joint Arab League and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit, which condemned "Israeli aggression" and demanded halting weapons export to Israel; Saudi Arabia reportedly refrained from voting for concrete measures against Israel, including cutting diplomatic and economic ties. Meanwhile, Saudi Minister of Investment Khalid Al-Falih 8 Nov said normalisation with Israel "remains on the table" but depends on peaceful resolution of Palestinian question.

Saudi and Iranian leaders met for first time since restoration of ties in March. In first for Iranian president in eleven years, Iran's President Raisi 11 Nov met Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman in Riyadh on sidelines of Arab League-OIS summit to discuss bilateral relations and situation in Gaza.

➡ **Yemen Saudi-Houthi dialogue appeared to gather steam, while Houthi rebels launched attack in Marib governorate, fortified presence in southwest and attacked Israeli and U.S. targets in Red Sea.**

Houthi-Saudi talks continued, boosted by Saudi-Iranian communication. Houthi delegation early month reportedly visited Saudi capital Riyadh – in second such visit in 2023 – to discuss technical details of deal on humanitarian issues, including salary payments. Saudi defence minister 15 Nov met Presidential Leadership Council members in Riyadh for update on talks. Dialogue appeared to benefit from increased engagement between Riyadh and Iran: notably, Iran's President Raisi 11 Nov met Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman in Riyadh (see Saudi Arabia).

Houthis launched attack in centre, strengthened presence in Taiz, Hodeida and Al-Dhale governorates. Houthis 6-7 Nov launched attack on govt position in Alkassara area, northwestern Marib, triggering clashes that killed eight govt soldiers and injured 17. Govt's Army Chief of Staff 7 Nov survived assassination attempt in Marib governorate that Ministry of Defence blamed on Houthis. Following recruitment drive fuelled by resentment over Israel's campaign in Gaza (see Israel-Palestine), Houthis fortified military presence in Taiz and Hodeida governorates near strategic Bab al-Mandab strait; Houthis reportedly installed ballistic missile launch pads in Hodeida. In Al-Dhale governorate, Houthis 12 Nov launched attacks targeting Southern Transitional Council forces in Mount Satah Bab Ghalaq; group escalated activity north of Al-Dhale, 12 Nov launching drone strikes on Habil Al-Abdi district.

Houthis continued to take aim at Israeli and U.S. targets. Houthis 6, 9, 13, 14 Nov claimed drone and ballistic missile attacks on Israeli targets. Group 8 Nov shot down

U.S. drone. Houthi leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi 14 Nov vowed to continue attacks on Israel and Israeli ships in Red Sea. U.S. officials 15 Nov reported intercepting drone originating in Yemen in Red Sea. Houthis 19 Nov hijacked ship in Red Sea partially owned by Israeli businessperson and declared all Israel-linked vessels “legitimate target”. U.S. officials said two ballistic missiles were launched 27 Nov from Houthi-controlled areas towards general location of U.S. warship in Red Sea. U.S. Navy 29 Nov shot down drone launched from Houthi-controlled area.

North Africa

➔ **Algeria** **President Tebboune appointed new PM in apparent preparation for re-election bid; Algiers reiterated support for Palestine and appeared set to mend diplomatic ties with Spain.**

Tebboune continued to centralise decision-making ahead of re-election campaign. One year ahead of presidential election scheduled for Dec 2024, Tebboune 11 Nov appointed his chief of staff, Nadir Larbaoui, as PM. Move took place few weeks after Tebboune reorganised president’s office, appointing several advisers whose responsibilities appear to duplicate those of govt. Meanwhile, historical ruling party, National Liberation Front, 13 Nov elected Abdelkrim Benmbarek as new general secretary; in inaugural statement, Benmbarek praised Tebboune’s track record and vowed to support his “vision”, pointing to party’s ambition to return to prominence after being sidelined in wake of 2019-2021 Hirak protest movement.

Algiers sent ambassador to Spain, ending 19-month crisis. Govt 16 Nov appointed new ambassador to Spain; post had remained vacant since Algiers in March 2022 recalled its diplomatic representative in protest at Madrid’s recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.

In other important developments. Tebboune 6 Nov called on International Criminal Court to take action to hold Israel accountable for crimes committed against Palestinians in Gaza since October. Army chief of staff, Saïd Chengriha, 12 Nov began visit to China in bid to diversify weapons and military equipment purchases as Algeria’s main arms supplier, Russia, faces difficulties in fulfilling export contracts amid Ukraine war.

➔ **Egypt** **Presidential election campaign kicked off, with President Sisi set to win third term in December; Cairo allowed entry of several groups of wounded Palestinians and dual nationals from Gaza Strip.**

Sisi bound for re-election having sidelined all serious contenders. Election authority 8 Nov announced final four candidates in 10-12 Dec presidential election, and electoral campaign started 9 Nov. Amid ongoing restrictions on free speech, Sisi’s re-election for third term is virtually guaranteed even as country grapples with record inflation and massive debt. Prominent presidential hopeful Ahmed Tantawi, who in Oct withdrew his presidential bid after failing to gather necessary endorsements to run, 28 Nov faced trial on charges of “circulating election-related papers without official authorisation”.

Some wounded Palestinians and foreign passport holders left Gaza Strip for Egypt. Cairo 1 Nov for first time allowed 76 wounded Palestinians and 335 dual nationals

stranded in Gaza Strip to pass through Rafah border crossing. Evacuations in following weeks continued at slow pace amid difficult security situation, and truck carrying fuel 15 Nov crossed from Egypt into Gaza for first time since start of Israel's war with Hamas. Pause in fighting between Israel and Hamas 24-30 Nov allowed larger amounts of fuel and humanitarian aid to reach Gaza (see Israel/Palestine). Foreign ministry 14 Nov once again rejected Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich's suggestion that Palestinians leave Gaza, slamming it as "irresponsible" and violation of international law.

International donors offered fresh support amid new pressures arising from Gaza. With war in Gaza putting new strain on Egypt's economy, notably threatening tourism industry and natural gas imports, ratings agency Fitch 3 Nov downgraded Egypt's sovereign rating from B to B-, while country's main international partners appeared set to offer fresh credit. Cairo 14 Nov reported Qatar was ready to invest \$1.5bn in Egypt's industrial sector in 2024. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen 18 Nov visited Egypt, reportedly discussed possibility of enhanced partnership on migration and economic cooperation with Sisi.

➔ Libya Attempts to break political deadlock and unify state institutions continued to fail as distrust between rival authorities remained high.

Rival authorities remained at loggerheads on new unified executive and elections. Heads of rival assemblies, Aghela Saleh of eastern-based House of Representatives (HoR), and Mohamed Takala of Tripoli-based High State Council (HSC), around 8 Nov met in Egypt but failed to reach breakthrough; Saleh continued to back HoR-approved election laws and called for formation of interim unity govt, while Takala insisted that his assembly did not approve final version of laws and allegedly refused to back new govt formation. Taking stock of impasse, UN envoy Abdoulaye Bathily 23 Nov invited key stakeholders – Presidential Council, HoR, HSC, Tripoli-based govt and Libyan National Army – to attend meeting to reach settlement on outstanding issues pertaining to electoral process. Eastern-based govt of Osama Hamad immediately denounced its exclusion from UN-led talks, said Bathily has "entrenched division among Libyans" and called on UN Sec Gen António Guterres to "appoint a new UN envoy".

Unified mechanism to lead reconstruction of flood-hit city of Derna remained elusive. Eastern-based govt headed by Osama Hamad 1-2 Nov hosted international conference for reconstruction of Derna city following September devastating floods; over 70 foreign companies and handful of diplomats attended, but Tripoli-based authorities were not invited and western diplomats, who do not recognise eastern-based govt, boycotted. UN mission (UNSMIL) continued to call for unified and coordinated mechanism for reconstruction, warning that unilateral initiatives risk deepening existing rift between rival administrations.

In other important developments. Tensions remained elevated in eastern city of Benghazi and western city of Gharyan following deadly fighting in October; separate incidents were triggered by return of two military commanders to their hometowns, and served as reminder that perceptions of hostile movement by rival forces can fuel localised violence. Meanwhile, dispute between Tripoli-based PM Abdulhamid Dabaiba and Central Bank Governor Seddiq al-Kebir early Nov reached new peak,

allegedly over latter's plan to meet eastern-based authorities; following spat, al-Kebir reportedly left Tripoli and flew out to Türkiye. Turkish Parliament 30 Nov approved extension of military mission in Libya for additional 24 months.

➡ **Tunisia In surprise move, President Saïed objected to bill criminalising normalisation with Israel, while authorities detained several high-profile businessmen on corruption allegations.**

Saïed changed tack on bill to criminalise normalising relations with Israel. Parliament 2 Nov started debating draft law criminalising recognition or establishment of relations with Israel. Parliament Speaker Brahim Bouderbala same day suspended session, citing Saïed's concern that bill could harm Tunisia's foreign affairs and security, and Saïed next day confirmed he objected to bill. MP and rapporteur for Rights and Freedoms Committee, Mohamed Ali, 6 Nov said U-turn came after U.S. threatened "economic and military sanctions".

Security forces arrested several prominent businessmen. Police 7 Nov arrested Marouane Mabrouk, head of country's largest oligopolistic group and one-time son-in-law of former President Ben Ali, as well as former Transportation Minister Abderrahim Zouari, representative in Tunisia of French car company Peugeot. Judiciary few days later issued arrest warrants against them, notably for corruption and money laundering. Authorities 14 Nov also arrested coordinator of leftist Al Qotb party, Riadh Ben Fadhel, allegedly in relation to his buyback of Ben Ali's cars. Moves came as mandate of special commission set up in 2022 expired, having failed to collect up to €4bn allegedly looted by businessmen under Ben Ali.

In other important developments. Interior ministry 7 Nov said security and defence forces had apprehended all five individuals convicted of terrorism who late Oct escaped from Mornaguia high-security prison. New clashes between security forces and sub-Saharan African migrants reported 24 Nov in Al Amra neighbourhood on outskirts of country's second largest city of Sfax, with unclear casualties; police and national guard in following days allegedly locked area down searching for gun and ammunition reportedly lost during confrontation.

↓ **Western Sahara Polisario Front independence movement launched rare rocket attacks in Morocco-controlled Western Sahara.**

Four explosions overnight 28-29 Oct struck Moroccan-controlled city of Smara; Polisario claimed rocket attacks, said it targeted military infrastructures, but rockets hit residential areas, leaving one civilian dead and three others injured. New round of attacks reported 5 Nov in same area, with no casualties. Moroccan authorities opened investigation into blasts and FM Nasser Bourita 15 Nov said investigation's outcome will inform Morocco's response.