



Middle East and North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

↓ **Israel-Palestine Double bombing rocked Jerusalem amid heightened volatility in West Bank, and victory of far-right coalition could bring even more destabilising policies in near future.**

Deadly bombings struck Jerusalem as Israeli and Palestinian violence continued in West Bank. In first such attack since 2016, unclaimed bombings at two bus stops in Jerusalem during rush hour 23 Nov killed one Israeli teenager and wounded at least 18, and raised prospect of further attacks. In West Bank, near-daily clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians continued, as Israel conducted over 170 raids in West Bank and killed at least 18 Palestinians, bringing deaths in 2022 to at least 205. Palestinians killed several Israelis; notably, 15 Nov killed three in Ariel settlement. In incident that may portend greater state-sanctioned settler violence, 30,000 Israeli settlers 19 Nov entered Hebron where hundreds vandalised Palestinian properties and attacked Palestinians. Shin Bet head mid-month reportedly warned of imminent collapse of Palestinian Authority. Meanwhile, in first launches since Aug ceasefire, Gaza-based militants 3 Nov fired rockets into Israel; Israeli aircraft next day struck alleged Hamas rocket-making facility in Gaza.

Right-wing coalition led by former PM Netanyahu won Israeli elections. In 1 Nov Israeli elections, voters elected most right-wing parliament in Israel's history, as former PM Benjamin Netanyahu's bloc won 64 of 120 Knesset seats with 14 going to ultra-conservative, anti-Arab Religious Zionist alliance. President Herzog 13 Nov tasked Netanyahu with forming govt, which may give far-right members control of police and army; possible policies such as encouraging formation of Jewish militias could ignite violence in mixed Arab-Jewish cities and occupied territories, while potential visit by far-right leader to Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade could dramatically inflame tensions.

In other important developments. In East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities confiscated or demolished around dozen Palestinian-owned buildings. UN decolonization committee 11 Nov adopted Palestinian-drafted resolution requesting International Court of Justice to provide legal opinion on Israel's occupation. Defence minister 14 Nov revealed U.S. Justice Dept opened investigation into killing of U.S.-Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. Syrian state media reported Israeli strikes 13, 19 Nov killed six Syrian soldiers (see Syria).

↓ **Lebanon Country entered presidential vacuum, which may persist indefinitely so long as political blocs fail to find compromise, while absence of new govt further impaired efforts to address economic crisis.**

Country entered presidential vacuum, which could extend for months or years. Parliamentary blocs made no tangible progress on appointing replacement for outgoing President Michel Aoun, whose six-year term ended on 31 Oct. House Speaker Nabih Berri convened parliamentary voting sessions on 10, 17 and 24 Nov, but none made progress; Michel Moawad favoured by anti-Hizbollah camp in his best showing 10 Nov received 44 votes in first round, short of 86 required for outright first-round win, as pro-Hizbollah alliance continued to return blank votes and refrained from offering alternative candidate amid lack of agreement within bloc.

Presidential vacuum boded ill for forming empowered govt. Prospects of forming new govt without president's election remained exceedingly dim, as politicians generally accept that caretaker govt exercising presidential prerogatives cannot approve new cabinet. Further weakening current caretaker administration, PM Mikati had late Oct announced that he will convene cabinet only "for urgent matters" during vacuum. Constant debates over presidential choices and constitutionality of govt activity could absorb most of political leadership' already minimal policymaking capacity, allowing economic crisis to deepen.

State budget entered into force amid concern over worsening economic crisis. Country's 2022 state budget 15 Nov came into effect, one of several International Monetary Fund (IMF) requirements to unlock potential financial aid package. Notably, budget ended long-defunct official exchange rate of 1,507.5 Lebanese pounds to \$1 and adopted significantly higher exchange rates for customs (15,000 pounds for \$1); ten-fold increase in customs fees could fuel another bout of inflation, thereby reducing purchasing power and increasing poverty amid soaring energy prices at onset of winter; measure also raised concern that projected state revenue will be less than anticipated. World Food Programme 22 Nov announced it had earmarked \$5.4bn in food assistance for next three years, noting food prices are 16 times higher than Oct 2019, when Lebanon's economic crisis became widely apparent.

► ●* **Syria Türkiye intensified attacks against Kurdish-led forces after deadly Istanbul bombing, threatening ground offensive in north that could trigger displacement and fuel escalatory cycle of violence.**

Türkiye stepped up strikes against Kurdish-led forces, threatening ground incursion. Following 13 Nov bombing in Turkish city Istanbul that killed six, which Türkiye blamed on Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and People's Protection Units (YPG), Turkish forces 20 Nov launched "Operation Claw-Sword" in northern Syria and Iraq (see Türkiye); Turkish defence ministry claimed strikes targeting Kobani and Tal Rifat in Aleppo province, Cizire and Derik in Hasakah province and northern Iraq 20-21 Nov killed 184 militants. Turkish President Erdoğan from 21 Nov repeatedly signalled possible ground invasion into north as Ankara reportedly negotiated with Russia on possible offensive west of Euphrates River; potential ground operation in coming weeks – fourth since 2016 – would risk large-scale displacement, civilian casualties and escalatory cycle of violence with YPG. U.S. 23 Nov said Turkish strikes in Syria threatened safety of U.S. personnel and progress of anti-Islamic State (ISIS) operations. Meanwhile, retaliatory cross-border attacks into Türkiye increased: notably; rocket attack 21 Nov killed three civilians in Gaziantep province.

Russia continued strikes in Idlib, while Israel attacked regime bases. Russian aircraft 6 Nov bombed IDP camps near Idlib city, reportedly killing at least nine civilians and injuring over 70. Syrian military claimed Israeli missiles 13 Nov hit Shayrat air base in Homs province, killing two servicemen; Syrian state media reported Israeli airstrikes 19 Nov killed four soldiers and injured one in military bases in central and western Syria.

Deadly unclaimed attacks continued. Unidentified drone strike 8 Nov targeted militia convoy, reportedly killing at least 14, including suspected Iranian nationals, in Deir Ez-Zor province. Explosion near capital Damascus 21 Nov killed two, including Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps colonel. Rocket attack 22 Nov reportedly killed five civilians in Aleppo province's Azaz city, controlled by Türkiye-backed groups.

In other important developments. Beheaded bodies of two teenage Egyptian girls were found in al-Hol camp in north east 15 Nov. Erdoğan 17 Nov raised prospect of normalising relations with Damascus following Turkish elections in 2023.

Gulf and Arabian Peninsula

➔ **Iran Nationwide protests continued as Revolutionary Guards attacked Iranian Kurdish groups in Iraq, while govt stepped up nuclear activity in response to international censure for its nuclear intransigence.**

Nationwide protests continued into their third month. Protesters held commemoration ceremonies for those killed by security forces and events marking mid-Nov anniversary of 2019 protests, as security forces maintained heavy-handed crackdowns, with reports late month indicating greater coercive force in Kurdish-majority regions. Human rights groups mid-month estimated that fatalities to date may exceed 400, including 50 children; senior Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) commander 20 Nov indicated around 60 fatalities among security personnel. Authorities continued to blame unrest on foreign agitation: notably, IRGC 14, 20-21 and 22 Nov resumed cross-border missile and drone attacks into northern Iraq on Iranian Kurdish outfits, while bolstering military presence in border regions (see Iraq).

Tehran expanded nuclear activity in response to atomic watchdog's censure vote. At International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s quarterly Board of Governors meeting, Director General Rafael Grossi 16 Nov shared "serious concern" over lack of progress in resolving safeguards concerns related to past activities at undeclared nuclear sites; board 17 Nov passed censure resolution deeming Iranian cooperation "essential and urgent", as Russia and China voted against. In response, govt 22 Nov began enriching uranium to 60% at its fortified Fordow facility and promised to install more advanced centrifuges there and at Natanz site. Earlier, IAEA's 10 Nov survey showed growing stockpile of 60% enriched uranium reached 62.3kg.

U.S. and its Western allies imposed sanctions. In sign of concerted diplomatic pressure, U.S. 16 Nov blacklisted half dozen employees of Iran's state media and 23 Nov designated three officials over crackdown; European Union and UK 14 Nov

sanctioned individuals and entities for govt crackdown and drone provision to Russia. U.S. 15 Nov sanctioned three Iranian entities implicated in drone transfer to Russia. UN Human Rights Council 24 Nov voted to establish investigation into human rights violations; foreign ministry 28 Nov rejected cooperation. U.S. 16 Nov said Iran “likely” behind attack on Liberian-flagged Israeli-owned tanker off Oman’s coast previous day. Saudi Arabia warned of Iranian attacks (see Saudi Arabia).

➡ **Iraq Türkiye intensified strikes against Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in north after deadly Istanbul bombing, while Iranian forces resumed attacks on Iranian Kurdish groups.**

Türkiye targeted PKK and threatened ground incursion. Following 13 Nov bombing in Turkish city Istanbul that killed six, which Türkiye blamed on PKK and Syrian affiliate People’s Protection Units (YPG), Turkish forces 20 Nov launched “Operation Claw-Sword” in northern Syria and Iraq (see Türkiye); Turkish defence ministry claimed strikes in both areas 20-21 Nov killed 184 militants. Turkish President Erdoğan starting 21 Nov repeatedly signalled possible ground invasion into northern Syria and Iraq; threat of ground incursion in northern Syria appeared more likely than Iraq (see Syria). Before new operation, Turkish drone attacks 1, 3 Nov killed at least four PKK-affiliated Sinjar Resistance Unit members in Sinjar district, Ninewa governorate. Militant attacks in north 5 Nov and 25 Nov killed four Turkish soldiers.

Iran resumed strikes on Iranian Kurdish groups in Kurdistan region. Amid ongoing domestic turmoil in Iran that authorities blame on foreign agitation (see Iran), Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) 14, 20-21 and 22 Nov launched missile and drone attacks against Kurdistan Democratic Party – Iran (KDPI) in Zargawez area of Sulaymaniyah governorate and Sidakan area of Erbil governorate, reportedly killing at least two; forces also bolstered military presence in Iranian border regions. IRGC Quds Force commander 14 Nov visited capital Baghdad and threatened ground offensive if border was not secured from Kurdish infiltration.

In other important developments. Islamic State (ISIS) continued its insurgency; notably, ISIS 19 Nov attacked army position in Kirkuk governorate, killing four soldiers. Unidentified assailant 7 Nov killed U.S. aid worker in capital Baghdad; PM Sudani same day formed committee to investigate killing. In Kurdistan region, Kurdish Democratic Party 3 Nov held first party congress in 12 years, which appointed Masrour Barzani, son of party leader Masoud Barzani, as second deputy president amid waning influence of his cousin Nechirvan Barzani.

➡ **Saudi Arabia Tensions surfaced with Iran as Riyadh anticipated potential attacks, while govt and Huthis held back-channel talks.**

Riyadh warned of imminent Iranian attacks. Media reports 1 Nov reported that U.S. officials had said Saudi Arabia shared intelligence suggesting imminent Iranian attack on kingdom and Iraq’s Kurdistan region, prompting Saudi and U.S. militaries to go on high alert; Iran’s foreign ministry next day said claims were “baseless”. Iranian intelligence minister 9 Nov warned Tehran’s “strategic patience” could run out and threatened “glass palaces will crumble” if Iran decides to retaliate. U.S. 11 Nov announced two B-52H bombers flew over region to demonstrate “commitment to regional security”, as Israel said two of its fighter jets accompanied bombers on exercise.

Govt held back-channel talks with Huthis, amid sign of improved intra-Gulf ties. Govt and Huthis held back-channel talks following Yemen truce's expiry in Oct and amid Huthi attacks and threats of escalation (see Yemen). FIFA World Cup in Qatar 20 Nov commenced; alongside other Gulf leaders, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman attended opening ceremony, in sign of slow but steady intra-Gulf reconciliation process after Al-Ula agreement officially ended intra-Gulf rift in Jan 2021. Meanwhile, U.S. govt 17 Nov spoke out in support of Crown Prince and PM Mohammed bin Salman's claim to sovereign immunity in lawsuit over murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

➡ 🇲🇪 🌟* **Yemen** **Back-channel talks between Huthis and Saudi Arabia signalled deal could be reached outside stalled UN process, while Huthis attacked energy infrastructure, raising risks of front-line and regional escalation.**

Huthis and Riyadh intensified back-channel negotiations away from UN process. As UN efforts to resurrect truce remained deadlocked, Huthis and Saudi Arabia intensified Oman-facilitated secret talks that excludes Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) and UN Special Envoy. Huthis demanded govt use oil and gas revenues to pay civilian and military state employees; while PLC rejected demand, Riyadh reportedly showed willingness to accommodate request provided Huthis enter political process first. Talks raise prospect of bilateral agreement that excludes PLC, which could incentivise anti-Huthi factions to act as spoilers.

Huthis attacked oil and gas infrastructure and redeployed troops on front lines. Huthis 9 Nov launched "warning shot" drone attack on Qana port in Shebwa governorate and ramped up media campaign threatening to target domestic and regional oil and gas facilities; attack disrupted crude oil exports, which is govt's only source of revenue, and raised spectre of high-profile attack on Saudi Arabia or United Arab Emirates during World Cup. Huthis 21 Nov attacked al-Dhabba oil terminal for second time. While violence remained below pre-truce levels, tempo of skirmishes along front lines rose steadily, as Huthis sent reinforcements to Marib governorate. Unknown gunmen 8 Nov killed adviser to defence minister and his driver near Marib city. Meanwhile, UN human rights chief 4 Nov said Huthis had committed war crimes since truce's expiry. U.S. Navy 8 Nov reportedly intercepted shipment of missile fuel from Iran to Huthis in Gulf of Oman.

Diplomatic efforts continued to reinstate UN-brokered truce. U.S. Envoy for Yemen Timothy Lenderking 2-8 Nov visited Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates to meet Saudi, Emirati and govt officials. UN Special Envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg 7 Nov concluded visit to Saudi capital Riyadh, where he met Saudi ambassador to Yemen who is reportedly prominently involved in back-channel talks. Meanwhile, PLC leader al-Alimi 2 Nov attended Arab summit in Algerian capital Algiers and urged member states to designate Huthis as terrorist organisation, as PLC had done in Oct.

North Africa

➡ 🇲🇪 **Algeria** **Algiers doubled its defence budget amid growing military ties with Russia; Moroccan King Mohammed VI did not attend Arab League summit held in Algeria.**

Repression of dissent continued. Algiers court 14 Nov sentenced in absentia leader of outlawed Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylia, Ferhat Mehenni, to life imprisonment on charges of “establishing and running a terrorist organisation” and “undermining territorial integrity and national unity”.

Govt launched joint military exercises with Russia near Moroccan border. Army chief of staff, Gen. Saïd Chengriha, 10 Nov met with Russian head of military cooperation, Dimitri Evguenievitch Choughev, in capital Algiers. Russia and Algeria 16-28 Nov conducted first joint military exercises on Algerian territory in Bechar region near Moroccan border. President Tebboune, who is due to visit Russia in Dec, reportedly close to signing military equipment contract worth around \$12bn with Moscow as part of effort to modernise Algerian army. Meanwhile, parliament’s lower house 22 Nov approved 2023 finance law increasing military budget to \$23bn from \$10bn in 2022.

Tensions with Morocco remained high. Hours before Arab League summit kicked off in Algiers, Rabat 1 Nov announced that Moroccan King Mohammed VI would not attend event, prompting Algiers and Rabat to blame each other for missed opportunity. Moroccan FM Nasser Bourita, who represented kingdom at summit, 2 Nov said Mohammed VI had invited Tebboune to visit Morocco; Algiers rejected invitation as “deceitful marketing”.

➡ **Egypt Widespread repression came under scrutiny during Egypt-hosted UN climate change conference (COP27); Islamist militants in Sinai Peninsula demonstrated resilience.**

Security forces arrested scores ahead of planned protests during COP27. Authorities early Nov resorted to mass arrests and security forces deployment amid online calls to organise anti-govt protests on 11 Nov – to coincide with COP27 held 6-18 Nov in Sharm el-Sheikh city. Notably, NGO Human Rights Watch 16 Nov recorded 700 people detained 1 Oct-14 Nov across 18 governorates, denounced “nationwide crackdown”. As COP27 kicked off, imprisoned blogger and activist Alaa Abd el-Fattah 6 Nov stopped drinking water for about ten days in addition to his six-month-long hunger strike, drawing international attention to his plight; at least three other political detainees died in Egyptian prisons during COP27. European Parliament 23 Nov passed resolution calling for thorough review of European Union’s relations with Egypt in light of poor human rights record.

Media report alleged cracks in security apparatus. Paris-based media outlet Africa Intelligence early Nov reported that six intelligence officers 23 Oct resigned after failing to convince intelligence chief Abbas Kamel to address widespread popular frustration over economic hardship; incident, if confirmed, would highlight existence of major disagreements within security establishment.

Islamist militants proved resilient in Sinai Peninsula. Amid ongoing counter-insurgency operations by govt forces and allied tribal militiamen, Islamic State-affiliated Sinai Province (SP) militants 18-19 Nov exchanged fire with govt forces and took over several govt buildings in Al-Qantara city near Suez Canal; air force fighter jets fired missiles at school where militants had barricaded themselves, reportedly killing them; at least one army officer and five soldiers also killed.

In other important developments. On sidelines of football World Cup opening ceremony in Qatar, President al-Sisi 20 Nov for first time shook hands with Turkish President Erdoğan, who few days later reaffirmed intent to pursue full normalisation of diplomatic relations with Cairo.

➡ **Libya Tensions between Tripoli-based institutions reached new heights as country remained divided into two rival govts with no political solution in sight.**

Rival institutions remained at odds on means to resolve political crisis. Tripoli-based advisory High Council of State (HCS) Chair Khalid al-Meshri 14 Nov accused militiamen affiliated with Tripoli-based PM Abdelhamid Dabaiba of “besieging” HCS headquarters; said HCS had convened session to follow up on tentative agreement with eastern-based legislature House of Representatives (HoR) to work toward forming new unity govt. Dabaiba, who is opposed to HoR-HSC negotiations, immediately denounced “incitement and exaggeration”, saying only “a few” protesters had gathered outside HCS building, accused Meshri of making secret “power-sharing” deals to delay elections. HoR Speaker Aguila Saleh same day condemned “threats and intimidation by armed groups using force” against HCS. Dabaiba 29 Nov reportedly accused Meshri and Saleh of “systematically obstructing elections”. East-based military commander Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar around 22 Nov weighed in on political crisis, saying “time has come for the Libyan people to put an end to failed experiments and dead ends”, accusing politicians of “worshipping their seats of power”.

Greek FM’s refusal to meet Tripoli-based govt minister sparked diplomatic spat. After Tripoli-based Govt of National Unity (GNU) in Oct signed deal with Türkiye on oil and gas exploration in areas of Mediterranean contested by Athens, Greek FM Nikos Dendias 17 Nov canceled Tripoli visit upon landing to avoid being welcomed by his Libyan counterpart, FM Najla al-Mangoush; Dendias claimed he had come to meet Tripoli-based Presidential Council head Mohamed al-Menfi. GNU subsequently recalled its ambassador from Athens and summoned Greek chargé d’affaires in Tripoli.

In other important developments. In his briefing to UN Security Council, UN sec-gen’s special representative for Libya, Abdoulaye Bathily, 15 Nov renewed call for legislative and presidential elections but did not articulate how he planned to address sources of friction over electoral roadmap. International Criminal Court (ICC) Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan early Nov met with Haftar during first ever visit to Libya, 9 Nov told UN Security Council he expects latter to cooperate with ICC investigations into alleged crimes committed by Haftar’s Libyan National Army.

➡ **Tunisia Despite opposition boycott and amid shrinking space for dissent, authorities proceeded apace with plans to hold legislative elections in December.**

Electoral process went on despite opposition boycott. Electoral commission 3 Nov announced 1,058 candidates, including 936 men and 122 women, cleared to run in legislative elections set for 17 Dec, with seven constituencies lacking any candidates. Electoral campaign launched 25 Nov.

Authorities continued to use court and other means to stifle dissent. Islamist-inspired An-Nahda party leader Rached Ghannouchi 10 Nov appeared before court in Sousse city as part of investigation into money-laundering and incitement to violence; anti-terror judge in capital Tunis 28 Nov questioned him for second time over terrorism allegations. After Business News media outlet 10 Nov published article critical of PM Najla Bouden's track record, Justice Minister Leila Jaffel next day sued Business News chief editor Nizar Bahloul under new decree criminalising spreading "false information and rumours" online. Afek Tounes opposition party leader Fadel Abdel Kefi said police 16 Nov prevented him from leaving country without any judicial warrant; interior ministry official same day said Tunis court had issued judicial decision to prevent Kefi from travelling abroad on unclear basis. In Zarzis town, security forces 18 Nov used tear gas to disperse demonstrators demanding renewed search for 18 Tunisian migrants who went missing in Mediterranean Sea in Sept.

Partners stepped up budget support to Tunisia amid ongoing economic crisis. Notably, European Union 13 Nov granted additional €100mn and France 19 Nov announced €200mn loan. Moves come as International Monetary Fund is expected to greenlight \$1.9bn four-year program in Dec.

➡ Western Sahara Lawyers and NGO coalition filed new torture complaints against Morocco and UN Sec-Gen Guterres met with Moroccan King Mohammed VI.

Human rights groups, including International Federation for Human Rights, 8 Nov filed new complaints against Morocco before UN Committee Against Torture demanding release of six Sahrawi prisoners, saying their confessions were obtained under torture. UN Sec-Gen Guterres 23 Nov met in Morocco's capital Rabat with Moroccan King Mohammed VI on margins of UN Alliance of Civilizations conference; Mohammed VI reaffirmed Morocco's position that Western Sahara conflict should be settled "within the framework of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the kingdom".