

Middle East and North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

➔ **Israel/Palestine** West Bank remained highly volatile as Israeli forces conducted almost daily raids and Palestinian militants clashed with both Israeli and Palestinian Authority (PA) forces.

Israeli forces raided West Bank, killing several Palestinians. Israeli security forces conducted 125 search and arrest operations during month, killing at least ten Palestinians and injuring around 100. Notably, Israeli forces 1 Sept raided Balata refugee camp in Nablus city and Umm al-Sharayet neighbourhood near Ramallah, leaving two Palestinians dead. Israeli forces 5 Sept killed Palestinian in raid on Qabatiya village; next day killed Palestinian and injured 16 others during raid in Jenin city. Head of Israeli security service Shin Bet 11 Sept reported 130 shooting attacks by Palestinians against Israelis this year, increase from 98 incidents in 2021 and 19 in 2020; Palestinian health ministry 5 Sept reported Israeli forces have killed 97 Palestinians in West Bank in 2022.

Palestinian militants clashed with Israeli and PA forces in West Bank. Palestinian gunmen 4 Sept fired at Israeli military bus near Israeli settlement Hamra, injuring six soldiers. Members of Fatah's armed wing al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade and Israeli army 14 Sept exchanged fire at Jalama/Gilboa checkpoint near Jenin, killing Israeli officer and two Palestinians (including PA intelligence officer). During raid on Hamas in Nablus city, PA forces 20 Sept clashed with Palestinian gunmen, killing one; PA security forces and militants next day agreed truce. Israeli forces 28 Sept killed four Palestinian gunmen and injured at least 44 during clashes in Jenin. Amid rising insecurity, Israeli security officials appeared to be debating whether to step up operations in West Bank – akin to 2002 Operation Defensive Shield during Second Intifada – or strengthen PA through economic support.

In other important developments. In East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities 5 Sept advanced plans to build new Jewish settlement. In Gaza, Hamas 4 Sept executed five Palestinians, including two on charges of espionage, for first time since 2017. Ahead of Israel's 1 Nov general election, parties 15 Sept submitted final lists, with three far-right parties joining together and Joint List of Palestinian Arab parties splitting up. Syrian state media 6, 17 Sept reported Israeli strikes, killing five soldiers (see Syria).

➔ **Lebanon** Govt formation remained stalled ahead of October expiry of President Aoun's term and violent street clashes erupted amid deepening economic crisis.

Govt formation efforts made no progress. PM Mikati and President Aoun failed to reach breakthrough; new govt may remain unattainable during Aoun's term, which ends 31 Oct. Parliament 29 Sept held first round of presidential elections, failed to elect new president; uncertainty persists that new president will be appointed before Aoun's term ends. Parliament 26 Sept passed 2022 budget, which fell short of International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s standards for bailout package; IMF delegation 19

Sept visited capital Beirut to “accelerate” reform process, concluded progress was “very slow”.

Insecurity flared, notably in north Lebanon. Central Bank 12 Sept lifted last remaining fuel subsidies, fuelling further price hikes for gasoline and diesel. Lebanese lira weakened to all-time lows, trading at 39,000 to \$1 on 19 Sept. In various regions – notably Tripoli, North and Bekaa Valley – street clashes over robberies and family issues led to deaths and injuries. Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi 13 Sept announced govt would impose “sustainable” security plan for North Lebanon; 16 Sept reiterated need for state intervention after bank depositors held up seven banks across country within three days to gain access to their own funds trapped inside illiquid banks. Transport minister 23 Sept confirmed that days earlier boat carrying Lebanese en route to Europe sank off Syrian coast, killing over 100.

Govt and Israel inched closer to maritime deal, notwithstanding risk of escalation. U.S. mediator Amos Hochstein 9 Sept met separately with President Aoun, PM Mikati and House Speaker Nabih Berri to discuss Israel’s response to proposal in which govt renounces claims to Karish gas field – some 90km off coast of Lebanon and Israel – in return for exclusive rights to unexplored Qana prospect; Hochstein said that “very good progress has been made” but noted “work to be done.” After drilling company Energean 8 Sept announced it is ready to resume work “within weeks”, Hizbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah 17 Sept reiterated previous warnings that Israel’s exploitation of Karish field before border negotiations conclude is “red line”.

➔ **Syria Clashes involving Turkish, regime and Kurdish-led forces continued, UN raised risks of cholera outbreak, and Israel conducted airstrikes on regime facilities.**

In north, Turkish, regime and Kurdish-led forces clashed, and Idlib ceasefire held. Turkish drone 16 Sept reportedly killed five militants near checkpoint in Ain Issa, Raqqa province. Turkish airstrikes 18 Sept killed three regime soldiers in raid near Kobane, Aleppo province, following cross-border shelling targeting Turkish forces. IED attack by Kurdish militants 22 Sept reportedly killed one and injured three civilians in Afrin city, Aleppo province. Turkish and Kurdish-led forces 27 Sept exchanged shelling in northern Hasakah province, killing two according to state media. Idlib province’s March 2020 ceasefire held despite violations: notably, alleged Russian airstrikes 8 Sept killed seven civilians near Hafsarja town; Russian strike 29 Sept killed seven and wounded 15.

UN sounded alarm over cholera. UN 13 Sept warned that first cholera outbreak in years was serious threat to region, as dozens were killed from hundreds of suspected cases primarily in Aleppo (north) and Deir ez-Zor (north east) provinces; rising temperatures, and reduced upstream flow in Euphrates river, combined with damage to supply and sewage infrastructure, has left Syrians dependent on shrinking unsafe water sources.

Low-scale Islamic State (ISIS) attacks continued, Israel targeted Aleppo and Damascus airports. In al-Hol camp in Hasakah province, clashes between Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and alleged ISIS militants 8 Sept reportedly killed one ISIS militant and two SDF members. ISIS 11 Sept reportedly killed six SDF members near Ruwaished village in Deir ez-Zor province. SDF 17 Sept announced end of three-week

anti-ISIS operation in al-Hol camp, arresting over 200 people. Meanwhile, state media 6 Sept reported Israeli airstrike on Aleppo airport in second strike in one week. Defence ministry 17 Sept said Israeli airstrike hit targets near capital Damascus, including Damascus International Airport, killing five soldiers.

In other important developments. U.S. Central Command reported that rocket attack 18 Sept targeted U.S. military base Green Village in Deir ez-Zor province.

Gulf and Arabian Peninsula

↓ **Iran** Authorities violently repressed nationwide protests ignited by death of young woman in police custody; talks to revive nuclear deal faltered once more.

Security forces' crackdown on mass protests killed dozens. Morality police mid-month detained 22-year-old woman Mahsa Amini for failing to properly wear hijab (compulsory under Iranian law); Amini later died in hospital, allegedly out of severe injuries from police beating in custody. Death sparked widespread outrage and protests involving thousands in dozens of cities across country; security forces immediately responded with force, reportedly killing at least 40 protesters (and possibly dozens more), arresting hundreds and throttling nationwide internet access. Revolutionary Guards launched attacks against Kurdish dissident groups in northern Iraq, alleging role in unrest (see Iraq).

Nuclear negotiations appeared to stumble short of finish line, dashing hopes of imminent breakthrough. U.S. assessed Iran's 1 Sept response following series of back-and-forth exchanges as "moving backwards". EU High Representative Josep Borrell 14 Sept acknowledged "a kind of stalemate... I don't have anything more to propose"; looming U.S. midterm elections could keep talks in holding pattern for foreseeable future, while Tehran's demands to close International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards probe and have guarantees on sanctions relief likely to remain sticking points. Addressing IAEA Board of Governors on 12 Sept, Director General Rafael Grossi noted challenges in conducting oversight given curtailed access and reported no progress in clarifying safeguards concerns; 23 of board's 25 members 14 Sept urged Tehran to "resolve all outstanding safeguards issues".

Tensions persisted between U.S. and Iran. Albania 7 Sept severed diplomatic ties with Iran over 15 July cyberattack; U.S. National Security Council same day blamed Iran for "reckless and irresponsible" act. U.S. 8 Sept blacklisted several Iranian individuals and companies engaged in development of drones and their transfer to Russia and 14 Sept designated dozen persons and entities linked to Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, citing "malicious cyber attacks". In response to crackdown of protests, U.S. 22 Sept sanctioned Morality Police and seven officials. U.S. Navy 2 Sept announced Iranian Navy ship seized and subsequently released pair of U.S. unmanned surface vessels, following similar incident late Aug.

➡ **Iraq** Govt formation made modest progress amid tense atmosphere, Türkiye and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) battled in north, and Iranian forces struck Kurdistan region.

Govt formation slowly progressed amid violence. PM al-Kadhimi 5 Sept convened second round of talks to resolve political deadlock, which Sadrists boycotted. Supreme Court 7 Sept ruled it could not dissolve parliament, key demand of Sadrists. Shiite Coordination Framework 28 Sept pushed for parliamentary session, which was attended by more than 200 MPs despite Sadrist supporters staging protests outside Green Zone; session reached quorum to elect new deputy speaker to replace resigned Sadrist MP, also reaffirmed support for current speaker. As session ended, Sadrist protesters clashed with security forces outside Green Zone, causing injuries on both sides; rockets 28-29 Sept struck Green Zone. Earlier in month, Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's Saraya al-Salam forces and Iran-aligned Asaib Ahl al-Haq 1 Sept clashed in Basra city, killing at least four.

North witnessed uptick in attacks between Türkiye and PKK. Turkish drone attack 11 Sept killed two PKK members in Sinjar, Ninewa governorate. Later same day, Türkiye claimed PKK killed four Turkish soldiers in Kurdistan region and 12 Sept announced killing three PKK members in Khalifan district of Kurdistan. Turkish intelligence 14 Sept arrested two PKK members in Makhmour refugee camp, Ninewa governorate; next day said it had neutralised five PKK members. Meanwhile, Turkish intelligence chief 10-11 Sept met senior officials, including president and PM, indicating Ankara's desire to mend ties after Türkiye's July attack, which killed nine civilians, and regain Baghdad's support for operation against PKK.

Iranian forces heavily shelled northern Kurdistan. Amid protests in Iran (see Iran), Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards claimed responsibility for missile and drone strikes targeting Iranian Kurdish opposition parties beginning 24 Sept; notably, strikes 28 Sept killed at least 13 people and wounded 58, including civilians; guards claimed attacks targeted bases of "separatist terrorists", accused them of key role in unrest. U.S. military 28 Sept downed Iranian drone reportedly targeting Erbil.

Military continued operations against Islamic State (ISIS). Notably, military 10 Sept said airstrikes had killed dozen ISIS members, including two commanders in Hamrin mountains, Salah al-Din governorate.

➡ **Saudi Arabia Authorities voiced support for efforts to extend Yemen truce; amid global energy crisis, Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies (OPEC+) cut oil production.**

Saudi Arabia welcomed efforts to renew Yemen truce. Ahead of UN-brokered truce in Yemen's expiry on 2 Oct (see Yemen), FM Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud 24 Sept said: "We think it must be extended, however, the signs are not positive" and accused Huthis of not meeting their obligations under truce.

Amid global energy crisis, OPEC+ cut oil production. OPEC+ 5 Sept announced cutting oil production by 100,000 barrels per day, prompting around 3% rise in oil prices; move follows initial announcement in Aug to increase production following U.S. pressure to do so. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman 13 Sept met European Council President Charles Michel and 24 Sept met German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to discuss deepening energy partnership. FM Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud 4 Sept met Egyptian President al-Sisi in Egyptian capital Cairo, amid wider efforts by Gulf states to bolster Egyptian economy.

Riyadh pursued regional and international engagement, notably on security issues. Riyadh 7 Sept hosted Gulf Cooperation Council ministerial meeting on strategic dialogue with Central Asian countries in which ministers outlined plans to enhance security, economic and political ties. In positive sign of ongoing intra-Gulf Cooperation Council reconciliation efforts, army chief of staff of 8 Sept undertook official state visit in Qatar to expand military and defence cooperation.

➔ 🌟 **Yemen** **Efforts to extend UN-brokered truce stalled ahead of Oct deadline amid govt disunity and Huthi military build-up, raising spectre of return to full-scale fighting.**

Govt and Huthis failed to overcome key sticking points to renew truce. Ahead of expiry of UN-brokered truce on 2 Oct, efforts to secure third extension remained deadlocked amid fear of return to front-line hostilities; main sticking points included Huthi demand for disbursement of salary payments to areas under their control and govt demand for Huthis to first reopen roads in and around Taiz city. Flurry of diplomacy continued: notably, head of Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) Rashad al-Alimi during month met UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg, U.S. Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking, U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Grundberg 3-5 Sept met Iranian FM Hossein Amir Abdollahian who reiterated Huthis' call for lifting "blockade" and disbursing salary payments; Huthis 28 Sept reiterated threats to not extend while Grundberg warned "real risk" of return to war.

Anti-Huthi bloc faced fragmentation amid simmering tensions in south. Following deadly clashes in Aug between PLC factions that saw United Arab Emirates-aligned forces consolidate control of Shebwa and Southern Transition Council (STC) late Aug advance into Lawdar, capital of Abyan governorate, situation in south calmed during month; however, STC signalled intent to push further east into oil-rich Hadramawt and Mahra governorates. Protests supported by STC occurred throughout month in Hadramawt and Mahrah governorates demanding replacement of Islah forces from security positions.

Huthis continued military build-up in Hodeida, al-Qaeda struck in south. Huthis 1 Sept held military parade in Hodeida city; UN mission in Hodeida same day condemned parade as violation of 2018 Hodeida agreement. Huthis 21 Sept held another military parade in capital Sanaa as govt same day held military parades in Marib and Taiz; Huthis may believe resumption of hostilities favours them after weeks of PLC infighting. Meanwhile, suspected al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) 6 Sept launched deadly attack on security post in Ahwar, Abyan province, sparking clashes that killed 21 troops and eight militants.

North Africa

➔ **Algeria** **President Tebboune conducted partial cabinet reshuffle, while Algiers continued to seek enhanced role on international scene.**

Interior minister replaced in partial cabinet reshuffle. Tebboune 8 Sept appointed new interior minister as part of govt reshuffle affecting seven ministerial portfolios; energy and foreign affairs ministers remained in office. Bigger reshuffle could follow

Arab League summit to be held in capital Algiers 1-2 Nov. Meanwhile, Tebboune 1 Sept appointed as head of foreign intelligence service Maj. Gen. M'henna Djebbar, previously head of intelligence service monitoring political movements; 7 Sept appointed Gen. Abdelaziz Nouwat Choueiter as head of army's central security directorate. Both Djebbar and Choueiter are close to Gen. Mohamed Mediène "Toufik", who ran intelligence agency from 1990 to 2015.

Repression of dissent continued. Authorities 8 Sept arrested independent daily newspaper *Echorouk* journalist, Belkacem Houam, in Algiers on charges of "illegal speculation" over his coverage of trade issues. Govt reportedly postponed visit by UN special rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly, Clément Nyaletsossi Voulo, planned for 12 Sept; NGO Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights 7 Sept alleged govt "feared" rapporteur could "uncover the reality of an implacable repression".

Flurry of diplomatic engagements. FM Ramtane Lamamra 1 Sept co-chaired 18th Algerian-Malian Strategic Bilateral Committee session with Malian counterpart Abdoulaye Diop in Mali; leaders reportedly discussed reviving joint military operations centre known as CEMOC – created in 2010 with view to conducting joint military patrols and cross-border operations among Malian, Mauritanian, Nigerien and Algerian security forces. Amid efforts to ensure Europe's energy security, European Council President Charles Michel 5 Sept visited Algiers, described country as "reliable" partner in energy cooperation. Newspaper *Jeune Afrique* 12 Sept reported Moroccan King Mohammed VI planned to attend upcoming Arab League summit despite persistent diplomatic tensions between Algeria and Morocco.

➔ **Egypt National dialogue set to begin in Oct as govt faced sustained pressure to free political detainees; military and tribal militias continued to confront jihadists in Sinai Peninsula.**

Poor human rights record cast shadow on upcoming national dialogue. President Sisi-sponsored dialogue set to start in early Oct after board of trustees 11 Sept announced selection of rapporteurs for dialogue's three main tracks. Status of political detainees remained sore point. Coalition of opposition parties participating in dialogue Civil Democratic Movement, 7 Sept urged govt to speed up release of prisoners of conscience. Public prosecutor 14 Sept released 46 prisoners, including political activist Haitham Mohamedin and Al Jazeera journalist Ahmed al-Najdi; authorities 17 Sept rearrested civil society activist Sherif el-Ruby, less than two weeks after his release from prison. Meanwhile, group of MPs and other members of ruling party 1 Sept filed lawsuits against independent media outlet Mada Masr journalists after they published article alleging financial violations within party. U.S. 14 Sept announced withholding \$130mn – of \$300mn conditioned on human rights benchmarks – in military aid to Egypt for second year in a row.

Islamic State (ISIS) affiliate suffered severe blow in North Sinai. Armed forces and Sinai Tribal Union combatants 3 Sept killed at least ten ISIS-affiliated Sinai province (SP) operatives and detained four others in counter-insurgency operations in Jilbana area (north-western Sinai) east of Suez Canal. SP suffered one of most severe blows in recent years when army and tribal fighters 11 Sept killed SP commander Ahmad Suleiman Odeh, alias Al-Shayeb, and his deputy Yunis Salim Salem al-Qaram, alias Abu Osama, at unspecified location in North Sinai. Suspected SP operatives 19 Sept

killed prominent Sinai Tribal Union commander, Hamid al-Wat, at or near his home in North Sinai.

Sisi sought external support amid economic crisis. Sisi 13-14 Sept made first visit to Qatar since bilateral relations resumed in 2021; Sisi and Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, signed agreements to boost cooperation. Move appears to be part of Egypt's efforts to find new investments and foreign support to secure International Monetary Fund loan.

➔ **Libya** **Crisis of two rival govts remained intractable as Sirte-based PM Fathi Bashagha came out weakened of failed efforts to enter capital Tripoli.**

PM Dabaiba continued to consolidate control in Tripoli. Militias aligned with Tripoli-based PM Abdelhamid Dabaiba early Sept reportedly took over security headquarters in Ain Zara town south of Tripoli after repelling forces loyal to rival Sirte-based PM Fathi Bashagha in late Aug. Situation inside Tripoli remained calm in Sept, but renewed clashes between rival armed factions 2-3 Sept broke out in Warshafana area west of Tripoli with reports of mortar fire. Fighting 25-26 Sept also erupted in Zawiya town, 40km west of Tripoli, allegedly over fuel trafficking; at least five people killed including ten-year-old girl; UN Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) next day "condemned the use of heavy artillery in densely populated neighbourhoods".

Parties sought to strengthen relations with Ankara. Dabaiba and Bashagha, 31 Aug-1 Sept made parallel visits to Türkiye to seek Ankara's support. Turkish FM Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu 14 Sept said Türkiye seeks to "build good relations" with various Libyan parties amid media reports that Turkish drones turned late-Aug clashes in Dabaiba's favour.

New UN envoy appointed. UN Sec-Gen António Guterres 2 Sept appointed Senegalese diplomat and former govt minister Abdoulaye Bathily as special representative for Libya and head of UNSMIL after obtaining Security Council's approval, ending nine-month search. Dabaiba, who in Aug had reportedly objected to Bathily's nomination, 3 Sept assured envoy of his "full support". Bathily, who 25 Sept officially assumed duties, will have to mediate between Libyan factions now divided between those adamant that Dabaiba stay on until elections, those proposing new power-sharing deal and govt reshuffle under Dabaiba, and those calling for entirely new "third" govt. Foreign capitals also split on path ahead.

In other important developments. After power struggle erupted in Aug between Supreme Court and Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR), HoR Speaker Aguila Saleh 15 Sept announced appointment of Abdullah Abu Razizah as new chief justice of Supreme Court to replace Mohammed Al-Hafi; Abu Razizah few days later took office.

↓ **Tunisia** **Amid shrinking space for dissent, President Saïed unilaterally changed electoral rules ahead of Dec polls and tensions rose between interior ministry and police unions.**

Opposition parties announced boycott of upcoming elections as Saïed issued new electoral law. Main opposition coalition National Salvation Front (which comprises

Islamist-inspired An-Nahda party), and anti-Islamist, anti-revolution Free Destourian Party, 7 Sept separately announced boycott of legislative elections scheduled for 17 Dec, citing Saïed's plan to unilaterally draft new electoral law. Saïed 15 Sept issued new electoral law, reducing political parties' role by making voters choose individual candidates rather than party lists. Five left-wing parties 19 Sept also announced election boycott, denouncing Saïed's "coup against the [2014] constitution". African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights 22 Sept ruled Saïed's 2021 decision to suspend parts of 2014 constitution violated African human rights charter, ordered return to constitutional democracy within two years.

Crackdown on dissent persisted, tensions ran high between interior ministry and police unionists. Saïed 16 Sept issued decree criminalising spreading "false information and rumours" online, with prison sentences of up to ten years; international NGO Reporters without Borders 20 Sept said decree "threatens press freedom" and aims to "create a climate of fear". Police 19, 21 Sept questioned An-Nahda leaders Rached Ghannouchi and Ali Larayedh over terrorism allegations; Ghannouchi decried move as "attempt ... to eliminate a political opponent". Clashes 1-2 Sept erupted as security forces violently removed sit-in tents installed in Tunis airport by police unionists to protest Saïed and Interior Minister Taoufik Charfeddine's alleged plan to bring together all police unions into single structure; about 200 police officers 28 Sept protested in Sfax city to demand release of eight police unionists detained 23 Sept for alleged involvement in clashes.

Amid economic crisis, govt and social partners agreed on public sector wages. After annual inflation rate reached 8.6% in Aug, govt and main workers' union (UGTT) 15 Sept agreed on 3.5% increase in public sector wages; move could facilitate International Monetary Fund rescue program. Hundreds 25 Sept protested in Tunis against shortages of some foodstuffs, especially sugar and milk, caused by country's inability to pay for imports.

➔ **Western Sahara UN envoy continued regional tour, and confusion emerged over Kenya and Spain's positions on contested territory.**

UN Envoy for Western Sahara Staffan de Mistura 3-4 Sept met with Polisario Front independence movement leader, Brahim Ghali, and Polisario's UN representative, Sidi Mohamed Omar, in Algeria's Tindouf province to discuss current state of Western Sahara conflict between Polisario and Morocco ahead of UN Security Council meeting on Western Sahara in October. Kenya's new President William Ruto 14 Sept announced via Twitter decision to withdraw his country's recognition of contested Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) before deleting tweet few hours later. Kenyan FM Macharia Kamau 16 Sept clarified in internal note that country's position remained unchanged. Spanish PM Pedro Sanchez 22 Sept said Spain supported "mutually acceptable political solution" regarding disputed territory; declaration partly contradicts Madrid's endorsement of Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara in March.