



## Middle East and North Africa

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### Eastern Mediterranean

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↓ ⚡ **Israel/Palestine** Israel escalated deadly violence in West Bank and approved plans to recognise illegal settlements, while Israeli assault on Gaza Strip continued; Israel and Hizbollah intensified cross-border attacks, threatening expanded conflict.

*Israeli security forces and settlers stepped up attacks across West Bank, govt approved plans to “legalise” settlements.* Notably, Israeli forces 11 June killed six Palestinians in Kafr Dan village; Israeli airstrike 30 June killed Palestinian and injured five in Nur Shams refugee camp. UN Security Council members, including U.S., 25 June voiced concern about escalating violence in West Bank and expansion of illegal settlements. Israeli govt 27 June approved plan to “legalise” five settlement outposts illegal under Israeli law.

*Israel killed hundreds in operation to free hostages in Gaza.* Israel’s June operations in Gaza killed over 1,500, bringing total death toll since Oct to at least 37,765 Palestinians. In central Gaza, Israeli forces 8 June launched operation in Nuseirat refugee camp, rescuing four Israeli hostages while killing 274 Palestinians. In south, Israel continued incursion into Rafah and 17 June claimed control of 70% of city. Israel maintained control of Gaza-Egypt border and Rafah crossing remained closed. Israel Defense Forces 16 June announced “tactical pause” in fighting during daylight along main road in southern Gaza to allow aid in from Kerem Shalom crossing; PM Netanyahu denounced pause. Israeli military 27 June ordered evacuation of residents east of Gaza city, displacing estimated 60,000-80,000 and leaving around 78% of Gaza Strip under evacuation orders.

*Ceasefire proposal made no headway and Israeli war cabinet dissolved.* Following U.S. President Biden’s ceasefire proposal outlined late May, negotiations remained stalled, with Hamas demanding Israel’s commitment to permanent ceasefire and withdrawal from Gaza, and Israel refusing to endorse end of war. Meanwhile, centrists Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot 9 June left Israeli war cabinet and coalition govt, citing failure to set out post-war plan for Gaza, and Netanyahu 17 June dissolved war cabinet. Israeli Supreme Court 25 June ruled to end military exemption for ultra-Orthodox men, setting stage for tensions in coalition.

*Pressure mounted for all-out war against Hizbollah.* Amid domestic pressure notably from displaced Israelis and right-wing ministers for all-out war against Hizbollah, cross-border attacks escalated (see Lebanon).

➡ ⚡ **Lebanon** Spectre of all-out conflict loomed large as Hizbollah and Israel intensified cross-border attacks; crackdown against Syrians continued.

*Hizbollah and Israel exchanged threats amid escalation of cross-border attacks.* Israel in June targeted southern Lebanon with deadly airstrikes, while Hizbollah launched major rocket and drone attacks on northern Israel, sparking wildfires and injuring several Israelis. Notably, Israeli airstrike 11 June killed Taleb Sami Abdallah, reportedly most senior Hizbollah casualty since Oct 2023, and three others in Jouaiyya town, South governorate. In response, Hizbollah next day launched unprecedented barrage of over 250 rockets into northern Israel, and 13 June targeted nine military sites in what reportedly amounts to group's largest rocket and drone attack since October. Hizbollah also targeted Israel's airpower, forcing Israeli warplane to avoid anti-aircraft missile 6 June and shooting down Israeli drone 10 June. Meanwhile, Israeli PM Netanyahu 5 June said Israel is "prepared for a very intense operation", and Israeli FM Israel Katz 18 June warned of imminent all-out war, saying military's "operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon were approved and validated". Hizbollah leader Nasrallah next day threatened war with "no restraint and no rules and no ceilings" in case of Israeli offensive, and vowed to attack Cyprus should island open bases and airports for Israeli use. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant 26 June said Israel does not want war but warned it could "take Lebanon back to the Stone Age".

*Crackdown against Syrian refugees continued.* Nationwide vilification of Syrian refugees continued in June, with politicians calling for immediate deportations and municipalities targeting Syrians with home evictions and document checks. Notably, Christian party Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea 18 June sent letter to UN Sec Gen Guterres complaining that UN refugee agency (UNHCR) was complicit in imposing burden of Syrian refugees on Lebanon.

*Economic crisis and political deadlock persisted.* Leaders made no tangible progress to end double executive vacuum or implement reforms required by International Monetary Fund to unlock financial rescue package.

*In another important development.* Syrian national 5 June opened fire on U.S. embassy just outside capital Beirut, leading to shootout with army; assailant was arrested after being injured.

➡ **Syria** Israeli strikes killed dozens of pro-Iran combatants across country, while latter continued attacks on U.S. bases; Kurdish administration postponed municipal elections in north east.

*Israel stepped up deadly strikes on Iran-backed militias, which targeted U.S. base.* Alleged Israeli airstrikes 3 June killed Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) adviser Saeed Abyar and 16 Iran-backed fighters north of Aleppo city; 11 June killed six Hizbollah and affiliated fighters near al-Qusayr city, Homs province. Alleged Israeli drones 19 June also struck govt forces in Quneitra and Deraa provinces, killing one officer, while Israeli airstrike targeting pro-Iran centre 26 June killed at least two near capital Damascus. Meanwhile, Iranian-backed groups 10 and 22 June reportedly launched drones at U.S. al-Tanf base, Homs province; U.S. did not

acknowledge attacks. Unidentified airstrike 21 June reportedly killed Islamic Resistance in Iraq member near al-Bukamal city, Deir ez-Zor province.

*ISIS attacks continued.* Govt forces 7 June launched anti-Islamic State (ISIS) operation with Russian air support amid continued ISIS attacks. Notably in Homs province, ISIS minefield and attack 12 June killed 16 govt forces. U.S. 16 June killed senior ISIS official Usamah Jamal Muhammad Ibrahim al-Janabi in airstrike reportedly in Afrin, Aleppo province.

*In north east, Kurdish authorities postponed municipal elections.* Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria 6 June postponed municipal elections scheduled for 11 June to August after Turkish President Erdoğan threatened military action should elections proceed and Kurdish National Council (KNC), part of Turkish-backed Syrian National Coalition, questioned elections' legitimacy, confirming intra-Kurdish tensions. Turkish drone 6 June killed one near Qamishli city, Hasakah province.

*In other important developments.* In north west, protest movement demanding resignation of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani and prison reform entered fourth month; newly-formed local group Revolutionary Movement Gathering 6 June suspended dialogue with HTS until kidnappings of activists stop. Meanwhile in south, local armed factions continued to demonstrate their standing; notably, Mountain Brigade faction 13 June detained at least three security officers in al-Suwayda city to obtain release of local civil society activist Rita Nawaf al-Aqbani, who was arrested 10 June by security services in Damascus.

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## **Gulf and Arabian Peninsula**

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➡ **Iran** **Iran held presidential election amid record low turnout; govt responded to censure resolution at UN nuclear agency with plans to expand uranium enrichment capacity as Western sanctions increased.**

*Country held presidential election to replace deceased President Raisi.* Unelected oversight body, Guardian Council, 9 June approved six candidates for 28 June presidential election triggered by 19 May death of President Raisi; all but one came from conservative end of political spectrum. Voter turnout 28 June hit new historic low of 40 per cent with no candidate securing absolute majority. Runoff between centre-left Masoud Pezeshkian, backed by reformists and moderates, and far-right Saeed Jalili scheduled for 5 July.

*Nuclear watchdog censured Iran for failing to cooperate, prompting Tehran's ire.* International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director Rafael Grossi 3 June opened Board of Governors meeting by noting ongoing expansion of Iran's enriched uranium stockpiles, continued limits to IAEA's access to Iranian facilities and lack of progress in resolving safeguards concerns. Board 5 June voted 20 to two in favour of censure resolution – the first since Nov 2022 – reiterating calls for Iranian cooperation on IAEA access and safeguards concerns, and stressing potential need for comprehensive and updated assessment by IAEA if such cooperation is not forthcoming. Iran's foreign ministry next day denounced resolution and around 9-10 June informed IAEA of ongoing expansion of uranium enrichment capacity at Natanz and

Fordow sites. U.S. 13 June warned it would “respond accordingly” if expansion was implemented and joined IAEA in calling on Tehran to cooperate with agency on safeguards.

*U.S. and Canada further sanctioned Iranian individuals and entities.* U.S. 10 June blacklisted ten people, entities and ships for financing Houthis; 17 June unveiled another nine Houthi-related designations and designated Iran-backed Islamic Resistance in Iraq member Harakat Ansar Allah al-Awfiya as terrorist organisation; 25 June sanctioned nearly 50 entities and individuals described as Iranian govt’s “shadow banking” network; and 27 June blacklisted three entities and 11 associate vessels for transporting Iranian petroleum and petrochemicals, in response to Iran’s nuclear advancements. Canada 19 June designated Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps as terrorist group.

➡ **Iraq Iran-backed groups claimed attacks on Israel; Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Federal Supreme Court reached agreement on local elections.**

*Iran-backed groups continued alleged attacks on Israel.* Tehran-aligned Islamic Resistance in Iraq in June claimed dozens of drone attacks against Israeli targets, including in Haifa and Eilat cities, none acknowledged by Israel. Resistance groups 6, 12, 23, 26 June also claimed joint operations against Israel with Yemen’s Houthis (see Yemen). Meanwhile, mobs affiliated with resistance groups early month vandalised and burnt down American restaurants and shops in capital Baghdad on grounds that they finance U.S. support for Israel’s war in Gaza. U.S. 17 June said it targeted Harakat Ansar Allah al-Awfiya (HAAA), part of Islamic Resistance in Iraq, and HAAA leader, Haydar Muzhir Ma’lak al-Sa’idi, with terrorism designation. Islamic Resistance in Iraq 30 June vowed to expand operations, including against U.S. targets, in case of expansion of war in Lebanon.

*Kurdish party KDP reached agreement with Supreme Court on Kurdistan parliamentary elections.* KDP 9 June announced lifting election boycott after Supreme Court in May reverted February decision to annul minority quota seats in Kurdistan parliament, ordering that five seats be allocated to minorities across Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok provinces in more even distribution than initial system which put minority seats under de facto control of KDP. Electoral commission 6 June announced reopening window for candidate registration. Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Nechirvan Barzani 26 June set 20 Oct as new date for parliamentary elections, and electoral commission next day further extended deadline for candidate registration until 4 July. With relations between Baghdad and Erbil improving, KRG PM Masrour Barzani 9 June confirmed last remaining federal bank, Trade Bank of Iraq, was added to list of banks at which KRG employees can open salary accounts.

*Türkiye continued strikes on PKK, extended flight ban on Sulaymaniyah airport.* Türkiye continued airstrikes targeting PKK; notably, Turkish airstrike 19 June caused fires in al-Amadiya district, Duhok governorate. Officials in Sulaymaniyah governorate 8 June said Turkish authorities extended flight ban until Dec due to alleged PKK infiltration on Sulaymaniyah international airport.

➡ **Saudi Arabia** Saudi Arabia continued to push for ceasefire in Gaza, while U.S.-Saudi-led mediation process on Sudan remained stalled.

*Riyadh sustained diplomatic efforts on Gaza, Ukraine; Sudan mediation stalled.* Saudi-led Arab contact group including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Jordan, Egypt, and Palestinian Authority 3 June announced support for U.S.-sponsored ceasefire proposal for Gaza. Meanwhile, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman 12 June met Ukrainian President Zelenskyy in Jeddah city, and Saudi officials 15-16 June attended Ukraine peace summit in Swiss city Luzern. Efforts to restart Jeddah talks between Sudan warring parties remained stalled amid tensions with UAE over latter's alleged support to Sudanese paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

*In other important developments.* Amid liquidity crisis due to spending on Vision 2030 megaprojects, Saudi Arabia 2 June sold \$12bn in national oil company Aramco shares. *Wall Street Journal* 9 June reported that U.S. govt was close to finalising defence treaty with Saudi Arabia as part of wider package aimed at encouraging normalisation of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel.

➡ **Yemen** Houthi attacks on shipping intensified amid continued U.S.-UK airstrikes, while local mediators negotiated reopening of key road in Taiz governorate.

*Houthis sank second ship since start of Red Sea attacks; U.S.-UK airstrikes continued.* After hitting two commercial vessels in Gulf of Aden 9 June, Houthi missiles 12 June struck Liberian-flagged, Greek-owned vessel, which sank 19 June, killing one; 13 June struck Palau-flagged ship, injuring one crew member. Houthis 3 June launched new solid-fuel missile at Israeli city Eilat; 6 June claimed first coordinated attacks on Israel with Iran-backed Islamic Resistance in Iraq, with drone strikes on port of Haifa; 12, 23, 26 June claimed more joint operations against Israel. Meanwhile, six U.S. airstrikes 17 June hit Hodeida airport and four targeted Kamran Island near Salif port for first time. Intensification of airstrikes since late May highlight failure of Oman-facilitated talks between Houthis and U.S. and increasing concerns over Houthis' deployment of unmanned boats. UN Security Council 27 June passed resolution demanding Houthis halt attacks on shipping.

*Sanaa-Taiz road reopened after ten-year closure.* Local mediators 13 Jun negotiated reopening of crucial Sanaa-Taiz road on frontlines between Houthis and govt forces. Houthis agreed to reopening in likely bid to address local discontent and improve financial situation following govt's banking sector freeze in Houthi-controlled areas.

*Houthis detained scores of aid workers.* Houthis 6-7 June detained around 60 employees from UN agencies and various local and international NGOs in Sanaa, Hodeida, Saada and Amran cities, over accusations of spying for U.S. and other Western countries. Crackdown comes amid heightened tensions with U.S. over Red Sea attacks and after some aid organisations, including World Food Programme, suspended aid to Houthi-controlled areas. Detentions could lead to closure of more aid organisations in northern Yemen, further exacerbating humanitarian plight.

*Houthis and Southern Transitional Council (STC) clashed in Lahj.* Houthis in May-June reinforced military presence in Lahj governorate amid fears that local forces

could receive U.S. support to push them back from Red Sea coast, and 5 June launched attack on STC forces on frontline between Lahj and Taiz governorates, triggering clashes that killed 18 on both sides.

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## **North Africa**

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### **➡ Algeria Preparations for September presidential election continued amid unrest over water shortages; national oil and gas company signed new foreign partnerships.**

*Ahead of upcoming polls, some parties announced candidates.* President Tebboune 7 June convened electoral body for 7 Sept presidential vote, but still did not announce whether he would run. Front des Forces Socialistes, historic opposition party that has boycotted elections for 25 years, 7 June nominated national secretary Youcef Aouchiche as party's candidate for upcoming polls; Saïda Neghza, president of main employers' union Confédération Générale des Entreprises Algériennes, 10 June announced intention to run.

*Protests erupted over water shortages.* Residents 1 June rioted in Tiaret town, 300km west of capital Algiers, against weeks-long shortages of drinking water in some districts; protesters took to streets torching tires and blocking roads. Tebboune 2 June convened council of ministers and ordered them to "develop an urgent and exceptional program" to resolve problem; measures, including installing supply system relying on nearby wells, partially solved problem in central Tiaret, but issues persisted in other neighbourhoods.

*National energy company sought new partnerships with foreign companies.* State-owned oil and gas company Sonatrach 7 June signed agreement with China's Sinopec and 13 June signed deal with American company Chevron, aiming to expand cooperation and boost output from southern gas fields, increasing exports. Agreements came after Sonatrach late May signed other contracts with international companies and consortiums.

*In another important development.* European Commission 14 June announced dispute settlement procedure against Algeria, accusing it of restricting European exports and investments in violation of 2005 trade agreement.

### **➡ Egypt Rafah border point with Gaza remained closed despite attempts to reach compromise between Egypt and Israel, while govt continued spending cuts and economic reforms.**

*Rafah border crossing remained closed amid Israeli military presence.* After Israel early May launched offensive on southern Gazan city of Rafah and seized control of border point – causing govt to suspend aid collaboration – Egyptian, Israeli and U.S. officials 2 June met in capital Cairo to discuss possible arrangements for reopening Rafah crossing to allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza; govt continued to demand total Israeli withdrawal and that Palestinians or neutral actor, such as EU, manage crossing on Gazan side. FM Shoukry next day reiterated position during meeting with Spanish counterpart in Spain's capital Madrid. Despite dialogue, border remained closed. Meanwhile, govt continued to refute suggestion it may join potential

post-war multinational Arab-led military force responsible for overseeing security in Gaza.

*Price hike in bread did not spark protests, despite serious economic hardship.* Govt 1 June quadrupled cost of subsidised bread, marking first official price rise in 30 years; increase aimed to reduce subsidy spending in govt budget as part of plan to decrease long-term debt. Hike not met with protests or riots, despite extremely challenging economic conditions nationwide. Meanwhile, EU and govt 29 June signed agreement for €1bn financial aid to support economic reforms to boost private sector.

*President reselected PM and assigned him to establish new govt.* President Sisi 3 June re-appointed PM Madbouly and tasked him with forming new govt; cabinet reshuffle – expected since Sisi’s re-election in Dec 2023 – likely to take place early July. New govt expected to continue politically unpopular economic reforms in order to gain confidence of international creditors.

➡ **Libya Deadlock between rival govts continued including over economic matters, while Russia stepped up military assistance to eastern authorities.**

*UN representative called out ongoing political deadlock between rival govts.* Acting head of UN mission Stephanie Koury 19 June gave first briefing to UN Security Council, highlighting need for “inclusive Libyan-led process to overcome political impasse and support Libyan people” and noting “repetitive pattern” of abductions, arbitrary arrests and detentions. Despite broader political deadlock, High National Elections Commission 9 June launched voter registration process for elections in 60 municipalities due to be held sometime this year, later extending deadline to 7 July amid high voter demand to register.

*Financial management challenges persisted despite foreign mediation.* U.S. Embassy in Tunis 11-12 June hosted Libya Economic Dialogue with representatives of political and financial bodies aligned with rival east and west govts, as well as World Bank, U.S. Treasury and UN; dialogue intended to facilitate agreement between parallel govts on 2024 budget, but despite participants welcoming opportunity for discussions, forum concluded without final budgetary accord. U.S. 12 June announced sanctions against Russian state currency-printing company Goznak for allegedly printing money for east-based authorities, including \$1bn of “counterfeit Libyan currency”; move came amid Tripoli govt’s allegations that counterfeit money is in circulation although east-based officials continued to claim currency is legal, printed in 2020 through agreement with east-based head of Central Bank.

*Moscow’s military footprint grew.* Two Russian warships 16 June arrived at eastern Tobruk Naval Base for three-day visit, during which eastern military authorities announced 250 students had been sent to Russia for training and called for closer partnership in training, maintenance, technical and logistical support and maritime security; U.S. 22 June expressed concern over Russia’s increased military activity in country.

*Govt delayed Tunisia border reopening.* Libya and Tunisia 12 June signed agreement to reopen Ras al-Jedir border crossing for humanitarian and diplomatic needs, but Tripoli 24 June delayed full reopening amid presence of local militia from nearby

Libyan city of Zuwara; crossing closed since March following clashes between Tripoli-based security forces and local armed groups.

➡ **Tunisia Political tensions and scattered unrest continued ahead of presidential election due by October; govt pursued closer ties with China and Iran as EU support wavered.**

*Social unrest continued amid uncertainty over presidential vote.* Citizens took to social media to denounce hardline police tactics after football fans clashed with police 2 June at Hammadi Agrebi Olympic Stadium in Radès town outside capital Tunis, with sixty arrested and dozens wounded. Inhabitants of Rouai town in Jendouba governate 11 June demonstrated against lack of drinking water; police same day temporarily detained three members of NGO Tunisian Water Observatory, preventing them from covering protests. Presidential election date still unknown despite President Saïed and electoral authority being required to set electoral calendar by late July, at least three months before end of Saïed's current mandate.

*Tunis moved closer to Beijing and Tehran amid fraying relations with EU.* Saïed 28 May-1 June participated in Ministerial Conference of Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum in Beijing, resulting in announcement of bilateral strategic partnership in economic, technical and cultural fields. Govt 15 June abolished entry visa requirements for Iranian and Iraqi tourists following Saïed's late May visit to Tehran. Tensions with European actors continued to grow; despite strong partnership with Rome, Saïed declined invite to 13-15 June G7 summit in Italy, sending PM Hachani instead. EU High Representative Josep Borrell 24 June said Tunisia "very important and longstanding partner" but expressed concern over govt's "drive closer to Russia, Iran and China".

*In another important development.* With Italian support, UN 19 June officially recognised Tunis' search and rescue zone in Mediterranean Sea as newest measure for limiting migrant flows to Europe.

➡ **Western Sahara Polisario Front suspected of involvement in explosion at Moroccan mining infrastructure.**

Videos purportedly showing explosion at conveyor belt transporting phosphate near mine in Boucraa town, 100km east of Laayoune in Morocco-controlled Western Sahara, circulated online 4 June. Moroccan media outlets speculated group may be responsible while pro-Polisario activists spoke of planned attack; some believe Polisario also responsible for similar explosion at same phosphate conveyor belt in May 2023. Neither Polisario nor Morocco supported claim of group's involvement, however, as former feared accusations of terrorism and latter wanted to reassure investors and international partners that Western Sahara is safe and Polisario does not pose threat.