

Middle East and North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

➔ **Israel-Palestine Clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces continued in occupied territories while Israeli annexation plans stalled; anti-govt protests erupted across Israel.** Clashes 1-13 July between Israeli security forces and Palestinians in West Bank left at least 70 Palestinians injured. Israeli security forces 9 July shot dead Palestinian man and injured another near Kifl Haris village, bringing number of Palestinians killed in West Bank this year to 17. Meanwhile, Palestinian Authority (PA) 2 July announced it would pay only 50% of civil servants' salaries, if above 1,750 shekels, for May and June; move comes after PA early June rejected tax revenues that Israeli authorities collected on its behalf. In Gaza, Fatah and Hamas leaders in rare joint press conference 2 July reaffirmed Palestinian unity in light of looming Israeli annexation of West Bank. After unknown assailants 5 July launched three rockets into Israel, Israel Defence Forces 6 July struck Hamas positions in Gaza; no casualties reported. While PM Netanyahu did not proceed with anticipated annexation of portions of West Bank, Egypt, Jordan, France and Germany in joint statement 7 July warned Israel that annexation would have implications for bilateral relations. Israeli protesters throughout month and across country gathered on weekly basis over govt's mismanagement of COVID-19 and economic crises; some assemblies saw violent clashes between protesters and police. After thousands of Israeli protesters 21 July marched from PM Netanyahu's residence in West Jerusalem to Knesset, dozens of demonstrators 22 July blocked entrance to parliament; police arrested at least 34. Thousands of Israeli protesters 23-24 July in Jerusalem demanded Netanyahu's resignation; police dispersed protesters with water cannon and arrested dozens. In Syria, Israel 20 July reportedly launched air raids targeting suspected Iranian and Iran-linked targets south of capital Damascus; five members of Iran-backed militia reportedly killed and a dozen more wounded, including seven Syrian govt soldiers (see Syria). Iranian officials reportedly accused Israel of involvement in series of incidents in Iran, including 2 July fire at uranium enrichment facility in Natanz (see Iran). Tensions also increased between Israeli forces and Hizbollah militants following 27 July purported border incident (see Lebanon).

➔ **Jordan PM Omar Razzaz's comment on one-state solution for Israel-Palestine conflict sparked public outcry, while teachers late July took to streets in capital Amman.** After Jordan, Egypt, France and Germany in joint statement 7 July warned Israel that annexing portions of West Bank would have implications for bilateral relations, PM Razzaz in interview with British newspaper 21 July said Jordan would consider "one-state democratic solution" to Israel-Palestine conflict. Largest parliamentary bloc al-Islah 23 July condemned PM's statement and called for his dismissal; King Abdullah 22 July met United Arab Emirates' Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, reaffirming country's commitment to two-state solution. Meanwhile, police 25 July raided offices of opposition-run Jordan Teachers Association (JTA) and arrested senior members on corruption charges, including union's leader who was charged with

incitement following his 22 July speech critical of govt; move comes after JTA threatened to stage protests over salary dispute that triggered month-long strike in Sept 2019. Attorney general 25 July suspended JTA's operations for two years while placing gag order on media coverage of situation. After teachers 29 July took to streets in Amman to oppose union leaders' arrest, clashes with anti-riot police erupted; several demonstrators reportedly injured and dozens arrested. State media 29 July announced parliamentary elections to be held 10 Nov. Jordan's Court of Cassation 15 July ruled that country's Muslim Brotherhood branch has no legal standing and should be dissolved; Brotherhood 23 July questioned decision's timing, given prospective Israeli annexation of portions of West Bank, and declared its intent to appeal.

➔ **Lebanon Amid deepening economic crisis, anti-govt protests continued and talks with International Monetary Fund (IMF) remained deadlocked.** Exchange rate on black market early July for first time crossed 10,000 Lebanese lira to the dollar, up from 8,000 on 30 June; marking loss of 85% since beginning of crisis in Oct 2019. In response to rising inflation and poverty rate, Central Bank 6 July announced it will provide foreign currency at fixed exchange rate of 3,900 Lebanese lira to the dollar for essential food industries. Anti-govt protests continued across country, fuelled by widespread electricity blackouts of up to 22 hours per day and reports of suicides of two men on 3 July that many blamed on govt's inept response to deepening economic crisis; protesters 6 July took to streets in capital Beirut, blocking several roads. Negotiations with IMF continued to stall over divisions within Lebanese delegation regarding magnitude and distribution of financial losses. After IMF director Kristalina Georgieva 17 July confirmed no progress had been made in previous 17 rounds of talks, French FM Jean-Yves Le Drian 23 July urged govt to finalise deal with IMF and enact reforms. Following 20 July killing of Hizbollah militant in reported Israeli air raid in Syria, tensions flared between Israel Defence Forces and Hizbollah members in 27 July purported border incident; Israel accused Hizbollah of infiltrating Israeli territory in disputed area along border; no casualties reported; Hizbollah same day denied launching operation and accused Israel of inventing "false and mythical victories". Authorities 12 July reported highest daily increase in COVID-19 cases with 166 new infections, bringing total number of cases to 2,344. Meanwhile, Hizbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah 7 July accused U.S. ambassador Dorothy Shea of "colonial" behaviour; move comes after Shea publicly criticised Hizbollah late June. U.S. General Kenneth McKenzie in meeting with President Michel Aoun 8 July reaffirmed Washington's support for "security, stability and sovereignty" in Lebanon. In response, dozens of demonstrators, including Hizbollah supporters, 10 July rallied outside U.S. embassy in Beirut to protest Washington's alleged interference in Lebanese internal affairs in second anti-U.S. assembly in Beirut this month.

➔ **Syria Militant attack and Russian airstrikes in north west strained March ceasefire, while President Bashar al-Assad's Baath Party won parliamentary elections.** In north west, Russia and Turkey 22 July conducted 22nd joint patrol since March, for first time along entire 70km route following M4 highway. After 1 and 7 July joint Russian-Turkish patrols, IED attack in southern part of de-escalation zone 14 July wounded three Russian and several Turkish soldiers; Kataib Khattab Al-Shishani, unknown group suspected to be composed of militants from Caucasus, claimed responsibility for attack. In retaliation, Russia 14

July carried out more than a dozen airstrikes on rebel-held parts of Idlib and Latakia provinces, reportedly wounding five. Russian airstrikes 15 July reportedly killed one civilian and injured at least ten, including children, in Turkish-controlled Al-Bab city. Fighting 25-29 July intensified between govt and jihadists in Jabal al-Zawiya in southern Idlib. Vehicle-borne IED 19 July reportedly killed eight and wounded 77 near the Bab al-Salama border crossing; separate IED same day injured at least 13 in the centre of Afrin. Turkish defence ministry 26 July accused Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) of bomb attack same day in Ras al-Ayn's city centre in north east that reportedly killed five. Health authorities 10 July reported first COVID-19 case in Idlib province. Amid collapsing economy and U.S. sanctions in June, President Assad's Baath Party and coalition won 19 July parliamentary elections, third election since civil war erupted in 2011; opposition Syrian National Coalition described election as "theatrical". Iranian state media 10 July announced reinforcement of Syria's air defence system as part of new military cooperation agreement. Israel 20 July reportedly launched air raids on suspected Iranian and Iran-linked targets south of capital Damascus; five members of Iran-backed militia killed, and dozen more wounded, including seven govt soldiers. In response to alleged mortar fire on occupied Golan Heights, Israel 24 July struck Syrian army targets in south. UN Security Council 11 July voted to resume cross-border humanitarian aid to Syria through one border crossing from Turkey. UN 24 July announced 24 Aug meeting of Constitutional Committee comprising representatives of govt, opposition and civil society.

Gulf and Arabian Peninsula

➔ **Iran** Amid ongoing U.S. "maximum pressure" campaign on Tehran, tensions over implementation of 2015 nuclear deal continued while sensitive Iranian facilities suffered spate of incidents. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell 3 July announced receipt of Iranian letter triggering Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action's (JCPOA) Dispute Resolution Mechanism; Iran foreign ministry same day said move was motivated by last month's resolution from International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) submitted by France, Germany and UK (E3) urging Iranian cooperation on agency access requests and E3's "continued non-abidance" with their JCPOA commitments; Borrell 17 July announced extension of resolution mechanism timeline. Meanwhile, IAEA director general 15 July underscored "absolute necessity" for Iran to cooperate on agency access to two sites of concern; discussions with Tehran ongoing. Washington continued diplomatic efforts to garner support for Security Council resolution extending UN arms embargo on Iran due to expire in Oct 2020. Following late June explosions in "public area" of Parchin and at medical centre in Tehran that killed 19, Iran suffered spate of further incidents, including 2 July blast at Natanz nuclear facility, 15 July combustion of more than six ships at Bushehr shipyard and 19 July explosion at Isfahan power plant. Iranian officials confirmed Natanz incident caused "significant damage" and warned of response if foreign govt responsible, while Israel's defence minister Benny Gantz 5 July said Israel was not "necessarily" behind every incident in Iran; while unconfirmed, incidents at sensitive sites hint at possibility of new, covert phase of "maximum pressure" campaign by U.S. and/or its regional allies. U.S. military 23 July reported "visual inspection" of Iranian airliner over Syria;

Iranian officials described incident as “illegal and dangerous”. Iran continued to struggle with COVID-19 pandemic: authorities 28 July reported deadliest day to date with 235 deaths; economically, rial currency continued to lose value through most of month.

↓ **Iraq Tensions escalated between PM Mustafa al-Kadhimi’s govt and U.S. on one hand and Iran-backed militias on the other.** Two unknown attackers 6 July shot and killed Hisham al-Hashemi, prominent security adviser of PM Kadhimi as well as critic of Sunni and Iran-backed armed groups in Iraq, in capital Baghdad; Kadhimi 7 July said govt would prosecute perpetrators as no one was “above the law”. Kataib Hizbollah 8 July warned of “escalation” if Kadhimi continued crackdown on militia after security forces late June carried out raid on group’s base in Baghdad suburb. U.S. General Kenneth McKenzie 7 July reaffirmed U.S. would continue military presence in Iraq; suspected Iran-backed militias 5, 19 July conducted rocket attacks against U.S. positions in Baghdad’s Green Zone, reportedly injuring one child. Iran-backed militia Saraya Thawrat al-Ishreen al-Thania 11 July attacked Iraqi vehicles transporting U.S. military supplies near Diwanayah. Unclaimed rockets 24 July struck Basmaya base south of Baghdad hosting U.S. troops and 27 July struck Camp Taji in north. In reshuffle of security institutions, Kadhimi 4 July dismissed Faleh al-Fayyadh from important security posts; appointed new head of Iraqi National Security Service and national security adviser. Following unprecedented financial shortfalls and failed reform attempts, Kadhimi 11 July launched campaign against corruption to recover import tax revenue lost to bribery. Demonstrators 10-14 July took to streets in several southern provinces to protest low electricity supply; clashes between protesters and security forces 26 July killed two and wounded dozens during protest in central Baghdad over electricity cuts. Meanwhile, Iraqi security forces 11 July launched fourth phase of anti-Islamic State (ISIS) military operation; three militants reportedly killed, one arrested and 15 hideouts destroyed. UN expert at UN Human Rights Council 9 July called U.S. killing in Jan of Iran’s Qods Force chief and Popular Mobilisation Unit deputy chief “unlawful”; U.S. Sec State Mike Pompeo same day denounced UN report as “spurious”. After Turkish armed forces early July expanded operations against Kurdistan Workers Party in northern Iraq, President Barham Salih 16 July called for international stance against Turkey’s violations of Iraqi territorial sovereignty. Interior minister 29 July met Kurdistan Regional Government counterpart to discuss security cooperation in disputed territories.

➔ **Qatar UN top court backed Qatar in dispute with United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt over air blockade.** Following three-year anniversary of intra-Gulf dispute in June, International Court of Justice 14 July upheld International Civil Aviation Organisation's decision to hear Qatar's case regarding closure of airspace to Qatari civil aviation; Qatar Airways next day announced it will seek compensation for financial losses due to "illegal airspace blockade" and 22 July launched international arbitration against blockading Gulf states, seeking \$5bn compensation for financial losses due to airspace blockade. Following meeting with FM Mohammed al-Thani, U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook 26 July said blockade has "continued for too long" and was harming shared regional interests in stability and security. U.S. along with Qatar and five other Gulf states 15 July imposed sanctions on six targets accused of providing financial support to Islamic State (ISIS) leadership in Iraq and Syria. Qatari defence minister and Turkish counterpart 20 July met in Turkey's capital Ankara to discuss bilateral security cooperation.

➔ **Saudi Arabia Cross-border attacks between Saudi Arabia and Huthis intensified while fighting between Saudi-backed Yemeni govt forces and Huthis escalated in northern Yemen.** Saudi-led coalition 2 July launched series of airstrikes targeting area around Huthi-held Yemeni capital Sanaa. In retaliation, Huthis 13 July reportedly launched drone and missile attacks targeting oil facility in Saudi city Jizan, Abha airport and military sites in Jizan and Najran cities; no casualties reported. Saudi-led coalition same day said it had intercepted four Huthi missiles and six bomb-laden drones targeting civilians in Saudi Arabia. In north Yemen, Saudi-led coalition 12 July launched airstrike targeting Hajja governorate in north west, killing at least nine civilians, including seven children. Saudi airstrike near al-Hazm, capital of al-Jawf, 15 July killed at least eleven civilians, including several children; UN special envoy next day called for investigation. In Yemen's south, after Saudi Arabia in June presented new proposal to govt and Southern Transitional Council (STC) on stalled implementation of Nov 2019 Riyadh Agreement, STC 29 July rescinded its April declaration of self-administration and agreed to implement provisions of Riyadh deal, marking progress toward ending months-long power struggle between STC and UN-recognised Yemeni govt; Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi 29 tasked PM Maeen Saeed with forming new govt in accordance with deal. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia 14 July permanently cancelled licence of Qatari-owned broadcaster beIN, citing "monopolistic practices"; move comes after World Trade Organization ruled in June that Saudi Arabia had breached obligations to protect intellectual property of beIN. Saudi Arabia, U.S. and five other Gulf states 15 July imposed sanctions on six targets accused of providing financial support to Islamic State (ISIS) leadership in Iraq and Syria. State media 20 July announced King Salman's transfer to hospital in capital Riyadh for medical tests. UK's Foreign Ministry 6 July announced economic sanctions against 20 Saudi nationals suspected of involvement in killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Oct 2018 while UK 7 July announced it would resume exporting arms to Saudi Arabia after one-year moratorium on grounds that Saudi human rights violations in Yemen were "isolated incidents".

➔ **United Arab Emirates** Amid govt shakeup, tensions persisted between United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt, on one hand, and Qatar, on the other. As economic challenges increased due to COVID-19 pandemic and oil price collapse, PM Mohammed Al-Maktoum 5 July announced govt overhaul aimed at facilitating “quicker and more efficient decision-making”; changes include merger of some of country’s largest ministries, including Ministry of Energy with Ministry of Infrastructure. Meanwhile, UAE early July obstructed U.S.-backed talks between Qatar and blockading Gulf states UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt on resolution of Gulf crisis; UAE reportedly urged Saudi Arabia to follow suit. International Court of Justice 14 July rejected Gulf states’ appeal to overturn International Civil Aviation Organisation’s decision to hear Qatar’s case regarding closure of airspace to Qatari civil aviation. UAE, U.S. and five other Gulf states 15 July imposed sanctions on six targets accused of providing financial support to Islamic State (ISIS) leadership in Iraq and Syria. UAE 20 July launched spacecraft from Japan bound for Mars; first interplanetary mission in Arab world.

➔ **Yemen** Amid rising COVID-19 cases, fighting between govt forces and Huthis in north and cross-border attacks between Huthis and Saudi Arabia intensified, while tensions in south de-escalated. In north, fighting between govt forces and Huthis escalated: Huthis 4 and 18 July fired ballistic missiles into Marib governorate, leaving four civilians injured. Saudi-led coalition 12 July launched airstrike targeting Hajja governorate in north west, killing at least nine, including seven children. Saudi airstrike near al-Hazm, capital of al-Jawf, 15 July killed at least eleven, including several children; UN special envoy next day called for investigation. Meanwhile, Huthis mid-month stepped up campaign against tribes in south of Marib governorate in effort to pressure them into breaking with govt. Cross-border war mid-July intensified after Saudi-led coalition 2 July launched series of airstrikes targeting area around Huthi-held capital Sanaa; in retaliation, Huthis 13 July reportedly launched drone and missile attacks targeting oil facility in Saudi city Jizan, Abha airport and military sites in Jizan and Najran cities; no casualties reported. Saudi-led coalition same day said it had intercepted four Huthi missiles and six bomb-laden drones targeting civilians in Saudi Arabia. In south, after Saudi Arabia in June presented new proposal to govt and Southern Transitional Council (STC) on stalled implementation of Nov 2019 Riyadh Agreement, STC 29 July rescinded its April declaration of self-administration and agreed to implement provisions of Riyadh deal, marking progress toward ending months-long power struggle between STC and UN-recognised govt; President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi 29 tasked PM Maeen Saeed with forming new govt in accordance with deal. Meanwhile, UN special envoy Martin Griffiths early July shared latest draft agreement to end conflict with govt; President Hadi 14 July publicly rejected draft on grounds that it “undermines the govt’s sovereignty”; govt reportedly criticised concessions around reopening of Sanaa airport and easing restrictions on Hodeida port. Local health authorities as of 17 July recorded more than 1,500 COVID-19 cases and 439 deaths; 50% increase in both figures from previous month. UN 15 July warned of risk of oil spill from FSO Safer oil tanker in Red Sea, which risks closure of Hodeida port that could cut off 11 million Yemenis from access to basic goods.

North Africa

➔ **Algeria** Despite presidential amnesty granting release to several anti-govt protest movement (Hirak) supporters, courts continued to impose jail sentences on activists. Ahead of Independence Day 5 July, President Tebboune 1 July granted amnesty to several imprisoned Hirak activists and 4 July issued decree pardoning or reducing sentences of about 4,700 prisoners. Algiers court 2 July provisionally released high-profile Hirak figures Karim Tabbou, Amira Bouraoui, Samir Benlarbi and Slimane Hamitouche. Appeals court in Mascara city 14 July reduced journalist Ali Djamel Toubal's prison sentence from two years to 15 months; Toubal was sentenced in June on charges of insulting state institutions and distributing publications harmful to national unity. In latter part of month, courts imposed jail sentences on several activists accused of having criticised govt and other officials. Court in Timimoun city 22 July handed Hirak activists Ahmed Sidi Moussa and Yasser Kadiri six-month prison sentence, including three-month suspended sentence, for "attacking the person of the president", "attacking the integrity of the national territory" and "publishing leaflets likely to harm the national interest". Bordj Bou Arreridj court 23 July sentenced Hirak activist Brahim Laami to 18 months' imprisonment on charges of "insulting a regular body and employees". Tizi Ouzou court 28 July sentenced Hirak activists Zakaria Belkacemi and Mohamed Hamali to one-year imprisonment for "contempt of a regular body" and "social media posts undermining national unity" and "attacking the person of the President". Amid rising number of COVID-19 cases, authorities upheld movement restrictions throughout country. Notably, local authorities in Setif and Ouargla provinces 9-10 July reinforced partial lockdown measures. Govt 26 July also announced two-week extension of lockdown in 29 provinces.

➔ **Egypt Army grappled with Islamic State in Sinai, while govt continued to threaten military intervention in Libya.** In Sinai peninsula, army 21 July reportedly repelled suspected Islamic State (ISIS)-Sinai Province attack on military installation in Bir al-Abed area, leaving 18 militants and two soldiers dead, while ISIS claimed 40 soldiers killed during incident; in following days, military confronted militants who reportedly seized control of four nearby villages, killing at least one soldier and forcing residents to flee. Court of Cassation 14 July upheld life sentence for Muslim Brotherhood (MB) leader Mohamed Badie and 186 other MB members on charges of attacking Minya city police station and killing policemen in 2013. Spain-based businessman Mohamed Ali, whose online videos accusing President Sisi of misusing public funds sparked wave of protest in 2019, 9 July appeared in Madrid court on preliminary extradition hearing; Egyptian authorities late 2019 requested Ali's extradition from Spain on tax evasion and money laundering charges. Govt took preparatory steps toward military intervention in neighbouring Libya against Turkish-backed forces loyal to UN-recognised Govt of National Accord. Army 9 July reportedly carried out major military exercise in Qabr Gabis area near Libyan border. In 13 July statement, members of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar-aligned House of Representatives called for Cairo's military intervention in Libya, citing national security threat to both countries. In Cairo, Sisi 16 July met with Libyan tribal leaders favourable to military intervention. Parliament 20 July authorised troop deployment abroad "in defence of national security" (see Libya). African Union-facilitated negotiations among Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan on Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam 3-13 July failed to secure agreement (see Nile Waters).

➔ **Libya Turkish-backed forces loyal to UN-recognised Govt of National Accord (GNA) prepared offensive in Libya's centre, while Egypt took preparatory steps toward direct military intervention, raising risk of conflict escalation in Aug.** In west, unknown aircraft 5 July launched airstrikes on Wutiya airbase, reportedly destroying air defence systems following Turkish deployment of military equipment there. In centre, GNA-allied forces continued to prepare for offensive to capture Sirte city, gateway to Libya's main oil terminals, and nearby Jufra airbase from Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar's Arab-Libyan Armed Forces (ALAF); column of about 200 vehicles reportedly moved eastward from Misrata city 18 July. Citing threat to national security, Egypt army 9 July held major exercise near Libyan border and Egyptian parliament 20 July authorised troop deployment abroad "in defence of national security" against "criminal armed militias and foreign terrorist elements". UN Security Council special session on Libya 9 July highlighted international schisms: France fulminated against Turkey's "aggressive" posture as destabilising factor; Turkey called for international community to end support for ALAF; Germany and U.S. supported demilitarisation of central Libya, but Russia did not; U.S. slammed Russia for deployment of mercenaries, which Russia denied. UN acting envoy to Libya Stephanie Williams late July warned of "huge risk" of miscalculation around Sirte triggering direct confrontation between rival foreign powers. Diplomatic efforts redoubled to secure agreement on reopening of oil fields and export terminals that Haftar-led forces and allied local tribesmen shut down in Jan. U.S., UN and Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) early July proposed draft agreement holding guarantees that oil revenue would not accrue in contested Tripoli Central Bank but in NOC-controlled bank account for 120 days, to allow for concrete steps to address Haftar's demands

to replace Central Bank top management. NOC 10 July lifted force majeure on oil sites and ordered resumption of oil exports, but agreement unravelled within 24 hours with Haftar rejecting NOC's temporary holding of oil revenues and reiterating call for audit of Central Bank under UN supervision. UN 27 July announced launch of Central Bank audit.

↓ **Tunisia Political crisis peaked with collapse of govt following weeks of tensions between PM Fakhfakh and Islamist-inspired party An-Nahda.** National anti-corruption authority 13 July submitted report on PM Fakhfakh's revenues to national judiciary and Speaker of Parliament Rached Ghannouchi over allegations of conflict of interest. Group of 105 MPs led by Ghannouchi's An-Nahda (member of ruling coalition) 15 July tabled no-confidence motion against Fakhfakh's govt, prompting him to resign same day. Fakhfakh, who remained head of caretaker govt until new one is formed, next day reshuffled cabinet and dismissed all An-Nahda ministers, also pledged to review appointments made by An-Nahda in central and local govt. President Saïed 25 July designated Interior Minister Hichem Mechichi as new PM and tasked him with forming new govt by 25 Aug. Group of 89 MPs led by Abir Moussi's Free Destourian Party 16 July tabled no-confidence motion against Parliament Speaker Ghannouchi; in parliamentary session 30 July, motion fell short of 109-vote majority with 97 MPs voting against Ghannouchi. In south, several strikes and sit-ins brought production of phosphates to near halt. Notably, demonstrators asking for jobs in energy and related companies 16 July closed pipeline in Kamour area.