

Middle East and North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

➔ **Israel-Palestine Unprecedented jailbreak from Israeli maximum-security prison prompted Palestinian solidarity protests across Israel, West Bank and Gaza.** Six Palestinian prisoners 6 Sept broke out of Israel's maximum-security Gilboa prison, northern Israel; Israeli security forces immediately launched largest nationwide manhunt in decades, arresting dozens of Palestinians, including minors and families of fugitives. Jailbreak sparked prison riots; notably, Palestinian prisoners belonging to Islamic Jihad 8 Sept set fire to cells in Rimon and Ketziot prisons in southern Israel, and Palestinian prisoners across Israeli jails 17 Sept began hunger strike. In solidarity, around 500 Palestinians 8-9 Sept protested in Jerusalem and across West Bank, including in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron and Nablus cities. Palestinians 10 Sept announced "day of rage" in West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. Israeli forces same day raided Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque compound to disperse sit-in protest; Israeli fire severely wounded Palestinian man (who later died) at gates of compound in stabbing attack. Palestinians in West Bank's Jenin city 19 Sept threw rocks and explosives at Israeli troops. Israeli authorities 10-19 Sept announced rearrest of all six fugitives. Separately, over 500 Israeli settlers and security officers 22 Sept stormed al-Aqsa compound during Jewish holiday Sukkot. In West Bank, Palestinian military court in Ramallah town 27 Sept held first hearing into case of 14 members of security forces charged with June killing of Palestinian activist Nizar Banat; Israeli forces 26 Sept killed four Hamas and one Islamic Jihad member in gun battles in Biddu town; dozens of Israeli settlers 28 Sept assaulted Palestinians in al-Mufkara village in South Hebron Hills, injuring four-year-old. Israeli forces 30 Sept killed Palestinian gunman near Jenin. In Gaza, Israeli troops 2 Sept shot dead one Palestinian as over 1,000 gathered along border in nightly protests against blockade. Gaza factions 12-13 Sept fired rockets into Israel, prompting Israeli airstrike 13 Sept. Palestinian President Abbas gave Israel one year to withdraw from occupied territory to 1967 borders or Palestine would withdraw recognition of Israel. Israel 3 Sept carried out airstrikes near Damascus (see Syria). Israeli PM Bennett 13 Sept met President al-Sisi in first official Israeli visit to Egypt in over decade.

⬆ **Lebanon Parliament approved formation of new govt led by Najib Mikati, ending 13-month period with caretaker authorities.** Lebanese leaders 10 Sept agreed on formation of new govt under leadership of PM-designate and billionaire Najib Mikati; appointment ended extended stalemate that had left country without empowered govt since resignation of PM Hassan Diab on 10 Aug 2020 in wake of catastrophic Beirut port explosion. Parliament 20 Sept passed vote of confidence in new govt, with support of 85 out of 117 sitting members of parliament. Following dramatic deterioration in fuel crisis last month, long queues at gas stations and shortages of goods continued throughout month. Hizbollah during month realised its previous commitment to import fuel directly from Iran, in direct violation of U.S. sanctions; first deliveries of fuel reached country 16 Sept, after transiting Syria and crossing border without official knowledge or involvement of Lebanese authorities. Hizbollah-linked and U.S.-sanctioned Amana company distributed diesel fuel

for electricity generation to public sector institutions and bakeries across country for free, while charging consumers about 25% below govt-mandated price ceiling. State electricity company 23 Sept said country risked total blackout by end of month as its fuel reserves dwindle. Some 300 protesters in capital Beirut 29 Sept protested govt's decision two days earlier to suspend enquiry into port explosion. In highest-level contact in decade, govt delegation 3 Sept met Syrian officials in Syrian capital Damascus to discuss importing natural gas for power generation from Egypt through Jordanian and Syrian pipeline network. Israel's 18 Sept decision to award offshore drilling contract to U.S. corporation Halliburton prompted PM Mikati and FM Abdallah Bou Habib to reiterate Lebanon's claims over disputed maritime border with Israel; President Michel Aoun so far has refrained from signing amendment that would expand country's claims to Exclusive Economic Zone by 1430 sq km, potentially affecting Israeli-claimed Karish gas field.

➔ **Syria Govt forces struck deal with rebels to end fighting in south west, Russia stepped up attacks in Idlib, and clashes continued between Kurdish and Turkish-backed forces in north east.** In Daraa governorate in south west, tensions cooled following months of hostilities after new deal 1 Sept came into force requiring total surrender of rebel weapons, house-by-house search of each Daraa al-Balad neighbourhood by regime forces and mandatory "settlement of status" process for all residents; at least 2,300 people across Daraa governorate struck deals with govt during month. Regime 4-5 Sept resumed shelling, killing three, after deal 3 Sept temporarily collapsed; agreement however held from 6 Sept. Insecurity in Daraa countryside prevailed, with at least 18 reportedly killed by unknown gunmen, regime fire and IED explosions 1-22 Sept. Jordan 27 Sept announced Jaber-Nassib border crossing with Daraa governorate would open 29 Sept. In north west, March 2020 ceasefire held despite reported clashes and artillery shelling throughout month and Russia escalating attacks in Idlib governorate, with increase in airstrikes in Sept. Notably, govt shelling 7-8 Sept reportedly killed five civilians in Idlib city and Jabal al Zawiya area. Attack 11 Sept killed three Turkish soldiers, prompting Ankara 13 Sept to send military reinforcements to Idlib. International coalition airstrike 20 Sept reportedly killed two senior figures of al-Qaeda-affiliated group in eastern Idlib. Russian airstrike 26 Sept reportedly killed at least 11 Turkish-backed militants near Afrin city in Aleppo governorate; Turkish-backed militants reportedly responded by firing guided missile that killed two Syrian regime soldiers. In central desert, Russia continued airstrikes against suspected Islamic State (ISIS) targets. Notably, in Homs governorate, clashes between ISIS and regime-backed forces 7 Sept reportedly killed six pro-regime fighters in al-Sukhnah desert and ISIS attack 18 Sept in Palmyra reportedly killed five others. ISIS same day claimed attack previous day south east of capital Damascus that temporarily suspended energy provision to parts of country. In north east, Turkish-backed forces and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces clashed throughout month in Hasakah province, notably near Tel Tamr. Unattributed rockets 9 Sept hit outskirts of U.S. base in al-Shaddadi. Israeli airstrikes 3 Sept reportedly struck near capital Damascus.

Gulf and Arabian Peninsula

➔ **Iran Tehran struck last-minute understanding with UN nuclear watchdog regarding access to surveillance equipment, deferring diplomatic showdown with U.S. and European powers.** Iranian nuclear activity continued as indirect U.S.-Iran talks on mutual compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal remained deadlocked, marking three months since last round in June. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) quarterly report 7 Sept noted continued growth in Iranian uranium stockpiles enriched to 20% and 60%, shrinking breakout period to perhaps as little as one month. Concerns over nuclear activity raised prospect during month of possible censure resolution against Tehran by U.S. and/or European signatories of nuclear deal at IAEA Board of Governors' meeting held mid-Sept; President Raisi 8 Sept warned that "non-constructive actions" at IAEA "naturally disrupt the negotiation process". Amid flurry in diplomatic activity, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi 11 Sept visited Tehran and secured stop-gap three-point agreement granting agency access to its monitoring equipment, forestalling risk of censure resolution. At IAEA Board of Governors meeting, Grossi 13 Sept nonetheless raised concern over Iran's cooperation, saying verification and monitoring activities were severely inhibited and Tehran had done little to address probe into past activities at four undeclared sites. IAEA 26 Sept indicated that Iran had denied UN body access at Karaj facility, "contrary to the agreed terms"; Iran's IAEA representative 27 Sept insisted site was "under security and judicial investigations" to justify exclusion. U.S. Treasury Dept 3 Sept sanctioned four Iranians indicted in July 2021 for plotting kidnapping of U.S.-based journalist. U.S. 17 Sept unveiled tranche of designations against "members of an international network of financial facilitators" linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). Meanwhile, IRGC fired missiles at targets inside Iraq's Kurdistan region (see Iraq). Raisi 16-17 Sept attended Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit, where he announced Iran would join organisation as full member after receiving observer status in 2005.

➔ **Iraq Opposition parties announced boycott of October polls, Islamic State (ISIS) conducted deadliest attack this year, and Turkey continued operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).** In run-up to 10 Oct elections, office of PM al-Kadhimi 1 Sept announced security forces had thwarted plan to "rig the elections by putting pressure on a number of election commission employees". Around 40 political parties associated with 2019 Tishreen protest movement 4 Sept announced boycott of elections, saying polls "lack integrity, fairness and equal opportunities". UN official 22 Sept said UN election observers will number over 800. Meanwhile, series of suspected ISIS attacks continued. Notably, in Kirkuk governorate suspected ISIS militants 2 Sept killed one soldier; 5 Sept killed 13 federal police officers in Rashad region in deadliest attack this year; 11 Sept killed three federal police officers. ISIS ambush 21 Sept killed two in Garmiyah area, Sulaymaniyah governorate. Military and Peshmerga 17 Sept announced joint security operation against ISIS. Turkey continued operations – including airstrikes – against PKK in northern Iraq (see Turkey). In sign of increasing PKK retaliatory attacks in population centres, IED 15 Sept killed two members of so-called Rojava Peshmerga armed group in Akre, Duhok governorate. Unknown assailants 18 Sept shot dead mid-ranking PKK commander Yasin Bulut in Sulaymaniyah province. Insecurity and attacks persisted across country. In Nineveh governorate, gunmen 5 Sept killed at

least three soldiers in attack on army checkpoint south of Mosul city; attack on vehicle same day killed paramilitary Popular Mobilisation Forces commander in Babil governorate. Explosives attack 11 Sept killed at least four near Makhmour. Rockets 11 Sept targeted Erbil International Airport hosting U.S.-led coalition; in al-Muthanna governorate, IED next day reportedly targeted international coalition convoy. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) 9 Sept fired missiles at headquarters of unspecified foreign-backed organisation near Erbil city; Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran same day said it was targeted; IRGC 20 Sept struck four bases belonging to "anti-revolutionary groups". While Baghdad and Washington 16 Sept reportedly agreed to reduce U.S. troops in Anbar and Erbil provinces, *New York Times* 20 Sept reported that U.S. deployed additional 2,000 troops for nine months.

➔ **Saudi Arabia** **Huthis continued cross-border attacks, while minister of interior visited Qatar's capital Doha and talks continued with Iran.**

Saudi-led coalition reported interception of Huthi drones and ballistic missiles targeting various provinces, notably on 2, 4, 9, 11, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 Sept. Notably, Saudi-led coalition 1 Sept intercepted three Huthi drones over Yemeni airspace and 20 Sept announced destruction of two explosive-laden Huthi boats in Red Sea. Saudi air defences 4 Sept intercepted Huthi ballistic missile and eight drones over Dammam city targeting Saudi Aramco facilities at Ras Tanura (Eastern province), leaving two minors injured. In sign of continued improvement of relations, Minister of Interior Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef 4 Sept arrived in Doha on state visit and 6 Sept met Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to discuss bilateral relations and security cooperation. Meanwhile, Saudi officials 21 Sept reportedly met Iranian FM Amirabdollahian and other Arab and European officials on sidelines of UN General Assembly in New York. King Salman 23 Sept expressed hopes for direct talks with Iran in pre-recorded speech delivered at General Assembly. Media reports citing Iraqi officials 27 Sept indicated that Iranian and Saudi officials had met in Iraq's capital Baghdad for fourth round of bilateral talks, first since presidential transition in Iran's capital Tehran. U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan 27 Sept travelled to Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates with U.S. Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking to meet Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in effort to push for ceasefire in Yemen.

↓ 🌟* **Yemen** **Huthis intensified assault in north and consolidated control in central al-Bayda governorate, raising prospect that fighting could increase further in coming month; protests escalated in south.**

On military front, hostilities escalated sharply throughout month. In north, Huthis made gains in western Marib governorate and 8 Sept captured Rahabah district in Marib's south. In strategic and central al-Bayda governorate, Huthis consolidated control, enabling offensives into Bayhan district in Shebwa governorate and Lawdar district in Abyan governorate, threatening key road interchanges and transport lines between govt-held areas; Huthis could further intensify assaults in Marib, Shebwa and Abyan in coming weeks. In Hodeida governorate, fighting took place in southern al-Tuhayta, al-Hayma and Hays districts; Huthis reportedly deployed multiple brigades to al-Tuhayta in preparation for what local forces speculate is major offensive to restore control of Red Sea coast taken by United Arab Emirates (UAE)-backed forces in 2018. Huthis also continued cross-border attacks into Saudi Arabia (see Saudi Arabia). In south, Huthis 11 Sept fired five drones, three missiles at Red Sea port Mocha, Taiz governorate, reportedly injuring six soldiers. Fighting in al-Dhale

governorate continued at same levels in Qataba, al-Husha and al-Masharih districts. Separately, protests escalated in Aden, Taiz, Shebwa, Hadramawt, Socotra and al-Mahra governorates throughout month; violent clashes between demonstrators and security forces, who fired live ammunition, 15 Sept left three dead during protests in Aden and Mukalla cities. Demonstrators in Aden and Hadramawt protested collapse of public services, electricity outages and currency collapse, while in Shebwa, Socotra and al-Mahra, protesters demanded withdrawal of Saudi and UAE troops. Southern Transition Council leader Aydrous al-Zubaidi 15 Sept declared state of emergency in southern governorates in response to Huthis' inroads. Hundreds 27 Sept protested in Taiz city, blocking streets in protest at currency crash and inflation. On diplomatic front, UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg 10 Sept briefed UN Security Council, stressing need for more inclusive, Yemeni-led peace process. Grundberg 15-17 Sept visited Saudi capital Riyadh, met with Yemeni President Hadi and govt and Saudi officials. Meanwhile, Yemeni Riyal fell below YR1,100 to dollar in govt-controlled areas, driving up fuel and commodity prices.

North Africa

➡ **Algeria** **Authorities continued to restrict civil society and closed airspace to Moroccan planes in ongoing dispute with Rabat.** Coalition of political parties and civil society organisations Democratic Alternative Forces Pact, born during 2019 Hirak protest movement, 1 Sept denounced govt's "rising repression and authoritarian drift" and "war against public liberties". Police next day blocked march in support of political prisoners, arrested several demonstrators in Kherrata town, Kabylia region (north). In ongoing crackdown on outlawed Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylie (MAK), authorities 6 Sept reportedly arrested 27 suspected MAK members in Kherrata and Beni Ourtilane towns, both Kabylia. Authorities also detained several journalists over their alleged links to MAK, including Hassan Bouras 6 Sept and Mohamed Mouloudj 12 Sept; later charged them with terrorism-related offences. Amid heightened tensions with Morocco since worsening of Western Sahara conflict in late 2020, Supreme Security Council 22 Sept closed country's airspace to all Moroccan civil and military aircraft citing "provocations and hostile practices" by Rabat; senior diplomat Amar Belani 24 Sept said "adoption of additional measures cannot be ruled out". Former President Bouteflika, who resigned in 2019 amid outcry over his plan to seek fifth term, 17 Sept died aged 84.

➡ **Egypt** **Govt scored major victory against jihadist group amid persistent violence in Sinai, and U.S. decided to withhold part of military aid over human rights concerns.** After opponent in exile Mohamed Ali late-Aug urged Egyptians to take to streets against President Sisi on second anniversary of 20 Sept 2019 anti-regime protests, authorities reportedly placed country on high alert; streets 20 Sept remained quiet amid enhanced security presence notably in capital Cairo. In Sinai Peninsula, suspected Islamic State-affiliated Sinai Province (SP) 2-3 Sept abducted eight civilians; army four days later released them. Two IEDs reportedly activated early Sept against army vehicles west of Rafah town and south of Sheikh Zuweid town. In highest-profile defection since insurgency began in 2011, top SP official Mohamed Saad Kamel, also known as Abu Hamza al-Qadi, 10 Sept sur-

rendered to govt-linked tribal union. NGO Human Rights Watch 7 Sept accused security forces of having killed dozens of suspected “terrorists” in extrajudicial executions in recent years, including in North Sinai; called on international partners to halt weapons transfers to Egypt and to impose sanctions against security agencies and officials responsible for abuses. In unprecedented step, U.S. State Dept 14 Sept said U.S. administration will withhold \$130mn out of its annual \$300mn in military aid to Egypt until Cairo takes specific steps to improve human rights record; group of 19 human rights groups, which had called on U.S. to block entire \$300mn, same day decried decision as “terrible blow” to Washington’s commitment to “human rights first” foreign policy. Delegations of Egyptian and Turkish diplomats 7-8 Sept held second round of discussions in Turkey’s capital Ankara with view to normalising relations; both sides pledged further talks to address divergences.

↓ **Libya** **Prospects of holding elections by year’s end fading as parliament unilaterally issued presidential election law and voted no-confidence motion against unity govt, escalating political tensions.** Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) Speaker Aghila Saleh 8 Sept ratified presidential election law without putting it to vote or consulting rival political factions; law establishes strong presidential system of governance. Unilateral move sparked ire of western-based authorities. Rival assembly, Tripoli-based consultative High State Council (HSC), next day decried law as “flawed” due to lack of consultations, vowed to oppose it in court. Other Tripoli-based political opponents claimed it was designed to impose presidential election alone, without parliamentary ones, despite UN-backed roadmap requiring to hold both by year’s end. While briefing UN Security Council, UN Special Envoy for Libya Ján Kubiš 10 Sept did not express reservations on HoR’s presidential election law. HSC 19 Sept passed its own proposal for constitutional framework, envisaging bicameral legislative model, but also directly elected president. HoR 27 Sept postponed same-day session on parliamentary elections law to early Oct. Following weeks of mounting tensions between parliament and govt, HoR 21 Sept approved motion of no-confidence against govt, citing concerns over budgetary disbursements; PM Dabaiba and his cabinet to stay in power as “caretakers” with curbed access to country’s finances. Dabaiba same day rejected no-confidence vote, called on Libyans to rise up against HoR; in response, hundreds 24 Sept gathered in capital Tripoli. Meanwhile, fighting 3 Sept broke out between rival Tripoli-based armed forces in worst fighting this year. Dabaiba 7 Sept said govt forces arrested senior Islamic State (ISIS) figure Embarak al-Khazimi in operation south of Tripoli. Forces loyal to eastern strongman Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar 14 Sept launched air and ground operation against formerly allied Chadian rebel group Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT) in Tarbu area along Chadian border; Chadian and French forces reportedly involved in operation. Presidency Council Chair Mohamed al-Menfi 6 Sept announced release of political prisoners as part of national reconciliation effort; Saadi Qadhafi, son of former leader Muammar Qadhafi, released previous day. U.S. House of Representatives 28 Sept passed bill enabling sanctions against foreign actors in Libya.

➔ **Tunisia** **Despite mounting opposition, President Saïed set to ignore large parts of constitution and rule by decree with no end date, further cementing authoritarian drift.** After Saïed’s adviser 9 Sept said president was planning to suspend constitution and change it through referendum, powerful labour union UGTT, which had kept low profile since Saïed’s power grab in July, 11

Sept rejected idea, instead called for early legislative elections so that new parliament can be tasked with constitutional reform; several political parties expressed similar views. Hundreds 18 Sept gathered in capital Tunis in first protest against Saïed's power grab. Saïed 22 Sept enacted exceptional measures organising executive and legislative powers, under which he can issue "legislative texts" by decree and appoint cabinet members; any constitutional clause running counter to Saïed's new powers suspended. President's office same day said Saïed would form committee to help draft constitutional amendments, while members of frozen parliament would lose salaries and benefits. Islamist-inspired party An-Nahda, largest in parliament, immediately said moves amount to cancelling constitution; four other parties and UGTT next day condemned "dangerous step", said "president has lost his legitimacy by violating the constitution". Over 100 senior An-Nahda officials 25 Sept resigned from party, citing its failure to confront what they called "imminent tyrannical danger". Thousands 26 Sept rallied in capital Tunis calling for president to resign. Saïed 29 Sept named geology Professor Najla Bouden Romdhane as PM. Meanwhile, Saïed faced mounting international pressure to restore constitutional order. Notably, in unprecedented move, ambassadors from Group of Seven advanced economies (G7) 7 Sept urged him to quickly appoint new head of govt and return to "constitutional order, in which an elected parliament plays a significant role".

➔ **Western Sahara Search for UN special envoy made progress, while tensions remained high between Rabat and Algiers.** Morocco 15 Sept reportedly agreed to nomination of Italian-Swedish diplomat Staffan de Mistura as new UN sec-gen's personal envoy for Western Sahara; Polisario Front independence movement in May said it would accept de Mistura's nomination; position has remained vacant since 2019, hindering peace process. Algeria 22 Sept closed its airspace to all Moroccan planes, citing "provocations and hostile practices" by Rabat; relationship between Algiers and Rabat has long been strained, notably over Western Sahara conflict. Algerian FM Ramtane Lamamra and Moroccan FM Nasser Bourita 27 Sept took their dispute to UN General Assembly with former insisting on Sahrawi people's "inalienable rights to self-determination" and latter condemning Algerian "interference". EU Court of Justice 29 Sept annulled EU-Morocco agriculture and fishing trade deals that allow Morocco to export goods from Western Sahara.