



CrisisWatch 2024 – August Trends and September Alerts

Middle East and North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

↓ **Israel-Palestine** Israel continued deadly assault on Gaza and launched major raids in West Bank amid heightened violence; exchanges with Hizbollah intensified.

Israel launched large-scale operation in West Bank. Israel 28 Aug launched largest military operation in West Bank since 2002 including raids and airstrikes in Jenin, Tulkarem and Tubas governorates, in response to rising attacks by Palestinian militant groups which reportedly killed at least 22 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier. Meanwhile, hundreds of Israeli settlers 15 Aug rampaged Jit village, burning homes and vehicles and killing one Palestinian. Israeli forces and settler violence killed scores, bringing death toll since 7 Oct to over 650.

Israel launched major “pre-emptive” border attack in south Lebanon. Following killings of Hamas political chief in Iran and Hizbollah commander in Lebanon, Israel 25 Aug launched airstrikes on targets in southern Lebanon killing three militants; Hizbollah same day launched 320 Katyusha rockets at 11 Israeli military sites in retaliation for July killing of commander, saying operation was carried out “as planned” (see Lebanon). Hamas 25 Aug met mediators in Egypt’s capital Cairo and technical level officials met in Qatar 28 Aug; ceasefire talks ended without breakthrough.

Israel continued operations in Gaza, deadly attacks hit Tel Aviv area. Israel continued aerial bombardment and conducted ground incursions in Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah cities, killing over 1,200 Palestinians in Aug, bringing death toll to over 40,690 as of 31 Aug since 7 Oct. UN human rights office 5 Aug condemned escalating “pattern” of striking schools as Israel struck at least 17 schools serving as IDP shelters in recent weeks; notably, Israel 10 Aug struck Al Tabi’een school in Gaza city, reportedly killing at least 90. Meanwhile, Palestinian 4 Aug killed two Israelis in Holon city near Tel Aviv before being killed by Israeli forces. Bomb blast 18 Aug killed man carrying bomb and injured passer-by in Tel Aviv; Hamas and Islamic Jihad next day claimed attack.

In another important development. During visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount, Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir 13 Aug said Jews should be allowed to pray there, undermining status quo and looking to provoke further escalation with Arab and Muslim world.

↓ Lebanon Israel launched major “pre-emptive” cross-border attack and Hizbollah stepped up cross-border attacks.

Israel launched major “pre-emptive” attack as Hizbollah stepped up attacks. Israel 25 Aug launched attack on southern Lebanon killing three militants; Hizbollah same day said it launched 320 Katyusha rockets and dozens of drones at 11 Israeli military sites in retaliation for July killing of Hizbollah commander, claiming operation was done “as planned”. Cross-border attacks 25 Aug were most intense day of cross-border fire since clashes began on 8 Oct 2023.

Israel and Hizbollah carried out other cross-border attacks during month. Notably, Israeli strike 6 Aug killed four in southern Mayfadoun town. Israeli drones 9 Aug killed Hamas official, injured two civilians in Saida city. Hizbollah same day claimed attacks on Israeli town Dovev and Kiryat Shmona military base. Israeli airstrike 14 Aug injured 17 in Lebanon’s Abbasiyeh village, Tyre district; Hizbollah retaliated with rockets targeting Kiryat Shmona city, northern Israel. Ministry of Health 17 Aug said Israeli airstrike killed at least ten civilians in Lebanon’s Nabatieh area; Israeli strike same day killed Hizbollah member near Lebanon’s Tyre city and Hizbollah strike injured two Israeli soldiers in Misgav Am area, northern Israel. Explosion 18 Aug injured three UN peacekeepers in Yarine village, south Lebanon. Israeli strikes 19, 20 Aug struck alleged Hizbollah weapons storage facilities in Bekaa valley, eastern Lebanon, killing at least two and injuring 27. Israeli airstrike next day killed member of Fatah armed wing near Saida city. Israeli airstrikes across southern Lebanon 23 Aug killed eight militants and one child. UN Security Council 28 Aug extended mandate of UN Interim Force in Lebanon until 31 Aug 2025.

Economic crisis and double executive vacuum persisted. Political leaders made no headway in implementing reforms required by International Monetary Fund to unlock financial rescue package and failed to end political deadlock, leaving country with no president and only caretaker govt. State electricity provider 17 Aug said it had exhausted fuel reserves, causing widespread blackouts. Govt reportedly had \$2bn in arrears on payment for Iraqi fuel deliveries, 10% of GDP; Algerian media 18 Aug announced that Algiers will immediately supply Lebanon with some fuel, but exact deal remained unclear.

➡ Syria Iran-backed groups targeted U.S. base and clashed with SDF in east, armed groups fought in north and Israel launched several attacks.

In east, Iran-backed militias and U.S. traded deadly attacks; Iran-backed militias clashed with SDF. Iran-backed groups 9 Aug launched drone attack at Kharab al-Jir base, Hasakah province, injured eight U.S. troops. Suspected U.S. drone 11 Aug killed eight Iran-backed militiamen near Iraqi border. Also in east, govt- and Iran-backed Arab tribal militias 6-7 Aug launched large-scale attack on Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) positions in Deir ez-Zor province, killing at least three civilians. In response, SDF 7 Aug besieged govt-held areas in Hasakah and Qamishli towns, Hasakah province. Clashes between SDF and Arab tribal militias 7-12 Aug killed 38, including 19 civilians; notably, govt- and Iran-backed groups 9 Aug reportedly killed 12 civilians in Dahla village, Deir ez-Zor; SDF 12 Aug reportedly killed 17 Arab tribal militiamen. SDF 14 Aug lifted sieges but clashes next day resumed.

In north, armed groups clashed. Clashes between SDF-aligned Afrin Liberation Forces, Türkiye-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) intensified. Notably, SNA-Afrin Liberation Forces clashes 11 Aug reportedly killed SNA member near Marea town, Aleppo province. In Idlib province, SNA-HTS clashes 12 Aug killed five. Afrin Liberation Forces 18 Aug reportedly killed HTS member near Afrin town, Aleppo. Clashes with SDF's Manbij Military Council 21 Aug killed two SNA militants in Manbij area, Aleppo. Meanwhile, bomb 9 Aug killed at least nine in Azaz city, Aleppo province. U.S. strike 23 Aug killed senior leader of Al-Qaeda-linked Horas al-Din group in Jabal al-Zawiya area, Idlib province.

Israel reportedly launched several attacks. Alleged Israeli drone 3 Aug reportedly killed one on Damascus-Beirut road. Suspected Israeli airstrike 8 Aug targeted missile warehouse near al-Shayrat airport, Homs province, injuring Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps advisor who later died from wounds. Alleged Israeli airstrike 23 Aug killed three Iran-backed militants and injured ten in Homs and Hama provinces. Suspected Israeli drone strike 28 Aug killed three Palestinian fighters and one Hizbollah member on Damascus-Beirut highway.

In other important developments. ISIS 17 Aug killed three govt forces near al-Habil oil field, Homs. Alleged Turkish drone 29 Aug killed one in Hasakah's Amuda town.

Gulf and Arabian Peninsula

➡ **Iran Regional tensions soared after killing of senior Hamas official in capital Tehran while Gaza ceasefire talks intensified; parliament approved president Pezeshkian's unity cabinet.**

Regional tensions rose after senior Hamas official assassination in Tehran. U.S. significantly stepped up military deployments to defend against potential Iran/axis attack against Israel after late July killing widely attributed to Israel of senior Hamas official in capital Tehran. Against backdrop of intensified Gaza ceasefire talks, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps 20 Aug asserted Iran will not take "hasty action" in retaliation for July killing, saying "Time is on our side and the waiting period for this response may be prolonged"; U.S. officials 27 Aug continued to assess that Iran remained "postured and poised [...] should they want to do that". U.S. forces came under fire from Iran-backed groups; notably suspected rocket attack on Ain al-Assad airbase in Iraq 5 Aug injured five U.S. personnel, drone attack on military base in north-eastern Syria 9 Aug injured further eight (see Iraq, Syria). Houthi launched attacks in Red Sea (see Yemen) and cross-border exchange between Hizbollah and Israel intensified (see Lebanon).

U.S., Israel issued further sanctions on Iranian and Iran-backed entities. U.S. Treasury 15 Aug sanctioned "companies, individuals and vessels" for involvement in shipping Iranian goods to Yemen and United Arab Emirates on behalf of Houthi financial official; targeted Hong Kong-based company "for its role in shipping Iranian LPG [Liquefied Petroleum Gas] worth tens of millions of dollars for [Hizbollah]". Israel 15 Aug sanctioned 18 vessels said to be "transporting oil belonging to designated terrorist organization Quds Force".

Parliament approved president Pezeshkian's proposed cabinet. Pezeshkian 11 Aug submitted 19 ministerial candidates. Parliament 21 Aug approved proposed cabinet,

including reformists, marking first time in over two decades body accepted all proposed candidates. Notable figures include Abbas Araghchi, veteran of past nuclear negotiations, as foreign minister and Farzaneh Sadeq as minister of roads and transportation, becoming second female cabinet minister since 1979 establishment of Islamic Republic.

U.S. accused Iran of election meddling. U.S. 19 Aug accused Iran of cyberattacks against presidential campaigns of Kamala Harris and Donald Trump to “stoke discord”. Iran’s mission to UN 19 Aug called allegations “entirely unfounded”.

➡ **Iraq** **Iran-backed militia rockets injured U.S. troops in attack on airbase, govt signed security agreement with Türkiye amid anti-Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) operations and low-intensity Islamic State (ISIS) insurgency persisted.**

Iran-backed groups launched attack injuring U.S. troops, govt delayed decision on U.S. troop drawdown. Iran-backed militia 5 Aug struck Ain al-Asad base in Anbar governorate with two rockets, reportedly injuring 14, including at least five U.S. personnel. Iraqi military next day condemned “reckless” attack; security officials 8 Aug said five people were arrested in connection with attack. Islamic Resistance in Iraq 18, 20 Aug claimed unconfirmed attacks on Israel. Foreign Ministry 15 Aug said that announcement of end date of U.S.-led coalition’s mission in Iraq was postponed to early Sept due to “latest developments”, without identifying developments.

Govt held security cooperation talks with Türkiye which continued striking PKK. Iraq and Türkiye 15 Aug held fourth High-Level Security Mechanism meeting in Turkish capital Ankara signed Memorandum of Understanding on military, security and counter-terrorism cooperation. Meanwhile, Ankara continued operations against PKK. Notably, Turkish defence ministry 7 Aug said PKK militants killed Turkish soldier in northern Iraq, 9 Aug said Türkiye “neutralised” 12 PKK militants, 12 Aug said Turkish airstrikes “neutralised” 17 PKK members in northern Iraq. Turkish drone 23 Aug killed two journalists in Kurdistan region. Supreme Judicial Council 1 Aug ruled to dissolve three Kurdish parties, Yazidi Freedom and Democracy Party, Democratic Struggle Front, and Party of Kurdistan Society’s Freedom (Tavgari Azadi) for association with banned PKK.

In other important developments. Nine months after provincial elections were held, disputed Kirkuk province 10 Aug elected Rebwar Taha of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan as new governor amid protests from Kurdistan Democratic Party and Iraqi Turkmen Front. Low-scale ISIS attacks continued; notably, in Kirkuk governorate, alleged ISIS attack 10 Aug reportedly killed one Hashd al-Shaabi member in Tuz Khurmatu district; airstrikes 29 Aug killed 14 alleged ISIS members. Iraqi and U.S. forces 29 Aug conducted joint operation against ISIS operatives in Western Anbar, which reportedly left 15 militants dead and seven U.S. soldiers injured.

➡ **Saudi Arabia** **Authorities condemned Israel for assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and conducted diplomacy with Iran to prevent wider Middle East escalation.**

Riyadh appealed to Iran for limited retaliation against Israel. Following assassination of Haniyeh late July in Iranian capital Tehran, FM Prince Faisal bin Farhan re-

portedly engaged with Iranian officials pushing for de-escalation and limited retaliation against Israel. During Organization of Islamic Cooperation meeting in Jeddah city, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Walid al-Khuraiji 7 Aug condemned attack as “blatant violation” of Iran’s sovereignty and international law.

In other important developments. U.S. State Dept 9 Aug announced lifting ban on offensive weapons sales to Saudi Arabia imposed in 2021 over kingdom’s role in Yemen war. Saudi Arabia, U.S. and Switzerland 15-16 Aug co-hosted Sudan peace talks in Swiss city Geneva; talks included United Arab Emirates as observer state along with Egypt, AU and UN, but were boycotted by Sudanese Armed Forces (see Sudan).

➡ **Yemen Houthis continued attacks on international shipping, appointed new govt and intensified crackdown on aid workers; tensions in Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) fuelled tensions in south.**

Houthis continued attacks in Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Notably, Houthis 3 Aug struck container ship in Gulf of Aden; next day said they shot down U.S. spy drone. Four suspected Houthis attacks 8, 9 Aug targeted ship in Bab al-Mandeb strait; attack 21 Aug targeted Greek-flagged oil tanker in Red Sea, leaving it adrift and burning, posing environmental hazard. U.S. forces continued strikes targeting Houthi infrastructure, notably 9 Aug said they destroyed Houthi vessel, missile launcher and aerial vehicles.

Houthis appointed new govt, consolidating power. Houthis 12 Aug announced new “Change and Development Government” 11 months after dismissing previous govt; appointment was delayed in Oct due to Houthis’ Red Sea operations and further group’s efforts to consolidate power. Notably, 15 out of 21 ministers are from Hashemite families closely aligned with group’s leader Abdel Malik al-Houthi; representation of General People’s Congress party reduced to 15% from 50% in previous govt; in apparent effort to include southerners, Houthis appointed new PM Ahmed al-Rahwi from southern Abyan governorate.

Houthis intensified arrests and harassment of aid workers. Houthi forces 3 Aug raided UN Human Rights Office in capital Sana’a and broadcast detainees’ forced confessions admitting to “westernising” Yemeni society; UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk 13 Aug condemned raid and called for release of all UN staff detained in Yemen, including 13 staff taken in early June.

In south, tensions driven by economic hardship and divisions in PLC escalated. Armed groups loyal to PLC member Abu Zaraa al-Muhrami 13 Aug raided PLC presidential office in Aden city after al-Muhrami accused office manager Yehiya al-Shuaibi of exploiting PLC allocations for personal financial gain. In Hadramawt governorate, dispute between Hadhrami tribal leaders and governor escalated with tribal armed groups 18 Aug cutting off oil supply from Masilah oil fields to local markets, demanding share of revenue. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula suicide attack 16 Aug killed 16 soldiers and injured 18 in Mudiya district, Abyan province.

North Africa

➡ **Algeria** Domestic tensions rose ahead of 7 Sept presidential elections; govt faced rocky relations with several international actors.

Amid preparations for polls, former candidates faced criminal charges. With only three presidential candidates approved to run and main political groups including largest parties and unions supporting President Tebboune's re-election bid, incumbent appeared set to win 7 Sept presidential election. Public prosecutor's office 3-4 Aug detained 68 suspects on charges of fraud for allegedly having paid for backing for presidential candidatures; court 4 Aug placed three former candidates, Saïda Naghza, Belkacem Sahli and Abdelhakim Hamadi, under judicial supervision over case. Authorities 27 Aug arrested opposition figure Fethi Ghares, reportedly on charges of insulting president and spreading false news, releasing him under judicial supervision two days later. Meanwhile, Tebboune 18 Aug hosted first election campaign rally in Constantine city, pledging support for Palestine in Gaza war, including in reconstruction.

Security forces thwarted alleged separatist movement network. Govt 4 Aug arrested 21 individuals reportedly linked to Movement for the Self-determination of Kabylia, group authorities classified as terrorist organisation in 2021; Defence Ministry said arrests were made in connection to alleged arms-smuggling plot through Béjaïa port and attempt to disrupt upcoming election.

Govt faced international tensions over regional issues. Algiers 11 Aug expressed concern over advance of troops commanded by eastern Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar toward Libyan Ghadames border town, 6km from Algerian Deb-deb town (see Libya). Meanwhile, tensions also remained high with both France and Morocco over Paris' July decision to support Moroccan autonomy plan for Western Sahara; notably, Algerian and Moroccan representatives 23 Aug engaged in apparent scuffle at African development summit in Japan's capital Tokyo over attendance of Sahrawi independence movement representative despite Moroccan protests. Govt also criticised activities of Russian paramilitaries in Mali close to Algerian border, with Algerian UN representative 26 Aug calling on UN Security Council to halt mercenary activities in area.

➡ **Egypt** Judicial reforms proposed amid economic challenges as Cairo continued to advocate for resolution to crises in Gaza, Red Sea and Sudan.

Advisory body proposed judicial reforms amid economic crisis. National Dialogue Initiative 11 Aug suggested series of recommendations to President Sisi, which included justice system reforms that could reduce maximum pre-trial detention period and list of 600 detainees who could receive presidential pardon; Sisi 21 Aug approved recommendations, which may garner him goodwill amid unpopular economic reforms and cost-of-living inflation. After PM Madbouly late July announced intention to remove all fuel subsidies by Dec 2025, govt continued to implement tough austerity measures including 1 Aug increasing metro ticket price in capital Cairo by 25-30%.

Cairo continued push for ceasefire in Gaza (see Israel/Palestine). FM Abdelatty 5 Aug called on Washington to pressure Israel to stop its "brinkmanship" while Sisi 6,

16 and 23 Aug held calls with U.S. President Biden over intensifying efforts to reach ceasefire. Cairo, Doha, and Washington 9 Aug released joint statement advocating ceasefire, while Cairo 22-25 Aug hosted U.S., Israeli and Hamas negotiators in attempt to secure deal. Tensions with Israel over Philadelphi Corridor and Rafah border crossing, however, persisted; state-affiliated media 5 Aug denied Israeli claims about existence in Philadelphi Corridor of operational tunnels leading into Gaza. Egypt remained opposed to Israel's permanent presence in corridor as well as lack of Palestinian control of Rafah border.

In other important international developments. Abdelatty 7 Aug met with chief of EU naval mission in Red Sea to discuss insecurity, which continued to limit Suez Canal revenues; Abdelatty praised mission but underlined Gaza conflict as root cause of deterioration. Meanwhile, govt's attempt to host discussion between Sudanese pro-army delegation and U.S. officials over implementation of Jeddah agreement faltered after Khartoum attempted last minute changes to delegation.

↓ **Libya Relations between east- and west-based govts significantly deteriorated amid confrontations over legitimacy, central bank leadership and military manoeuvres, threatening to undermine fragile peace.**

Rival authorities attempted to delegitimise each other. Capital Tripoli-based govt 11 Aug expelled two Egyptian intelligence officers as reprisal for Cairo's state visit invitation to non-internationally recognised east-based PM Hammad; in response, eastern House of Representatives (HoR) Speaker Aguila Saleh 13 Aug announced Hammad's administration as "legitimate govt", withdrawing recognition of three-man Presidency Council in Tripoli that backs PM Dabaiba; move potentially pre-empted Presidency Council issuing possible decree freezing eastern parliament. Earlier, Khaled Mishri, who seeks agreement on new unified govt with HoR, 7 Aug installed himself as president of western-High State Council after claiming one more vote in internal election than outgoing president and Dabaiba-ally Mohamed Tekkala; Tekkala contested result in court.

Dangerous contest erupted over central bank leadership. Presidency Council 12 Aug issued decree dismissing central bank governor Siddiq Elkebir, called on Mohammed Shukri to take post and installed new board of directors. HoR 16 Aug, however, issued notice confirming Elkebir in post; Elkebir also refused to step down. Armed group in Tripoli 18 Aug kidnapped bank executive Musab Msallem and Elkebir suspended all Central Bank operations. Though Msallem released next day, operations remained suspended with banks closed across country. Hamad's east-based govt 26 Aug ordered closure of oilfields controlled by eastern military commander Khalifa Haftar due to dispute; by 30 Aug daily oil barrel production dropped from 1.4mn to 590,000. Elkebir 30 Aug said he and other senior bank officials forced to flee country amid threat of militia violence. UN mission 26 Aug expressed concern over "deteriorating situation [...] resulting from unilateral decisions".

East-based army movements unsettled Tripoli authorities. Media outlets early Aug reported Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) intended to advance on Ghadames city bordering Algeria and Tunisia and under control of Tripoli-based forces. Tripoli authorities mobilised units to counter possible takeover, though LNA 14 Aug claimed it was only reinforcing positions across south. Meanwhile, clashes between armed groups in Tripoli 9 Aug killed nine, highlighting persistent insecurity.

↓ **Tunisia Political tensions worsened amid heightened repression and splits between President Saïed and army ahead of October presidential poll.**

Authorities imposed prison sentences on several presidential candidates. Judiciary sentenced several aspiring candidates to jail for alleged illegal campaign practices, including 5 Aug Nizar Chaâri and 14 Aug rapper alias “K2Rym” in absentia. Electoral body 10 Aug announced three candidates approved to run in 6 Oct vote, out of 108 who submitted nominations: incumbent Saïed, little-known businessman Ayachi Zammel and Zouhair Maghzaoui of Arab nationalist Echaab movement, close to president, but critical of his poor economic record and closure of political space. Courts 27-30 Aug overturned electoral body’s rejection of candidacies of Abdellatif Makki, former leader of Islamist-inspired An-Nahda party, Mondher Zenaïdi, minister under former President Ben Ali and Imed Daïmi, former leader of centre-left Congress for the Republic party; opposition could unite during volatile electoral period, raising stakes for vote. Meanwhile, alongside heightened political tensions, spectre of electoral violence rose; Saïed 5 Aug called on citizens to fight “forces opposed to the Tunisian people”, amid threats by president’s supporters to opposition candidates on social media.

Strains emerged between Saïed and army amid govt overhaul. Saïed 7 Aug dismissed PM Hanachi amid latter’s support to Agriculture Minister and army general Abelmonem Belati’s plan to combat water stress. Water management – including supply limits – continued to be flashpoint between military establishment and Saïed throughout month. President 25 Aug announced sudden govt reshuffle including removing Belati and shifting other military officials aside.

Authorities arrested prominent human rights activist. In regime’s continued attempts to neutralise those involved in post-2011 democratic transition, authorities 1 Aug issued arrest warrant for Sihem Bensedrine; Bensedrine, driving force behind transitional justice process, accused of falsifying report on crimes committed during Ben Ali’s dictatorship. UN 8 Aug said arrest cast “chilling effect on journalists, human rights defenders and civil society”.

➡ **Western Sahara Sahrawi authorities criticised French support for Moroccan autonomy plan; more countries moved to open diplomatic offices in Moroccan-controlled territory.**

Fallout from France’s July switch to supporting Moroccan sovereignty over region continued. Pro-independence figures remained highly critical of Paris’ 30 July recognition of Rabat’s autonomy plan, which would give Morocco control over Western Sahara’s national security and foreign affairs; Abdelkader Taleb Omar – ambassador to Algeria for Polisario Front’s de facto state Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic – 5 Aug said France’s position “has no legal impact” and was “built on falsehood”; ambassador also reaffirmed commitment to restore Sahrawi sovereignty over Moroccan-occupied territories. Meanwhile, Sahrawi representative to AU Lamine Baali 23 Aug attended African development summit in Japan’s capital Tokyo despite Moroccan protests, prompting apparent scuffle between Moroccan and Algerian representatives (see Algeria).

Chad opened consulate to Morocco in Western Sahara, others to follow. In sign of support for Rabat’s sovereignty over disputed region, Chad 14 Aug opened consulate

in Moroccan-controlled Dakhla city. Meanwhile, Dominican Republic 17 Aug announced intention to also open consulate in Dakhla and reaffirmed support for Moroccan sovereignty.