



Daily

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MAX - MENA Region Daily Summary - December 1, 2020

The following report reviews current events in the MENA region and their possible effect on business continuity and security.

Highlights of the Day

- **Iraq: IED explodes in front of liquor store in Baghdad's al-Jadeeda District on November 30; likely bid to enforce 'Islamic customs'**
- **Saudi Arabia & Turkey:** Saudi authorities suspend imports of certain Turkish goods, per November 29 reports; bilateral tensions to remain high
- **Saudi Arabia & Yemen:** Houthi-launched ballistic missile lands in Yemen's Saada Governorate on November 30; cross-border attacks to persist
- **Syria:** Infighting between SAA forces reported in Daraa Province's Saida on November 29; noteworthy due to infrequency
- **Tunisia:** Tear gas recorded during protest to denounce underdevelopment in Sidi Bouzid's Jelma on November 30; protests likely to persist

Actionable Items

Algeria: Government imposes curfew in two provinces, extends curfew in 32 others, from December 2 until December 16; adhere to instructions

According to Algeria's official news agency, the government has extended the night curfew in the following provinces for a period of 15 days beginning from December 2 until December 16: Adrar, Laghouat, Oum El Bouaghi, Batna, Bejaia, Biskra, Blida, Bouira, Tebessa, Tlemcen, Tiaret, Tizi-Ouzou, Algiers, Jijel, Setif, Guelma, Annaba, Constantine, Medea, M'sila, Ouargla, Oran, Illizi, Bordj Bou Arreridj, Boumerdes, Tindouf, Tissemsilt, El Oued, Khenchela, Souk Ahras, Tipaza and Ain Temouchent. A curfew will furthermore be imposed in Mostaganem and El-Tarf provinces, which were previously not under a curfew. The curfew will be imposed between 20:00 (local time) and 05:00 in all of these 34 provinces.

Those operating or residing in the aforementioned 34 provinces of Algeria from December

2 until December 16 are advised to adhere to government instructions and take necessary precautions to ensure business continuity due to the night curfew.

Turkey: Government on November 30 imposes nationwide curfew during week nights, lockdown during weekends; adhere to government instructions

During the evening hours of November 30, the Turkish government announced the imposition of a nationwide curfew during week nights. Starting on December 1, a curfew will be imposed every week night from 21:00 (local time) to 05:00. In addition, a nationwide lockdown will be imposed every weekend, starting from 21:00 on Friday to 05:00 on Monday. Employees in essential sectors such as manufacturing, supply chains, health, and agriculture will be exempt from the measures. Businesses, such as restaurants, that provide delivery service will be exempt from the weekend restrictions. Furthermore, people under the age of 20 and over the age of 65 are barred from using public transportation.

Those operating or residing in Turkey on December 1 and over the coming weeks are advised to adhere to government instructions and take necessary precautions to ensure business continuity due to the implementation of a curfew during week nights and lockdowns on weekends.

Notable Events

Algeria: On November 30, MDN reports on surrender of militant in In Guezzam's Tin Zaouatine; extracted intelligence to prompt further arrests

According to the Ministry of National Defense (MDN), the militant was part of "terrorist groups active at the Malian border in 2018". He surrendered while in possession of an RPG launcher, rockets, and an assault rifle.

The development comes amid frequent counter-militancy operations in Algeria's southern provinces along the borders with Mali and Niger. The indication that the militant was active near the Mali border suggests that he may have transgressed Algeria's border into Mali as part of his operations, given that the Sahel region currently constitutes the primary area of operations for several militant groups. Nevertheless, his surrender may have been prompted by the reported reconciliation policy undertaken by the Algerian government, based upon which it offers amnesty to militants who are willing to voluntarily give up arms against the state. Moreover, the militant's possession of an RPG launcher with suitable ammunition shows militants' ability to acquire and maintain such weapons within Algeria. Security forces will attempt to extract actionable intelligence from the militant to identify and apprehend potential collaborators over the coming days and weeks.

Iraq: IED explodes in front of liquor store in Baghdad's al-Jadeeda District on November 30; likely bid to enforce 'Islamic customs'

The explosion reportedly resulted in material damage. al-Jadeeda is located approximately six km east of the Green Zone.

This incident comes amid increasingly frequent attacks targeting liquor stores and other private establishments in Baghdad over recent months, the majority of which take place in Karrada District. On November 26, an IED targeted an alcoholic beverage shop in Karrada, following which members of a Shiite group named Rab'Allah, raided a massage parlor and assaulted its employees in a "stand against societal corruption". The fact that the current attack targeted a liquor store further supports our previous assessment that these attacks are aimed at business establishments that are deemed as breaching Islamic customs. This is given that the consumption of alcohol is forbidden in Islam. Thus, the attack was likely perpetrated by hardline Islamists, such as Rab'Allah, who perceive such businesses as not aligned with Iraq's religious values. The fact that the latest attack occurred outside Karrada implies that attacks targeting similar businesses may occur across different parts of Baghdad over the coming days and weeks.

Iraq: IS claims raiding village official's residence in Anbar Province on November 29; aims to deter cooperation between civilians, government

According to the claim, Islamic State (IS) militants raided the home of a local official from al-Kasrah village, where they captured and executed five Iraqi soldiers. The claim further stated that the militants subsequently attacked an Iraqi military patrol in the same village.

This incident comes amid relatively frequent IS-perpetrated attacks in Anbar Province, which extends from central Iraq towards the border areas with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria. The claim that the militants raided a local house in al-Kasrah as well as subsequently attacked an Iraqi military patrol indicates the relative ease with which IS militants operate in the region. This is likely facilitated by the area being sparsely-populated, which enables the militants to establish hideouts and other infrastructure. By attacking village and tribal officials who are perceived by the group as "apostates" for assisting the Iraqi military, IS likely seeks to create a negative psychological effect on the local population to deter cooperation between civilians and the Iraqi government. Thus, IS will continue targeting both civilians and military personnel in Anbar Province over the coming weeks and months.

Morocco: SPLA claims attacks on RMA positions along separation wall in Western Sahara on November 30; similar attacks to recur

The Sahrawi People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the Polisario Front's military wing, claimed to have targeted Royal Moroccan Army (RMA) positions in Smara, Mahbes, and Awsard, along the separation wall dividing Polisario-held parts of Western Sahara from Morocco-controlled areas.

The development comes amid daily SPLA-perpetrated attacks against Moroccan military positions along the separation wall since Rabat's commencement of a military operation in Guerguerat on November 13. For instance, on November 28, the SPLA claimed similar

attacks in Hawza and Smara. The current attacks, thus, highlight the SPLA's persistent motive to attack RMA positions. This likely emanates from recent indications from several governments, including Jordan and Bahrain, that they will open consulates in the Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara, thus constituting these countries' support for Morocco's territorial claim over Western Sahara. This is likely perceived by the Polisario Front as an unfavorable shift to the status quo in the area. Against this backdrop, the SPLA will likely continue to maintain pressure on RMA positions, rendering further hostilities along the separation wall in Western Sahara likely over the coming days and weeks.

Saudi Arabia & Turkey: Saudi authorities suspend imports of certain Turkish goods, per November 29 reports; bilateral tensions to remain high

According to reports quoting the Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM), Saudi imports of goods such as "meat, eggs, honey, and milk" have been suspended since November 15. The TIM also reportedly stated that Turkish exports to Saudi Arabia fell by 16 percent in the first ten months of 2020.

This development comes amid indications of several campaigns in Saudi Arabia calling for the boycott of Turkish products. For instance, reports from October indicated that a ban on Turkish textile was implemented. The latest development, thus, points towards a broadening of this boycott campaign. Given the long-standing tensions between the two countries due to ideological differences and diverging regional interests, such a campaign is likely part of Riyadh's efforts to undermine the Turkish economy. The lack of an official endorsement of the move by Saudi authorities may be attributed to Riyadh's willingness to avoid being directly accused of waging economic warfare against Ankara. However, informal campaigns against Turkish products may continue to grow by expanding to other fields, which will elevate further bilateral tensions between the two countries over coming months.

Saudi Arabia & Yemen: Houthi-launched ballistic missile lands in Yemen's Saada Governorate on November 30; cross-border attacks to persist

According to Saudi Arabia's official news agency, the failed missile attack was launched from Amran Governorate. Meanwhile, the Houthis claimed a ballistic missile attack against a military camp in Marib Governorate that "wounded and killed 15 commanders and soldiers of the Saudi enemy" on November 29.

This development comes amid persistent Houthi-launched cross-border attacks towards Saudi Arabia over the past weeks. Given precedent, the Shiite group most likely intended to target strategic assets located in the Kingdom's southern provinces, potentially airports in Asir, Najran, or Jazan. The indication that the missile launch was unsuccessful and failed to reach Saudi territory points towards some limitations in the Houthis' offensive capabilities. Nonetheless, the attack on Marib underscores the Houthis' continued maintenance and ability to utilize ballistic missiles. The Saudi-led Coalition will likely attempt to target Houthi military sites in and around Amran in order to hinder the Shiite

group's military capabilities over the coming days. Nevertheless, the Houthis will continue to utilize ballistic missiles as well as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to target Saudi Arabia over the coming days and weeks.

Syria: Infighting between SAA forces reported in Daraa Province's Saida on November 29; noteworthy due to infrequency

A member of the Russian-trained Fifth Corps was reportedly killed by another Syrian Arab Army (SAA) force in Saida, located approximately ten km east of Daraa city.

This incident is notable given the rarity of reported clashes within the ranks of the SAA. However such clashes are not unprecedented as was highlighted on June 27, when members of the Fifth Corps assaulted SAA intelligence unit members near Daraa Province's Kahil, seizing control over checkpoints. The current incident, thus, points towards persistent tensions between such forces in Daraa. These tensions likely emanate from differences in these forces' loyalties, particularly given that the Fifth Corps is known to have been trained and backed by Russian forces, as compared to other SAA units, which are more strongly linked to the Bashar al-Assad-led government. In this context, opposing interests and the resultant mistrust between the groups likely sparked the latest hostilities. Thus, further clashes between government loyalist forces and the Fifth Corps may occur in and around Saida, which will further destabilize the security situation in Daraa Province over the coming months.

Tunisia: Tear gas recorded during protest to denounce underdevelopment in Sidi Bouzid's Jelma on November 30; protests likely to persist

According to reports, demonstrators blocked main roads to demand development and employment, which led the security forces to utilize tear gas to disperse the protesters.

The development comes amid frequent protests surrounding socio-economic issues across Tunisia, particularly in outlying areas. On November 24-25, anti-government protests were recorded across several governorates including Beja, Gabes, Gafsa, Jendouba, Kairouan, Kasserine, Kef, Sfax, Tozeur, and Sidi Bouzid. In this context, the latest protests in Sidi Bouzid highlight the continued anti-government sentiments harbored by the locals. This may be attributed to the Tunisian government's inability to direct funds for socio-economic development projects, particularly given the deterioration of the country's economy amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. This is further underscored by the fact that the Tunisian economy reportedly contracted by ten percent in 2020. As the government is unlikely to be able to meet the locals' demands due to the lack of a significant increase in revenue in the near future, similar socio-economic protests are likely to recur across Tunisia, including in Sidi Bouzid, over the coming days and weeks.

Upcoming Notable Dates

December 1-3

- **UAE:** National Day

December 5

- **Kuwait:** Parliamentary Elections

December 10

- **Iraq:** Victory Day

December 10-18

- **Israel:** Hanukkah