



Daily

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MAX - MENA Region Daily Summary - August 12, 2021

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

Highlights of the Day

- **Algeria:** Angry crowd lynches suspected arsonist in Tizi Ouzou's Larbaa Nath Irathen on August 11; shows intensity of anger over wildfires
- **Iran:** President Raisi appoints hardline diplomat as foreign minister, per August 11 reports; impediments to JCPOA return likely to persist
- **Lebanon:** Lebanese central bank lifts fuel subsidies on August 12; likely to trigger nationwide protests, unrest
- **Turkey:** Security forces forcefully disperse rioters in Ankara's Altindag on August 11; anti-refugee protests to persist in area

Actionable Items

Israel: Anti-government march to take place in Tel Aviv from 19:00 (local time) on August 12; maintain heightened vigilance

According to Israel Police, the march will start at the Museum of Art, continue down Shaul Hamelech Boulevard and Ibn Gabirol Street, and end at Rabin Square. The protest aims to denounce the current Israeli Prime Minister (PM) Naftali Bennett-led government and call upon Bennett to resign.

The slated protest comes amid heightened anti-government sentiments harbored by segments of the right-wing population towards the Benett-led government. This is because some right-wing constituents and activists perceive the government as upholding policies that are "betraying" right-wing values. The upcoming march will attract right-wing activists who support the former Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, as well as people who hold negative sentiments towards the ruling "Change bloc" composed of left-wing, right-wing, centrist, and Arab parties. Thus, the protest will likely garner a medium participation rate, ranging from the mid-dozens to the low-hundreds. Heightened

deployment of security forces can be expected at the protest locales. The possibility of limited scuffles between protesters and security personnel cannot be ruled out. Regardless, traffic congestion is expected in the vicinity of the protest locales for the duration of the event.

Those operating or residing in Tel Aviv during the evening hours of August 12 are advised to maintain heightened vigilance in the vicinity of the Museum of Art, Shaul Hamelech Boulevard, Ibn Gabirol Street, and Rabin Square due to the planned protest and the potential for localized unrest.

Israel: Additional COVID-19-related restrictions to come into effect from August 16, 18; adhere to authorities' instructions

On August 11, the government approved new restrictions on movement and gatherings. From August 16, additional restrictions will be added to the "Purple Ribbon program" for malls and places of commerce. This will limit stores to one customer per seven square meters. A maximum of 1,000 people can attend a mass event in closed spaces and up to 5,000 in open spaces. For private events, only 50 people will be allowed inside and 100 people will be allowed outside. From August 18, "Green Pass" requirements will come into effect nationwide, except in malls and areas of commerce. This requires anyone aged three or over and is unvaccinated, either by choice or due to a medical condition, to present a negative PCR test certificate before entering public spaces, such as swimming pools, gyms, academic institutions, sports and culture events, conferences, museums, libraries, restaurants, and hotels. Tests for children aged 11 and below are free of charge. However, anyone aged 12 or older will be required to pay for the test. These restrictions will remain in place until further notice.

Those operating or residing in Israel from August 12 onwards are advised to adhere to government instructions and take necessary precautions to ensure business continuity due to the expansion in scope of the COVID-19-related restrictions. Remain abreast of further updates in coming weeks.

Turkey: Heavy rain, flooding in western Black Sea region on August 11 result in four deaths, evacuations; remain cognizant of alerts

Flooding as a result of heavy rain was reported in the cities of Bartın, Kastamonu, and Sinop, which resulted in the evacuation of over 600 people. This has also triggered power cuts in these areas. The Ministry of Interior has warned those residing in Bartın, Kastamonu, and Sinop to not leave safe zones and to avoid using roads located near flooded areas. Flooding was also recorded in Ulus District in Bartın Province; Azdavay, İnebolu, Bozkurt, Küre, and Pınarbaşı districts in Kastamonu Province; and Ayancık District in Sinop Province. A landslide in Kastamonu Province killed one person. According to the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Authority, heavy rainfall will continue in these regions throughout August 12.

Those operating in the aforementioned areas on August 12 and over the coming days are

advised to remain cognizant of local authorities' updates and the risks associated with outdoor travel. Allot for disruptions to traffic and public utilities as well as reconfirm all flight and overland travel itineraries.

Notable Events

Algeria: Angry crowd lynches suspected arsonist in Tizi Ouzou's Larbaa Nath Irathen on August 11; shows intensity of anger over wildfires

Locals reportedly apprehended the individual after he was allegedly caught lighting a fire with accomplices. After being handed over to the authorities, a crowd followed the police vehicle carrying the suspect, forcibly removed him from the vehicle, and beat him to death. Reports also state that the suspect's friends claimed that he did not participate in arson but traveled to the area to aid fire extinguishing teams.

This comes amid widespread destruction caused by wildfires across Algeria, including in Tizi Ouzou Province. As of August 11, at least 65 individuals have been killed while Algeria's Minister of Interior (MoI) has attributed blame for the wildfires to criminals. The lynching of a suspected arsonist thus demonstrates the intensity of locals' anger surrounding the fires as well as their willingness to resort to lawless acts of violence. The MoI's insistence that the wildfires have been caused by criminals likely bolstered the locals' resolve to conduct the lynching. Given that the wildfires are ongoing across Algeria, further acts of violence targeting suspected arsonists can be expected, which will adversely impact the security situation in the country.

Iran: President Raisi appoints hardline diplomat as foreign minister, per August 11 reports; impediments to JCPOA return likely to persist

Hossein Amirabdollahian, the new foreign minister, reportedly harbors strong anti-Western sentiments and is believed to have close ties to Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and other Iranian proxies around the Middle East. He previously served as deputy foreign minister for Arab and African Affairs under former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

This follows Raisi's official inauguration as president on August 5 and his subsequent appointment of several loyalists to high-profile executive positions in the new government. Amirabdollahian's appointment thus aligns with Raisi's attempts to consolidate the hardliner camp's power within the political echelon in Iran. As Raisi has stated that he will support "any diplomatic plan" to lift sanctions against Iran, the new foreign minister's appointment is unlikely to significantly impact the probability of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) negotiations resuming. That said, Amirabdollahian will likely be uncompromising in his demand of full sanctions relief as a precondition for a return to the JCPOA. Therefore, despite Iran's willingness to resume JCPOA negotiations in the coming months, significant concessions will be required for a deal to be reached.

Lebanon: Lebanese central bank lifts fuel subsidies on August 12; likely to trigger nationwide protests, unrest

The central bank reportedly stated that it would offer credit lines for fuel imports based on the exchange rate of the Lebanese Pound (LBP).

The central bank has been using its foreign exchange reserves to import fuel at rates below the market exchange rate since June, effectively subsidizing fuel. However, it has stated in the past that this process is untenable in the long-run, and therefore it is likely that the latest decision was taken as a result of the severe depletion of the bank's foreign exchange reserves. This development thus reiterates the severity of the economic crisis in the country. This move will drastically increase fuel prices, which will have an impact on the cost of basic goods, including food and health products. This, in turn, will exacerbate the acute economic hardships of the locals, especially given that half of the Lebanese population is reportedly under the poverty line. In this context, widespread anti-government protests and unrest can be expected across Lebanon's major cities, including Beirut and Tripoli, over the coming hours, days, and weeks.

Lebanon: Protesters storm Zahrani Power Plant south of Sidon on August 11; unrest to increase amid electricity crisis

Lebanon's official news agency reported that the protesters left the compound after they negotiated with the facility's management, which agreed to increase electricity provision. The Zahrani Power Plant is located seven km south of Sidon.

This comes amid an acute electricity crisis in Lebanon, which is particularly severe in the southern parts of the country, where extensive power cuts have been recorded in recent weeks. The locals' growing frustration over this crisis thus prompted them to storm the Zahrani Power Plant. This highlights the locals' increasing willingness to resort to the use of force to have their demands met. Despite the reported agreement that was reached, the electricity supply across Lebanon is expected to continue to face disruptions in the coming days and weeks, particularly following an imminent removal of state subsidies on fuel imports. This will prompt further unrest in the country, particularly in the vicinity of power plants. The Zahrani Power Plant and Deir Ammar Power Station near Tripoli account for approximately 40 percent of the country's electricity supply and therefore these may be the primary focal points of unrest.

Syria: Locals force NDF, Syrian Brigade Party to evacuate positions in as-Suweida Province on August 11; effort to de-escalate tensions

The National Defense Forces (NDF), a pro-government militia, and the "Anti-Terrorism Force" of the Syrian Brigade Party evacuated their respective positions from Raha village after locals pressured both parties to leave. The "Anti-Terrorism Force" is the military wing of the Syrian Brigade Party, comprising of 2,500 fighters who oppose the presence of pro-government forces in the province.

Tensions between the Syrian government and Syrian Brigade Party have been high in recent weeks after the former threatened to launch a military campaign and conduct airstrikes against the headquarters of the “Anti-Terrorism Force” in Raha. By forcing both parties to evacuate their respective positions, the locals likely sought to prevent the Syrian government from launching a military campaign, which would further destabilize the fragile security situation. The evacuation will only function as a temporary solution to de-escalate tensions as both the parties are vying to establish their respective authority in the province. Therefore, tensions will persist in the coming weeks and likely manifest in the form of localized hostilities between the NDF and “Anti-Terrorism Force” in other areas of as-Suweida Province.

Turkey: Security forces forcefully disperse rioters in Ankara’s Altindag on August 11; anti-refugee protests to persist in area

Security forces dispersed hundreds of rioters in the Battalgazi and Ondur neighborhoods in Altindag District after they vandalized property belonging to Syrian nationals. An unconfirmed report indicates that rubber bullets were fired against the rioters. Meanwhile, one of the two Turkish individuals wounded in a knife fight with a Syrian national in Ballatgazi on August 10 died of his wounds.

This constitutes the second consecutive day of riots targeting private property belonging to Syrian refugees by locals in Altindag. This violence comes in response to the stabbing of two Turks by a Syrian in a dispute on August 10. The rioting shows the continued willingness of protesters to resort to widespread violence to condemn the attack. It also indicates their opposition to the presence of a large Syrian refugee population in the district. This is because the August 10 incident has likely heightened underlying anti-Syrian sentiments among segments of the locals, who perceive Syrian refugees as a security risk in the area. Therefore, additional unruly anti-refugee protests are likely to occur in Altindag District in the coming days.

Yemen: Anti-Houthi forces claim territorial advances along Marib’s Kassara front on August 10; hostilities around city to persist

Kassara is located approximately 24 km northwest of Marib city.

This comes amid prolonged hostilities between the Houthis and the anti-Houthi forces in Marib, with the former attempting to make territorial gains in the governorate. Marib city is the sole Hadi-led stronghold in northern Yemen, motivating the Houthis’ continued efforts to capture territory in the governorate. The governorate’s abundant oil resources have also rendered it a major focal point of hostilities between the two sides. Against this backdrop, the latest gains are likely part of the anti-Houthi forces’ long-standing efforts to prevent the Houthis from advancing towards Marib city from their stronghold in Sanaa. This is because Kassara is located along the N5 Highway, which connects the Houthi-held stronghold of Sanaa to Marib. Thus, by consolidating their foothold in this particular area, the anti-Houthi forces aim to block the Houthis’ supply lines and therefore diminish the latter’s ability to mount a large-scale offensive on Marib city. Hostilities across Marib city

will persist over the coming days and weeks as the Houthis continue to attempt to gain territory in the region.

Upcoming Notable Dates

August 13

- **Tunisia:** Women's and Family Day

August 14

- **Morocco:** Oued Ed-Dahab Day

August 18

- **Iran:** Tassoua

August 18-19

- **MENA:** Ashura

August 20

- **Morocco:** Anniversary of the Revolution of the King and the People

August 21

- **Morocco:** Youth Day