



Daily

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MAX - MENA Region Daily Summary - September 14, 2021

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

Highlights of the Day

- **Israel & Palestinian Territories:** Two wounded in stabbing attack near Jerusalem's Central Bus Station on September 13; notable given rarity
- **Lebanon:** Lebanon to receive 1.135 billion USD from IMF on September 16; likely meant as show of confidence in new government
- **Tunisia:** President Kais Saied states possibility of amending constitution, per September 12 reports; move likely to be widely opposed
- **Yemen:** STC-linked forces use live fire against protesters in Aden's Crater District on September 13-14; will fuel grievances

Actionable Items

Algeria: Curfew extended in 31 provinces, timings revised to between 22:00 (local time)-05:00 from September 14-28; adhere to instructions

According to Algeria's official news agency, the government has extended the ongoing night curfew in the following 31 provinces of Algeria until September 28: Ain Temouchent, Algiers, Annaba, Batna, Bejaia, Bechar, Blida, Bouira, Boumerdes, Constantine, El Bayadh, El Oued, Guelma, Jijel, Khenchela, Laghouat, Mostaganem, M'Sila, Naama, Ouargla, Oran, Oum El Bouaghi, Relizane, Saida, Setif, Skikda, Sidi Bel Abbes, Souk Ahras, Tebessa, Tlemcen, and, Tizi Ouzou. The curfew hours have been reduced by one hour and will be now observed between 22:00 (local time) and 05:00 instead of 22:00-06:00. This measure has been introduced to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Algeria.

Those operating or residing in these 31 provinces of Algeria until September 28 are advised to adhere to government instructions and take necessary precautions to ensure business continuity due to the extension of the night curfew.

Israel: Yom Kippur to be observed from afternoon hours of September 15 until sundown on September 16; allot for disruptions

Yom Kippur (the Jewish Day of Atonement) will be observed across Israel from the afternoon hours of September 15 until sundown on September 16. In Jerusalem, the holiday will begin at 18:09 (local time) and in Tel Aviv at 18:26. The holiday will end at 19:20 on September 16. Many Jewish Israelis observe the holiday by fasting for 25 hours. While essential services will remain operational throughout the holiday, all public services and private businesses, including supermarkets, banks, and postal services, will be closed starting from the early afternoon hours of September 15. This includes Ben Gurion International Airport, which will be closed throughout the holiday. Vehicular travel will be prohibited nationwide and public transportation will not be operating during the holiday period. While health clinics will be closed during the holiday, public hospitals and emergency medical services will be available. Moreover, COVID-19 PCR testing centers will be closed from 12:00 on September 15 until the morning hours of September 17.

Those operating or residing in Israel on September 15-16 are advised to remain cognizant of cultural norms as well as allot for disruptions to business continuity due to the government's restrictions on travel and business operations.

Notable Events

Egypt: IS claims IED attack against EAAF vehicle west of North Sinai Governorate's Rafah on September 12; similar attacks to recur

The Islamic State (IS)-affiliated Wilayat Sinai claimed to have targeted an Egyptian Armed Forces (EAAF) vehicle on a road connecting the villages of Baala and Abu Shinar, west of Rafah.

While there has been a general downtick in Wilayat Sinai activity in the North Sinai Governorate in 2021, a localized uptick in attacks has been recorded in Rafah since the beginning of August. Nine attacks have been recorded in August-September compared to only ten between January-July. This uptick can partly be attributed to the sustained success of the EAAF's counter-militancy operations in other Wilayat Sinai strongholds, such as Bir al-Abd and Sheikh Zuweid. This success is evidenced by militants' increasing recourse to roadside IED and sniper attacks, which can be conducted without direct confrontation with security forces, thereby reducing the risk of militant casualties. By intensifying attacks in Rafah, it is likely that militants are attempting to divert EAAF resources away from Bir al-Abd and Sheikh Zuweid in order to ease pressure on militants operating in those areas. Therefore, similar attacks will recur in Rafah in the coming weeks.

Iraq: Ashab al-Kahf claims two IED attacks against US-led Coalition-linked convoys in Muthanna, Qadisiyyah on September 12; attacks to persist

The Iran-backed Shiite militia claimed that the attacks occurred near Muthanna's Samawah and Qadisiyyah's Diwaniyah. No casualties were reported in either attack.

This follows Ashab al-Kahf's launch of Operation "Karbala" on September 4, in which the group vowed to expand the geographical scope of its attacks against US-led Coalition-linked logistical convoys in Iraq. Although some prominent Iran-backed militia leaders, such as Hani al-Ameri from the Badr Organization, have reportedly pledged to cease attacks against US-linked interests in Iraq until at least the October 10 legislative elections, the latest IED detonations show that Ashab al-Kahf remains determined to pursue its pressure campaign on the US. While such attacks usually only cause material damage to US-led Coalition-linked logistical vehicles and rarely lead to casualties among those travelling within these convoys, IED denotations along major highways carry a risk of indiscriminate collateral damage to civilians who utilize these roads. However, this underlying risk is unlikely to deter Ashab al-Kahf from conducting further attacks targeting US-led Coalition-linked logistical convoys across Iraq over the coming days and weeks.

Israel & Palestinian Territories: Two wounded in stabbing attack near Jerusalem's Central Bus Station on September 13; notable given rarity

According to the Israel Police, a 17-year-old from West Bank's Hebron entered a shop on Jaffa Street near the Central Bus Station and stabbed two Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Israelis. The assailant was shot at and neutralized by an Israeli Border Guard personnel.

Successful militant attacks in the western part of Jerusalem have been rare in recent years. This comes amid heightened tensions between Palestinians and Israelis since September 6, when six Palestinian prisoners escaped the Gilboa Prison. The attack shows how such tensions can prompt residents of the West Bank, including minors, to plan and carry out militant attacks with white weapons within Israel's 1967 border. While this attack underscores the remaining gaps in security protocols in Jerusalem, the fact that the perpetrator was neutralized almost immediately by Israeli security personnel showcases the latter's heightened vigilance towards this threat in Jerusalem. This is particularly during periods of heightened tensions between Israel and the Palestinian population. This incident may inspire similar acts of militancy targeting Israeli civilians and security forces in Jerusalem and the West Bank over the coming days and weeks.

Lebanon: Lebanon to receive 1.135 billion USD from IMF on September 16; likely meant as show of confidence in new government

The Lebanese central bank will receive 1.135 billion USD in International Monetary Fund (IMF) Special Drawing Rights (SDRs). The IMF's SDR program is intended to supplement its member countries' official reserves.

Lebanon has experienced a political deadlock since October 2020, which has contributed towards the worsening of its economy that has been characterized by an almost complete depletion of the Central Bank's foreign exchange reserves. While Lebanese and IMF officials have participated in bailout negotiations, IMF aid has been largely contingent

upon the formation of a new Lebanese government and the subsequent implementation of wide-ranging economic reforms. On September 10, President Michel Aoun announced a new government headed by Prime Minister (PM) Najib Mikati. The timing of the IMF's announcement may thus be meant as a show of confidence in the new government. This is especially since Mikati has pledged to cut state subsidies, which conforms with the IMF's demands for economic reforms. Regardless, while this aid will help shore up Lebanon's foreign exchange reserves, it is insufficient to completely pull the country's economy out of its current crisis.

Syria: Turkey conducts UAV attack against SDF military council building near Aleppo's Manbij on September 12; part of trend of UAV attacks

The unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) strike reportedly hit the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-affiliated Manbij Military Council headquarters in Hamam. Three SDF personnel were wounded.

The use of UAVs by Turkey against the SDF is an emerging trend. Four such attacks were recorded near Aleppo's Ayn al-Arab and Hasakah's Qamishli between August 19-22. All of these attacks occurred either near to the Turkey-Syria border or close to Turkish-held territory in Syria. Therefore, the current attack, which was reported deeper within SDF-held territory at a more significant distance from both the Syria-Turkey frontier and Turkey-controlled territory in Syria, indicates an expansion of these aerial operations by the Turkish military beyond its areas of control. This is aimed at undermining the SDF's command-and-control structures as Manbij is a hub for the Kurdish-dominated military alliance. It is also a form of retaliation to SDF attacks, which lead to Turkish casualties. Most recently, a Turkish soldier was killed in an SDF-perpetrated attack in Aleppo's al-Bab on September 7. Hostilities between the parties will persist over the coming weeks, which may prompt further Turkish UAV attacks.

Tunisia: President Kais Saied states possibility of amending constitution, per September 12 reports; move likely to be widely opposed

Saied stated that he respected the constitution but that "constitutions are not eternal, and amendments can be made to them in order to meet the aspirations of the people". Meanwhile, the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) called for early elections to establish a new parliament, which could debate the constitution.

Tunisia has been facing significant political uncertainty since Saied's decision to indefinitely suspend the work and powers of the parliament. By calling for early elections, the UGTT is subtly rejecting Saied's proposal of amending the constitution, which marks a deviation from the measured stance it has taken thus far. The Ennahda party, which holds the plurality of seats in the current parliament, has stated that moving away from the 2014 constitution would indicate a shift away from democracy, while over 90 other political and civil activists have declared their rejection of "any attempt to circumvent, deviate, or overthrow its [constitution's] contents". Therefore, given the widespread opposition to constitutional amendments, any unilateral move by Saied towards this end

will be perceived as “undemocratic” and has the potential to trigger widespread civil unrest.

UAE: Authorities launch plans to create 75,000 private jobs for Emiratis on September 12; part of ‘Emiratization’ efforts

Private sector companies have been asked to ensure a workforce that is at least ten percent Emirati within five years. The government announced several incentives for Emiratis to choose private sector jobs such as grants for students, paid training programs, government-backed child allowance, unemployment benefits, and bonuses for some professions such as nursing and computer programming.

This development is part of the government’s “Emiratization” policy, which aims to prioritize job opportunities for citizens at the expense of the expatriate population. Emirati citizens reportedly prefer the UAE government as an employer due to better pay and working hours, as a result of which foreign workers currently dominate the private sector. The latest initiatives aim to encourage more Emiratis to switch over to the private sector. Although the authorities have announced the provision of training for Emirati citizens, private companies may be reluctant to hire locals due to their relative lack of qualifications as compared to expatriate workers. This will thus challenge the full implementation of this five-year plan. Regardless, the government is likely to announce similar measures over the coming months.

Yemen: STC-linked forces use live fire against protesters in Aden’s Crater District on September 13-14; will fuel grievances

Anti-government protesters reportedly burned tire fires to block roads in the vicinity of the Central Bank of Yemen (CBY) to denounce the deterioration of public services. Following this, Southern Transitional Council (STC)-linked forces used live fire to disperse the protesters. Some injuries were recorded following these clashes. Meanwhile, security forces reportedly used live fire to disperse protesters in Hadramout’s Mukalla on September 13.

Periodic protests surrounding socio-economic grievances such as lack of basic services, the devaluation of the Yemeni Rial (YER), non-payment of salaries, and frequent power cuts have been recorded in Aden over recent months. However, the use of live fire by STC forces is not commonly recorded during such protests. The protesters’ unruly activities near key government establishments and main roads highlight their frustration with the joint Hadi-Southern Transitional Council (STC) government’s inability to address the declining socio-economic situation. The clampdown on protesters in Aden and Mukalla will fuel the protesters’ perception that the authorities are inconsiderate towards their demands. Therefore, similar violent demonstrations will recur in Aden and Mukalla over the coming days.

Upcoming Notable Dates

September 15-16

- **Israel:** Yom Kippur

September 16

- **Libya:** Martyrs' Day

September 20-21

- **Israel:** Sukkot

September 26

- **Yemen:** Revolution Day