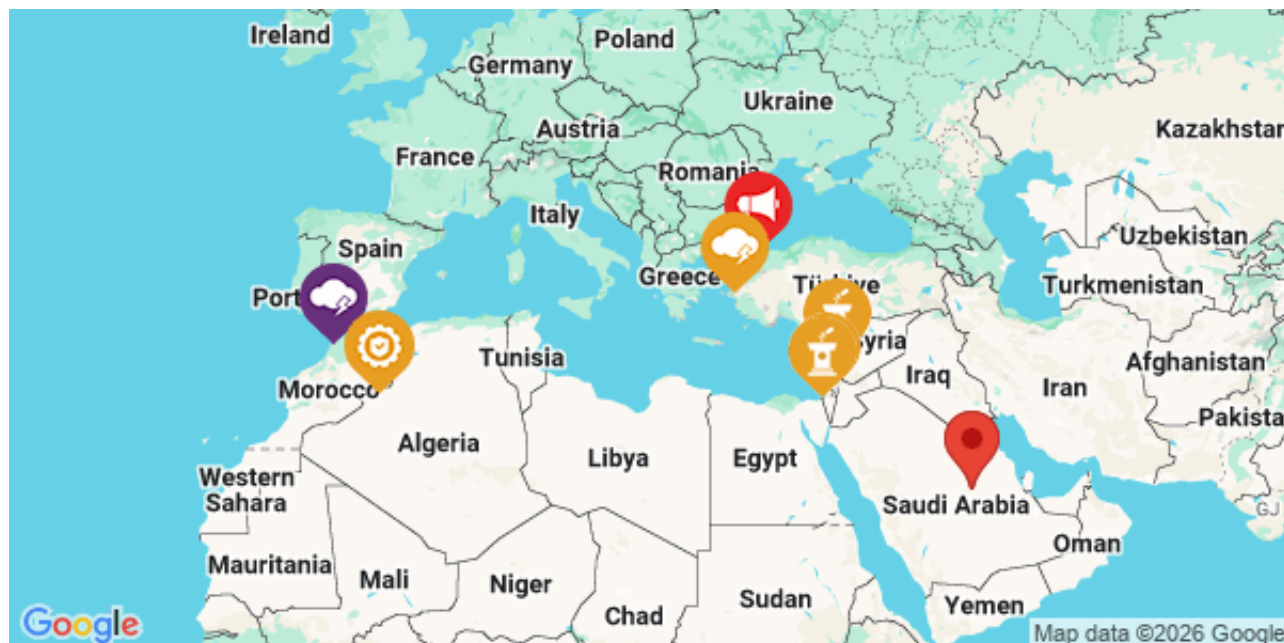


Daily



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MAX - MENA Region Daily Summary - January 31, 2026

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

Highlights of the Day

- **Algeria & Morocco:** MDN on January 29 eliminates Moroccan drug traffickers in Bechar; reflects Algiers' hardline border security posture
- **Israel & Palestinian Territories:** US President Trump says Hamas set to disarm on January 29; tensions to persist
- **Lebanon:** Parliament approves 2026 draft budget law with 59 votes in favor on January 29; likely to trigger protests
- **Turkey:** DEM party protest slated on February 1 in Istanbul, Ankara; avoid nonessential travel to vicinity of protest

Actionable Items

Morocco: Flooding reported at northern Morocco's Kasr al-Kabir on January 30; avoid all travel

Current Situation - Reports indicate that Kasr al-Kabir, situated about 85 km south of Tangier, faced flooding when heavy rains caused the Loukos river to overflow. Footage from the area indicated that numerous streets were submerged. Authorities had issued a flood alert in the city on January 29 and initiated evacuations in advance of rising water levels. Authorities also closed Tetouan Sania R'mel Airport because of the heavy rainfall. Morocco's Ministry of Interior announced the deployment of the Royal Moroccan Army to assist with relief operations. Reports further indicate that the ongoing state of high alert extends into January 31.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Morocco on January 31 are advised to avoid all travel to Kasr al-Kabir due to recent flooding and disruptions to travel.

Source: [Al-Jazeera](#)

Turkey: Authorities issue inclement weather warnings for Izmir on January 31; take necessary precautions

Current Situation - The General Directorate of Meteorology (MGM) has issued a yellow inclement weather warning for Izmir on January 31. The warning follows flooding and severe storms that affected parts of the city on January 30. Strong thunderstorms are expected to continue across Izmir, accompanied by localized hail and a risk of tornadoes in coastal areas. Additionally, according to the MGM, adverse weather conditions are affecting several other parts of Turkey on January 31.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Izmir on January 31 are advised to take necessary precautions due to the inclement weather conditions. Remain abreast of any updates and guidelines issued by authorities during this period.

Source: [AFAD](#); [AA](#)

Turkey: DEM party protest slated on February 1 in Istanbul, Ankara; avoid nonessential travel to vicinity of protest

Current Situation - The People's Equality and Democracy (DEM) Party has called for a protest at the Bull Statue in **Istanbul's** Kadikoy on February 1 at 15:00 (local time) in solidarity with Rojava's Kurdish population, denouncing the Syrian government's

perceived offensive against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The DEM has also called for a protest in front of the Yuva and Kulhali Villages Social Aid, Cooperation, and Cultural Association in the Tuzlucayir area of **Ankara's** Mamak district on February 1 at 15:00.

Assessments & Forecast - The slated demonstration comes amid an uptick in protests by Turkey's Kurdish community in solidarity with the SDF in Syria. This includes a [protest on January 28 in Kadikoy](#), which drew participation in the high dozens and concluded peacefully. However, previous demonstrations linked to the same issue have at times escalated into clashes with security forces, underscoring the heightened sensitivity surrounding Kurdish-related mobilization in Turkey. Based on precedent, turnout is likely to range from the high dozens to the low hundreds. Given the emotive nature of the issue, security forces are expected to maintain a firm posture toward any signs of unrest, in line with authorities' long-standing position that such demonstrations risk legitimizing proscribed groups such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Istanbul and Ankara on February 1 are advised to avoid nonessential travel to the vicinity of the DEM protests, given the elevated risk of unrest.

Source: [DEM Istanbul](#) ; [DEM Ankara](#)

Notable Events

Algeria & Morocco: MDN on January 29 eliminates Moroccan drug traffickers in Bechar; reflects Algiers' hardline border security posture

Current Situation - The Ministry of National Defense (MDN) announced that Algerian security forces conducted a joint operation in Bechar province along the western border, killing three Moroccan drug traffickers and arresting a fourth. The operation also seized 74 kg of cannabis, a shotgun, and communication equipment. The MDN stated the suspects had sought to exploit prevailing weather conditions to carry out their criminal activities.

Assessment & Forecast - Algerian authorities frequently accuse Morocco of being the primary source of cannabis resin smuggled into the country. Between January 8-13, Algerian security forces thwarted attempts to smuggle over three quintals of cannabis resin across the Morocco-Algeria border, arresting 40 traffickers. The killing of Moroccan nationals in the latest incident is notable, highlighting the Algerian security forces' hardline border posture. The last similar incident occurred in [August 2023](#), when Algerian coast guard fired on jet skiers in Algerian waters, killing two Moroccans and sparking protests in Morocco. Given the rugged western border, smuggling is likely to continue, with Algerian forces maintaining a forceful posture. This suggests that cross-border criminal activity will remain a source of tension in Algeria-Morocco relations.

Source: [MDN](#)

Israel & Palestinian Territories: US President Trump says Hamas set to disarm on January 29; tensions to persist

Current Situation - US President Donald Trump stated that, despite widespread skepticism, "it looks like they [Hamas] are going to disarm." On January 28, senior Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzouk rejected claims that the group would surrender its weapons, stating that Hamas had never agreed to disarm. He added that any discussion of disarmament would only take place at the negotiating table and would focus on which weapons would be removed, by whom, and through what mechanisms.

Assessments & Forecast - These conflicting statements reflect persistent tensions surrounding Hamas' disarmament as the second phase of President Trump's [20-point plan](#) progresses. Trump has expressed confidence that Hamas will ultimately disarm, likely following the group's stated commitment to the ceasefire, the return of the [remains of the final Israeli hostage](#), and its [willingness to relinquish control of Gaza to the Gaza Technocratic Committee](#). However, this confidence contrasts with recent remarks by Marzouk which signal continued reluctance to surrender weapons. Alongside Israeli assessments that Hamas is reconstituting its capabilities in Gaza, these statements are likely to heighten Israeli concerns over the disarmament requirement for the ceasefire's second phase. Overall, tensions are expected to remain elevated in the short term.

Source: [Arab News](#), [Memri](#)

Israel, Palestinian Territories & Egypt: COGAT announces reopening of Rafah border crossing on February 1; Israel to keep tight control

Current Situation - Israel's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) announced that the Rafah Crossing will reopen for limited two-way civilian movement. Crossings will be coordinated with Egypt, subject to prior Israeli security clearance, and overseen by the EU mission under the mechanism used in January 2025. Only Gaza residents who left during the war will be permitted to return from Egypt, following Israeli clearance and EU screening at Rafah, with additional identification conducted at an IDF-controlled corridor.

Assessments and Forecast - The crossing's reopening marks the first significant operational opening since Israeli forces took control in May 2024 and follows [Israel's recovery of Ran Gvili](#), a condition Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had identified as a requirement for reopening. The action also represents Israel's response to growing international humanitarian pressure related to thousands of patients needing external medical treatment and forms one operational component of the broader Phase Two transition. However, strict operational parameters, layered security controls, and case-by-case assessments underscore Israel's security-first approach. Given the pedestrian-only movement and the exclusion of aid, the reopening is unlikely to substantially ease Gaza's humanitarian crisis in the near term.

Source: [COGAT](#)

Lebanon: Parliament approves 2026 draft budget law with 59 votes in favor on January 29; likely to trigger protests

Current Situation - The Parliament approved the budget, with 59 lawmakers voting in favor, 34 against, and 11 abstentions out of 128. The budget reportedly projects approximately six billion USD in revenue matched by equivalent expenditure, resulting in a zero-deficit framework. The absence of general salary increases for public sector employees and retirees triggered heated parliamentary exchanges and large-scale protests outside the [Parliament](#), while retired military personnel blocked roads in northern Lebanon. Authorities reportedly reached an agreement to finalize a salary increase bill by late February.

Assessments & Forecast - The budget meets constitutional requirements by being approved within the mandated timeline, legally authorizing state spending for 2026 and enabling parliamentary consideration of the Financial Gap Law. However, key reforms, particularly debt restructuring, public sector reform, and tax system rebalancing, remain excluded, limiting the budget's ability to address Lebanon's structural fiscal weaknesses. Protests by civil servants, veterans, and retirees highlight entrenched grievances over wages that remain unadjusted despite sustained inflation and currency depreciation. Overall, the narrow vote margin, coupled with public sector salaries, suggests that social pressure is likely to persist and may trigger further protests in the coming days.

Source: [NNA](#)

Saudi Arabia: Riyadh launches privatization strategy to expand Public-Private Partnerships on January 29; aligns with Vision 2030 goal

Current Situation - The National Privatization Strategy seeks to expand Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) across 18 sectors. The strategy targets the signing of over 220 PPP contracts by 2030, aiming to generate high-quality employment and mobilize more than 64 billion USD in private capital investment.

Assessments & Forecast - The program, launched in 2018 with the establishment of the National Centre for Privatization and PPP (NCP), has overseen the development of around 200 approved projects and attracted an estimated 213 million USD in investment. The latest expansion reinforces this framework and aligns with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 objectives related to privatization by advancing economic diversification and easing fiscal pressures through more efficient PPP-led delivery. This expansion is particularly timely as the Kingdom seeks funding for large-scale infrastructure and service projects that have experienced [delays or setbacks](#) likely amid financial pressures in recent months. The initiative is likely to support private sector engagement, accelerate project implementation, and enhance investor confidence, contributing to broader fiscal sustainability and long-term economic growth. As such, agreements as part of this

initiative are likely to be announced by the Kingdom over the coming months.

Source: [SPA](#)

Other Developments

- **MENA:** Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) naval forces will conduct live-fire exercises in the Strait of Hormuz on February 1-2. US Central Command has urged Iran to conduct the drills safely and warned against actions that could threaten freedom of navigation or risk escalation with US forces and commercial vessels.
- **Oman & Saudi Arabia:** On January 30, the Royal Saudi Navy and the Royal Navy of Oman conducted missile and live-fire drills during the bilateral exercise "Winds of Peace 2026" in Oman, featuring advanced maritime security scenarios.
- **Tunisia:** On January 30, Tunisian President Kais Saied extended the long-running state of emergency for a further 11 months until December 31, 2026.
- **Yemen:** On January 30, the UN in Yemen said that the Houthis seized telecom equipment and vehicles from at least six offices in Sana'a, while the Security Council decided to end the UN Hodeidah mission's mandate by end-March 2026.

Notable Dates

9 FEB	Lebanon Holiday: St. Maroun's Day
10 FEB	Qatar Holiday: National Sports Day
11 FEB	Iran Holiday: Islamic Revolution Day
14 FEB	Bahrain Travel: February 14 Anniversary
16 FEB	UAE Travel: Men's Cycling Tour
17 FEB	Libya Holiday: February 17 Revolution Day