



Daily



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MAX - MENA Region Daily Summary - February 12, 2025

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

Highlights of the Day

- **MENA:** Houthis threaten to attack Israel if Israel-Hamas ceasefire collapses on February 11; intended to increase pressure on Israel
- **Iraq:** President files case against Prime Minister over KRG salary crisis, per February 10 reports; highlights intra-executive tensions
- **Israel & Palestinian Territories:** PM Netanyahu issues hostage release ultimatum to Hamas on February 11; increases risk of truce collapse
- **Libya:** GNU Minister shot near Janzour's Palm City during late morning hours of February 12; avoid all travel to affected area

Actionable Items

Libya: GNU Minister shot near Janzour's Palm City during late morning hours of February 12; avoid all travel to affected area

Current Situation - Reports indicate that the Government of National Unity's (GNU) Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Adel Jumaa, was shot and wounded by unknown gunmen who fired at his vehicle while he was traveling on the main highway from Janzour's Palm City to Tripoli. He reportedly received wounds on his legs and was transferred to the Abu Salim Trauma Hospital for treatment. Disruptions on the Coastal Road in Tripoli were also reported due to the incident and the resultant security operations. The GNU issued a statement condemning the attack on Jumaa by an "unknown party." The GNU confirmed that Jumaa's condition was stable and that security services have initiated investigations to apprehend the perpetrators.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Tripoli on February 12 and over the coming hours are advised to avoid all travel to Janzour, especially the Palm City area, along the Coastal Road, as well as to the Abu Salim Trauma Hospital, due to the reported assassination attempt. Remain cognizant of a heightened potential for militia deployment throughout the capital in the coming hours.

Source: [GNU](#)

Turkey: Maritime traffic through Bosphorus Strait resumes during late morning hours of February 12; travel may resume

Current Situation - According to Turkey's state news agency, maritime traffic in the Bosphorus Strait was reopened in both directions during the late morning hours (local time). The strait was earlier closed to maritime traffic in both directions during the early morning hours of February 12 due to dense fog.

Recommendations - Those operating vessels through the Bosphorus Strait on February 12 can resume operations as normal given the reopening of the strait to maritime traffic.

Source: [AA](#)

Yemen: Several international air operators resume flights to Aden, per February 11 reports; reconfirm itineraries, stay cognizant of updates

Current Situation - The Minister of Transport of the Presidential Command Council (PCC)-led government, Abdul Salam Saleh Humaid, reportedly announced that several international airlines have resumed operations at Aden International Airport, including African Express Airways, Air Djibouti, and Royal Jordanian. It remains unclear if other commercial carriers are currently operating at Aden International Airport. According to Humaid, six airports in PCC-held territories are operational, including in Aden, Seiyun,

Socotra, Ataq, and al-Rayyan. Reports quoting Humaid added that the PCC was working toward adding a new aircraft to Yemen's national fleet, Yemenia Airlines, by the end of 2025 and advancing other efforts to reopen additional domestic airports in PCC-held territories.

Recommendations - Those planning to travel to and from Aden, and other PCC-held territories on February 11 and beyond are advised to reconfirm itineraries and remain cognizant about the updates on resumption of commercial airline operations.

Source: [WAM](#)

Notable Events

MENA: Houthis threaten to attack Israel if Israel-Hamas ceasefire collapses on February 11; intended to increase pressure on Israel

Current Situation - Houthi leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi declared that the group is ready to resume its attacks if Israel "escalates again against Gaza". He also criticized Saudi Arabia for failing to take a "practical position" against Israel.

Assessments & Forecast - This follows the Israeli Prime Minister's February 11 statements [assessed below] on resuming hostilities if Hamas fails to release hostages per the ceasefire deal. The Houthis aim to maintain pressure on Israel by threatening regional security, including in the Red Sea where Houthi-perpetrated attacks have ceased since January 19 when the ceasefire came into effect. While unlikely to alter Israel's stance, these threats could heighten external pressure to uphold the agreement. The Houthis' criticism of Saudi Arabia aligns with their broader stance, accusing Riyadh of failing to support the Palestinian cause. This aims to fuel negative perceptions of the Kingdom, particularly in Yemen, where the Houthis seek to delegitimize the Saudi-backed Presidential Command Council (PCC). The threats broadly underscore the volatile security situation in the region, which in many ways hinges on developments regarding the Israel-Hamas ceasefire. Overall, the group is expected to maintain its pressure on Israel in the coming days.

Source: [Houthi Spokesperson Yahya Saree](#)

MENA: Jordan to accept 2,000 Gazan children, per February 12 reports; comes amid Arab opposition to President Trump's Gazans relocation idea

Current Situation - During a meeting with US President Donald Trump in Washington, Jordanian King Abdullah II stated that Jordan would accept 2,000 sick children from Gaza. He later reiterated his opposition to the displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and indicated his desire for Trump to review a plan for reconstruction that does not

involve displacing Gazans, presented by the Egyptian Foreign Ministry.

Assessments & Forecast - This comes amid ongoing opposition by Jordan and Egypt to President Trump's [plan](#) to relocate Gazans to them for reconstruction processes. Despite broad pushback to the plan, Washington has continued to place pressure on Amman and Cairo to cooperate, with Trump alluding to cutting aid to the two countries in the event of their noncompliance. In this context, Jordan's acceptance of sick children represents efforts to maintain positive relations with Washington, while Egypt's alternate plan proposal indicates a move to alleviate Washington's pressure by suggesting thought-of alternative paths of action. Washington will likely view such developments as partial successes while continuing to apply pressure on regional partners to shoulder the costs of rebuilding and relocation efforts.

Source: [NBC](#)

Iraq: President files case against Prime Minister over KRG salary crisis, per February 10 reports; highlights intra-executive tensions

Current Situation - President Abdul Latif Rashid filed a lawsuit in the Federal Court against Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani and Finance Minister Taif Sami, registered on January 20, seeking a provisional order to ensure the continuous and timely payment of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) employees despite ongoing technical obstacles.

Assessments & Forecast - The lawsuit follows ongoing protests over the KRG's failure to pay salaries, with some employees unpaid since October 2024 due to issues such as duplicate names on salary lists, missing biometric data, lack of bank accounts, and other administrative issues. In this context, the recent lawsuit highlights divisions among Iraq's executive branch regarding financial relations with the KRG, despite the recent easing of tensions over the oil sector. Rashid's lawsuit is likely intended to enhance his image by demonstrating support for Kurdish interests while shifting blame to Baghdad for the ongoing crisis. It could also indicate underlying tensions between the President and Prime Minister, particularly given al-Sudani's recent order for an investigation into a company linked to Rashid's son. Considering the continuation of legal proceedings in the coming days, tensions are to persist.

Source: [Iraqi Presidency](#)

Israel, Lebanon & Syria: IAF targets underground weapons smuggling tunnel connecting Lebanon to Syria, per February 10 reports; similar incidents to recur

Current Situation - The Israeli Air Force (IAF) targeted an underground tunnel in the Bekaa Valley that it claimed stretched from Syrian territory into Lebanon and was used by Hezbollah to transport weapons. The IAF also carried out multiple strikes across Lebanon on sites that it said contained weapons. These reportedly included areas around Azza,

Janta, Hermel, and a border crossing between Syria and Lebanon. According to official Lebanese reports, the strikes killed six and wounded two.

Assessments & Forecast - The Beqaa Valley is located north of the Litani River and is a known Hezbollah stronghold that connects Lebanon to Iraq and Iran via Syria. These strikes come amid occasional Israeli aerial strikes in southern and eastern Lebanon targeting Hezbollah-linked sites. In this context, the recent strike was likely aimed at curbing arms smuggling from regional countries into Lebanon to prevent Hezbollah's rearmament. This is because it is likely that the underground facility was used to transport and smuggle Iranian weapons into Lebanon from Syria. Similar strikes are likely to recur over the coming days as Israel seeks to deter Hezbollah from rebuilding its capabilities in Lebanon.

Source: [IDF](#)

Israel & Palestinian Territories: PM Netanyahu issues hostage release ultimatum to Hamas on February 11; increases risk of truce collapse

Current Situation - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that Israel would resume the war if Hamas did not release "our hostages" by 12:00 (local time) on February 15. He did not clarify whether he expected all remaining hostages or just the three previously scheduled for release.

Assessments & Forecast - Through this, Netanyahu countered Hamas' pressure tactic of [suspending the hostage releases](#) and raised the stakes involved with this ultimatum. The ambiguity in his statement is likely deliberate, reflecting a strategy to maximize pressure while retaining flexibility to maintain the ceasefire if Hamas releases three as planned. This lends some credence to the assessment that Netanyahu's interest at this stage is to facilitate the continuation of the Truce's Phase One. That said, the current situation also allows Netanyahu to capitalize on the window of opportunity and resume the war, which many within his government coalition lobby for. The possibility that Israel chooses to resume hostilities can therefore not be ruled out. In the coming hours, Israel will continue preparing for a potential military campaign in Gaza while strengthening defenses against Hamas counterattacks in the enclave and Gaza Envelope.

Source: [PM Netanyahu](#)

Lebanon & Syria: Syrian forces accuse Hezbollah of sponsoring border smuggling on February 10; signals lack of intent to confront LAF

Current Situation - Syrian state media quoted Border Security Commander Muayad al-Salama, who stated that Hezbollah-linked smuggling gangs along the Syria-Lebanon border posed a security threat. Al-Salama added that armed confrontations took place in several villages last week as authorities cracked down on smuggling, seizing drug and counterfeit money operations, including Captagon labs linked to Hezbollah and the former

Syrian government. He noted that transitional government forces did not target Lebanon's "interior".

Assessments & Forecast - This statement follows [clashes](#) between Syrian security forces and smuggling gangs near the Syria-Lebanon border, which led to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) deploying in border towns in Lebanon on [February 9](#). By identifying Hezbollah-affiliated smugglers as their target and clarifying that Lebanese territory was not attacked, the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)-led authorities likely aim to signal that they seek to avoid confrontation with the LAF. The recognition of border smuggling as a security threat will likely drive continued efforts to secure HTS's territorial control, aligning with its push to eliminate or integrate non-state armed groups under the [Military Operations Department \(MOD\)](#). The entrenched presence of Hezbollah-linked smugglers along the border suggests that similar security operations and clashes will persist.

Source: [SANA](#)

Libya: GNU-affiliated West Coast Military launches operation against fuel smuggling in Zuwara on February 11; to bolster GNU's control

Current Situation - The Government of National Unity (GNU)-affiliated West Coast Military Region launched a large-scale raid in Abu Kammash, targeting fuel smuggling depots. Security forces uncovered smuggling networks and seized thousands of liters of gasoline and oil from underground tanks. The smuggling operatives, all foreign nationals illegally residing in Libya, were arrested. Zuwara is located 102 km west of Tripoli.

Assessments & Forecast - The West Coast Military Region conducted a similar security campaign from [January 4](#) until February 11 targeting criminal activities and fuel smuggling in Zawiyah and al-Ajaylat. In this context, the recent raids are likely part of broader efforts to curb smuggling, stabilize Libya's fuel sector, and reduce irregular migration. The operation is likely aimed at strengthening control over key areas, such as Zuwara, which is reportedly a major transit point for smuggling goods between Libya and Tunisia. In addition, the GNU likely also intends to increase its influence in the region and improve its domestic perception as a stabilizing force. The security operation in Zuwara will likely continue in the coming days with other fuel smuggling hubs in northwestern Libya also likely to be targeted in the coming weeks.

Source: [West Coast Military Zone, 2](#)

Saudi Arabia: NEOM, AI firm signs agreement on February 10 to build net-zero AI data center; underscores kingdom's AI aspirations

Current Situation - NEOM has partnered with a private Saudi data firm to establish a 1.5-gigawatt net-zero artificial intelligence (AI) factory campus in Oxagon, the floating industrial city under development within NEOM. The firm will invest an initial five billion USD to fund the first phase of the factory's development, which is expected to be

operational by 2028.

Assessments & Forecast - The agreement supports Saudi Arabia's efforts to establish itself as a global AI hub. The kingdom has launched research centers, created ministries focused on AI, and signed agreements to strengthen its AI ecosystem. The private firm's investment will bolster Saudi Arabia's ambitions to develop a global logistics hub at NEOM and advance its AI initiatives. The collaboration also aims to address rising data center power consumption from generative AI by using renewable energy, supporting Saudi Arabia's sustainability goals. Oxagon's location on the Red Sea coast provides access to sub-sea cables, cost-effective renewable energy, and green hydrogen. By partnering with local firms, Saudi Arabia seeks to reduce its reliance on foreign firms and enhance digital sovereignty. Similar agreements are expected in the coming months.

Source: [SPA](#)

Other Developments

- **Palestinian Territories & Israel:** Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas ordered the restructuring of salary payments to families of Palestinians imprisoned or killed by Israel, including those involved in acts of terrorism, per February 10 reports.
- **Syria & Turkey:** Ankara's Trade Ministry confirmed on February 11 that it lifted trade and transit restrictions with Damascus, aiming to normalize commerce and facilitate cross-border trade between the two countries.
- **Turkey:** A state-run news agency reported on February 10 that, in 2024, Norway's sovereign wealth fund invested over 1.57 billion USD in shares of 44 Turkish companies.
- **UAE:** On February 10, the UAE stated that it thwarted the smuggling of 1.2 tons of psychotropic substances via air cargo by employing advanced security technologies and data analysis methods.
- **Yemen:** On February 10, the Aden-based Presidential Command Council (PCC) and China signed two memoranda of understanding. The first relates to cooperation in socioeconomic development, and the second entails the provision of police equipment to Yemen.

Notable Dates

9
APR Tunisia Holiday: Martyrs' Day

9
APR Iraq Holiday: Baghdad Liberation Day (KRG only)

12
APR Israel Holiday: Passover

13
APR Iran Holiday: Martyrdom of Imam Sadeq

13
APR MENA Holiday: Palm Sunday

17
APR Syria Holiday: Independence Day
