

Daily



JAN
12:19 UTC

MAX - MENA Region Daily Summary - January 19, 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:** Israel-Hamas ceasefire comes into effect at 11:15 on January 19; follow up on developments, adhere to instructions
- **Iran:** Tehran signs 20-year strategic partnership treaty with Russia on January 17; likely to heighten Western concerns
- **Iran:** Assailant assassinates two senior judges in Tehran's Supreme Court on January 18, shows major security gaps
- **Israel:** One wounded in stabbing attack on Tel Aviv's Levontin Street on January 18; reiterates sustained terrorist threat despite ceasefire

Actionable Items

MENA: Israel-Hamas ceasefire comes into effect at 11:15 on January 19; follow up on developments, adhere to instructions

Current Situation - The Israel-Hamas ceasefire came into effect at 11:15 (local time) on January 19. This followed a delay, with the deal initially slated to take place from 08:30, due to Hamas' earlier failure to publish the list of hostages slated to be freed on January 19. The group subsequently specified the three Israeli female captives who are slated to be released at 16:30 on January 19. After their release and handover to Israel, the first 95 Palestinian prisoners will be released and transferred to the Palestinian Territories, in accordance with the first phase of the ceasefire which will last 42 days and stipulates the release of 33 Israeli hostages. Meanwhile, in accordance with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) preparations for implementing the ceasefire agreement, a closed military area order was issued at the Nitzana Border Crossing from 00:01 (local time) on January 19. The Yad Mordechai and Kerem Shalom areas will also be closed military zones until January 24.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing within the MENA region on January 19 are advised to follow up on developments as the truce takes effect. Those operating or residing within Israel are advised to adhere to authorities' instructions regarding the closed military zones and continue to avoid all travel to within ten km (six miles) of the Gaza Strip.

Source: [IDF](#)

Turkey: Pro-Palestinian protest slated at Istanbul's Tunel Square at 18:30 on January 19; maintain heightened vigilance

Current Situation - Pro-Palestinian activists have called for a protest at Istanbul's Tunel Square at 18:30 (local time) on January 19. The protest is being organized in solidarity with the Palestinian cause and calls for a full embargo on Israel.

Recommendations - Those operating or residing in Istanbul during the evening hours on January 19 are advised to maintain heightened vigilance and allot for disruptions near Tunel Square due to the slated protest.

Source: [Students Collectives](#)

Notable Events

Iran: Assailant assassinates two senior judges in Tehran's Supreme Court on January 18, shows major security gaps

Current Situation - According to Iran's state news agency, the suspect infiltrated Tehran's Supreme Court building and conducted a "planned" assassination of Ali Razini and Mohammad Moqiseh who were involved in cases associated with national security, espionage, and terrorism. The suspect subsequently committed suicide. Initial investigations revealed that the suspect did not have any case pending in the Supreme Court. A report from an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)-affiliated outlet stated that the judges were reportedly shot with military-grade bullets.

Assessments & Forecast - The development is notable given the seniority of the assassinated judges and the location of the incident in a prominent government institution in the capital, highlighting significant gaps in security protocols. International reports indicate that both judges oversaw the prosecution and sentencing of dissidents and activists. Razini was reportedly involved in a committee that saw the execution of thousands of political activists in 1988, while Moqiseh was sanctioned by the US and EU for alleged human rights abuses in 2019. It is plausible that these factors motivated the targeted assassination by an anti-government, lone-wolf actor. Regardless, authorities will boost security around government buildings in Tehran over the coming weeks.

Source: [IRNA Mehr](#)

Iran: Tehran signs 20-year strategic partnership treaty with Russia on January 17; likely to heighten Western concerns

Current Situation - The "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty" will enhance political, economic, security, and military cooperation. The two countries' security agencies will exchange intelligence and develop military cooperation through the exchange of personnel, training, and holding joint exercises. Both parties also committed to developing "military-technical cooperation", while affirming that neither party will aid any aggressor to either nation. Tehran and Moscow vowed to promote joint projects in the "peaceful use of nuclear energy", including the construction of nuclear facilities.

Assessments & Forecast - The deal marks the culmination of growing cooperation between Iran and Russia in recent months. Geopolitical developments, including the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and the weakening of [Iran's Axis of Resistance](#) in the region, have likely pushed Tehran and Moscow to strengthen and formalize their ties. This aims to circumvent both nations' international isolation resulting from these pressures, especially in light of Western sanctions which are expected to intensify for Iran with the incoming [Donald Trump administration](#). The growing military cooperation outlined in the deal is liable to fuel Western concerns, although this will be somewhat mitigated by the absence of a mutual defense clause or the formation of a formal military alliance in the deal.

Source: [IRNA](#)

Israel: One wounded in stabbing attack on Tel Aviv's Levontin Street on January 18; reiterates sustained terrorist threat despite ceasefire

Current Situation - Israel Police announced that an armed civilian neutralized the assailant who stabbed and seriously wounded a civilian on Tel Aviv's Levontin Street. Hamas praised the attack, identifying the perpetrator as a 19-year-old from the West Bank's Tulkarm. Further reports indicate that he entered Israel illegally.

Assessments & Forecast - This marks the first terrorist attack in the Tel Aviv-Jaffa area since a dual shooting-stabbing attack on Jerusalem Boulevard in [October 2024](#), reiterating the latent militant threat in Israel's cultural and commercial hub. Such attacks, often conducted by young perpetrators susceptible to extremist influences, underscore the risk of radicalization of West Bank residents who can infiltrate Israel due to continued gaps in protocol along the security barrier. The timing of the incident just one day before the [Israel-Hamas ceasefire](#) took effect on January 19 likely aimed to undermine the Israeli populace's sense of security ahead of the truce deal, reiterating that the terrorist threat will persist despite the agreement. In this context, further copycat attacks cannot be ruled out in Israel and the West Bank over the coming days, although most plots will continue to be thwarted.

Source: [Israel Police](#)

Morocco: Authorities arrest suspected IS militant in Taourirt, per January 17 reports; highlights continued threat of extremism

Current Situation - Morocco's state news agency reported that judicial police arrested a militant identified as a supporter of the Islamic State (IS). Authorities seized chemical materials that could be used to produce explosive devices, assessing that the suspect had consumed many materials on the manufacturing of explosives and how to deploy them in his "terrorist project". Bladed weapons and electronic devices were also recovered during the searches.

Assessments & Forecast - Moroccan security forces regularly conduct counter-militancy operations targeting suspects linked to IS. While arrests of IS-linked individuals declined from 2023 (28) to 2024 (19), the latest operation underscores the sustained militant threat posed by IS sympathizers/operatives. The seizure of explosive materials is particularly notable due to its rarity, potentially pointing to the suspects' desire to construct an IED for use in a more sophisticated attack. Additionally, the suspect's role as a teacher highlights that radicalized individuals may retain positions from which they can influence youth who may be susceptible to extremist ideology. Moroccan authorities are expected to maintain heightened vigilance, with further security operations likely in the coming weeks and months.

Source: [MAP](#)

Syria & Lebanon: Authorities thwart weapons smuggling to Lebanon in Tartus on January 17; signals unwillingness to permit Iranian networks

Current Situation - The Syrian Ministry of Interior (MoI) stated that the Public Security Directorate in Tartus thwarted an attempt to smuggle weapons to Lebanon through an illegal crossing. According to unconfirmed reports, this included several Iranian “Shahed 101” UAVs.

Assessments & Forecast - It is plausible that this constituted an Iranian arms smuggling attempt destined for Hezbollah in Lebanon, with the weapons potentially arriving along [Iranian land corridors](#) stretching from Iran to Iraq and Syria or from the Tartus or Latakia Ports. The Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)-led authorities’ thwarting of this attempt is notable, seemingly marking a divergence from former President Bashar al-Assad’s government that permitted such Iranian arms smuggling corridors through Syrian territory. This may signal that HTS-led authorities are unwilling to enable Iranian efforts to rearm its proxies or re-establish its longstanding presence in Syrian territory. The transitional government will seek to leverage such incidents to project its good governance, security, and intelligence-gathering capabilities as part of its broader efforts to acquire international support and sanctions relief. Nonetheless, Tehran will attempt further arms smuggling operations, potentially through al-Assad loyalists in traditional support bases such as Tartus and Latakia, or criminal networks.

Source: [MOI](#)

Yemen: US sanctions Yemen Kuwait Bank for supporting Houthis, Hezbollah on January 17; aimed at eroding groups’ ability to fund activities

Current Situation - The US Treasury Department announced that it sanctioned the Yemen Kuwait Bank (YKB) for its alleged “financial support” to the Houthis and for aiding them to “launder money and transfer funds to its allies”, including Hezbollah. The Treasury Department alleges that YKB enabled the Houthis to establish front companies used to facilitate Iranian oil sales. YKB operates branches across Houthi and Presidential Command Council (PCC)-controlled territory in Yemen.

Assessments & Forecast - The US President Joe Biden administration has imposed several sanctions on the Houthis targeting weapons trafficking, illicit fuel shipments, and procurement networks in recent months. The latest designations highlight the US resolve to encompass financial institutions within these designations that are assessed to sustain the Houthis and other members of the Iran-led Axis of Resistance’s operations. This aims to degrade the groups’ capacity to fund their activities which continue to cause disruption in the region. However, the measure is unlikely to deter the Houthis who will likely seek alternative informal financial mechanisms to circumvent sanctions. Further designations are therefore likely under the incoming Donald Trump-led administration.

Source: [US Treasury](#)

Other Developments

- **Israel:** Demonstrators on January 18 blocked Jerusalem's Begin Boulevard to traffic to protest against the ceasefire agreement with Hamas. Police reportedly dispersed the protesters with water cannons.
- **Jordan:** Border guards of the Southern Military Zone on January 18 thwarted a narcotics trafficking attempt, shooting down a drone used by the smugglers.
- **Saudi Arabia:** According to an announcement from January 17, authorities thwarted an attempt to smuggle almost three million Captagon pills into the country via al-Batha Port.
- **Syria:** On January 17, a car exploded in Aleppo Province's Manbij. The detonation reportedly wounded four people.
- **Turkey:** The Turkish Space Agency (TUA) signed a cooperation agreement with a US-based space infrastructure developer to bolster opportunities for the Turkish space industry.
- **Turkey & Syria:** A Kurdistan Workers' Party official on January 16 reportedly stated the group would agree to leave northeastern Syria if the Syrian Democratic Forces were assured a joint leadership role.
- **Turkey & Syria:** US President Joe Biden on January 15 amended a 2019 executive order regarding Syria, removing references to Turkey. The measure retracts sanctions from Turkish ministries and officials.

Notable Dates

14 DEC	Israel Holiday: Hanukkah
16 DEC	Bahrain Holiday: National Day
17 DEC	Tunisia Holiday: Revolution and Youth Day
18 DEC	Qatar Holiday: National Day
21 DEC	Morocco Travel: 2025 African Cup of Nations
24 DEC	Libya Holiday: Independence Day