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Regional Overview: Middle East

15-21 October 2022

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Last week in the [Middle East](#), Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) forces intercepted Houthi drones traveling toward an oil tanker off the coast of Hadramawt governorate in Yemen, as efforts to negotiate a new truce agreement continued. In Syria, rebel and Islamist factions continued to clash in Aleppo province. In Iraq, fighting between Turkish forces and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) declined for the second consecutive week. In Turkey, Turkish forces killed four PKK militants across two separate operations, while Jinen Tirejen Roje militants killed three police officers and one prison guard in separate attacks. In Iran, violent mobs attacked military targets amid ongoing nationwide anti-government demonstrations. In Palestine, two Palestinian gunmen and one Palestinian rioter were killed during separate clashes with Israeli forces in the West Bank.

Yemen continued to experience some of the lowest levels of political violence last week since the start of the conflict, despite the end of the UN-mediated truce on 2 October. However, on 21 October, Houthi forces launched drones toward an oil tanker preparing to dock and load oil in the southern governorate of Hadramawt. Reiterating a previous warning to companies engaging in the export of oil from Yemen made towards the end of the truce, Houthi forces claimed that the operation was aimed at preventing the 'looting' of Yemeni oil ([Ansar Allah, 22 October 2022](#)). Officials from the IRG claim to have intercepted the strike, and there was no damage or casualties reported ([Reuters, 21 October 2022](#)). IRG officials also claimed that two drone attacks targeted a ship in the neighboring Shabwah governorate earlier in the week, although such strikes have not been acknowledged by Houthi forces or international authorities ([Associated Press, 22 October 2022](#)).

At the political level, the strike in Hadramawt governorate drew condemnation from UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg, who labeled the incident a "deeply worrying military escalation" and called for restraint ([Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, 22 October 2022](#)). The strike came days after Houthi authorities and Saudi Arabia moved closer to conducting a prisoner exchange agreed to in March 2022 ([Mareb Press, 15 October 2022](#)). Meanwhile, UN Special Envoy Grundberg also traveled to Saudi Arabia last week, where he met with regional and international diplomats to discuss efforts to renew the truce. The IRG formed a new team to engage in political negotiations ([Xinhua, 20 October 2022](#)).

In **Syria**, Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) and the Syrian National Army's 3rd Corps continued to engage in clashes in the Afrin and Azaz areas of Aleppo province last week for the second consecutive week. HTS seized control of more towns and villages in the Afrin area. Meanwhile, fighting between regime forces and rebel and Islamist factions in the frontline areas of Hama, Aleppo, Idleb, and Latakia provinces decreased last week. Similarly, Turkish and rebel shelling of Syrian Democratic Forces- and People's Protection Units-controlled areas in northern Syria saw a notable decline last week, with no Turkish air and drone strikes recorded. Violence against civilians also considerably declined last week compared with the week prior.

In **Iraq**, fighting between Turkish forces and the PKK continued despite a steady decline for the second consecutive week. Turkish drones targeted PKK-affiliated Ezidixane Asayish forces in Sinjar town in Ninewa province, reportedly killing two militants. The strikes triggered demonstrations in Sinjar, as well as Rania and Kalar cities in Al Sulaymaniyah province, denouncing Turkish operations in northern Iraq. Demonstrators also accused Turkey of using chemical weapons, which Turkey denied ([Reuters, 20 October 2022](#)).

In **Turkey**, Kurdish armed groups engaged in multiple armed interactions with Turkish state forces. Turkish Gendarmerie forces killed two PKK members last week during clashes in the Catak district of Van province. Another two PKK members were reportedly killed by a Turkish airstrike in the Nur Mountains area of Hatay province. Meanwhile, militants from Jinen Tirejen Roje – a Kurdish women's insurgent group – staged multiple attacks against state forces last week. In Tekirdag, Jinen Tirejen Roje attacked a group of off-duty prison guards

outside a prison in Malkara district, reportedly killing one guard. In Istanbul province, militants also reportedly killed one policeman in Eyup town, and two policemen in Catalca district.

In **Iran**, nationwide demonstrations triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini continued last week at slightly lower levels than the week prior. While peaceful protests continued to account for the majority of demonstration events, rioters used Molotov cocktails to target military sites in Gilan, Hamadan, and Ilam provinces. While violence in Ilam has not been common, it has become increasingly volatile, resulting in a shift from a place of 'low risk' to being considered an area of 'growing risk' by [ACLED's Volatility and Risk Predictability Index](#).

Last week in **Palestine**, two Palestinian gunmen and one Palestinian rioter were killed during clashes in the West Bank. On 19 October, Israeli security guards killed a Palestinian gunman during an exchange of fire at the entrance of Maale Adumim settlement east of Jerusalem. The same gunman reportedly killed an Israeli border guard near the Shuafat refugee camp in East Jerusalem [last week](#), and has been the target of a manhunt by Israeli forces. Hamas issued a statement claiming the gunman was a member of its movement ([Hamas Movement, 20 October 2022](#)). Another Palestinian gunman affiliated with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Katibat Jenin was reportedly killed by Israeli security forces in an armed clash during raids in the Jenin refugee camp. Meanwhile, a rioter reportedly died due to injuries received during clashes with Israeli forces carrying out a raid in Qarawat Bani Hassan. This violence contributed to the 33% increase in violent events in Palestine last week relative to the weekly average for the preceding month. [ACLED's Conflict Change Map](#) also warned of increased violence in the country during the preceding four weeks.

Note: This dashboard automatically updates to cover the latest four weeks of data released by ACLED. Use the date filters to view data for the one-week period covered by this Regional Overview.



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