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Regional Overview: Middle East 1-7 October 2022

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Last week in the Middle East, political violence decreased significantly in Yemen, as warring sides stopped their daily violations reports after the UN-mediated truce expired on 2 October. In Turkey, two Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants were reportedly killed in armed clashes with Turkish forces in Siirt and Sirnak provinces, while People's Protection Units (YPG) militants attacked a gendarmerie border outpost in Sanliurfa province from the Syrian side of the border. In Syria, unknown militants targeted regime forces in Dara province. Elsewhere, in Iraq, Turkish airstrikes instead pounded PKK positions in Al Sulaymaniyah province. Popular demonstrations triggered by the death of a Kurdish woman in police custody continued for a third consecutive week in Iran. In Palestine, five men were killed amid clashes with Israeli forces in the West Bank. Several Lebanese depositors attempting to reclaim their money stormed seven banks amidst the country's financial crisis.

In Yemen, overall levels of political violence decreased last week compared to the week prior, largely because the Houthi and Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) media ceased reporting on truce violations. Despite efforts from UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg to extend the truce into a more comprehensive ceasefire agreement, the warring parties failed to reach an agreement, with the truce ultimately expiring on 2 October. Both Houthi and IRG forces continued to show relative restraint throughout last week, with no reports of large-scale hostilities resuming.

Yet, small-scale violence broke out on multiple fronts, attesting to the fragility of the post-truce situation and its potential for escalation. Confrontations between Houthi and anti-Houthi forces took place last week in Ad Dali, Hodeidah, Marib, and Taizz governorates, as well as at the border area between Al Bayda and Lahij governorates, where tensions have been escalating over the past weeks. This activity contributed to a 167% increase in violence in the past week relative to the weekly average of the preceding month in Lahij, as flagged by ACLED's Subnational Surge Tracker. Despite the overall drop in political violence levels, last week also registered the highest number of reported fatalities from Houthi vs. anti-Houthi violence since the truce took effect on 2 April.

At the diplomatic level, UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg reiterated his intention to engage in dialogue with the warring parties to reach a new ceasefire agreement. Meanwhile, the UN Security Council explicitly blamed the Houthis' "maximalist demands" for the failure to renew the truce (UN Press, 5 October 2022).

In **Syria**, the targeting of regime forces by unknown gunmen in Dara province increased significantly last week. Meanwhile, fighting between regime forces and rebel and Islamist factions in the frontline areas of Hama, Aleppo, Idleb, and Lattakia provinces more than doubled last week. Turkey and rebel forces also continued to shell positions controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces and the YPG in the north of the country.

In **Turkey**, the army clashed with PKK militants in the Dereler region of Sirnak province, reportedly killing two militants (AFN News, 7 October 2022). In the meantime, on 3 October, YPG militants and Turkish gendarmerie soldiers exchanged fire after YPG militants attacked a gendarmerie border outpost in the Akcakale district of Sanliurfa province. The YPG has attacked Turkish military targets in border areas of Sanliurfa twice in the recent past, last August and last September.

In **Iraq**, Turkish airstrikes targeted sites controlled by the PKK and allied groups in Al Sulaymaniyah province. This escalation compounded a 900% increase in violent activity in Al Sulaymaniyah last week relative to the weekly average for the preceding month flagged by *ACLED's Subnational Surge Tracker*, which also warned of increased violence in Al Sulaymaniyah during the preceding four weeks. Iranian forces also continued to shell the positions of various Kurdish militias in Erbil province for the second consecutive week, claiming that the ongoing anti-government demonstrations in Iran were orchestrated by Kurdish militias (Middle East Monitor, 4 October 2022).

In Iran, continued nationwide demonstrations triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini while in the custody of the Guidance Patrol increased by almost a third last week compared to the week prior, with most of the demonstrations taking place on university campuses and led by students. Peaceful protests accounted for most of the demonstrations held last week, with police interventions, rioting, and acts of vandalism declining significantly. Despite this decrease in violent demonstrations, they still contributed to a 397% increase in weekly violent events in Iran in the past month relative to the weekly average for the preceding year. ACLED's Conflict Change Map also warned of increased violence in the country during the preceding four weeks. Demonstrations denouncing Amini's death and expressing solidarity with Iranian protesters were also reported in Turkey, Lebanon, and Israel, and in other countries across the world.

Last week in **Palestine**, five Palestinians were reportedly killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank. Israeli forces reportedly killed three Palestinian rioters during clashes in Al Ayzariyah, Qalqilyah, and Al Mazraah al Qibliyah in the West Bank (Haaretz, 7 October 2022). Meanwhile, Israeli soldiers reportedly killed a Palestinian after opening fire at a car carrying him and two others near Al Jalazun refugee camp. The Israeli army reported that the Palestinians in the car were fired upon after trying to run over soldiers, but Palestinian sources contest this (Haaretz, 3 October 2022). Finally, a Palestinian gunman was reportedly killed during armed clashes between Palestinian factions and Israeli forces in Dayr Al Hatab village (The Times of Israel, 5 October 2022).

In **Lebanon** last week, disgruntled depositors stormed seven commercial banks to demand the release of their US dollars savings. In the most serious incident of the week, an armed depositor held the employees of a Mediterranean Sea Bank branch in Nabatiye hostage for 11 hours. Since August, ACLED has recorded more than eight incidents related to bank hold-ups in Lebanon. Lebanon's worsening economic and security situation comes ahead of the upcoming presidential election, which is legally required to take place no later than 31 October. This violence contributed to a 79% increase in weekly violent events in Lebanon in the past month relative to the weekly average for the preceding year. *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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