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Regional Overview: Middle East 22-28 October 2022

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Last week in the [Middle East](#), levels of political violence declined significantly in Yemen, despite increased Houthi drone activity across the country. In Syria, Israeli airstrikes targeted regime forces and pro-Iran and Hezbollah militia positions in Rural Damascus. In Iraq, parliament approved the formation of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani's new government, triggering demonstrations. In Iran, an Islamic State (IS) attack on a Shiite shrine resulted in numerous fatalities. In Palestine, eight Palestinian gunmen, one rioter, and one civilian were killed by Israeli forces during separate violent events in the West Bank. Meanwhile, a historic deal was signed between Lebanon and Israel to demarcate a disputed maritime border in the Mediterranean Sea.

In **Yemen**, overall levels of political violence decreased last week. Despite this, landmine explosions increased in Al Bayda governorate, driving a 129% increase in violent events in Al Bayda last week relative to the weekly average for the preceding month flagged by [ACLED's Subnational Surge Tracker](#). The Subnational Tracker also warned of increased violence in Al Bayda during the preceding four weeks. Remote explosive, landmine, and IED explosions accounted for around one-third of all violent events in Yemen last week. This included IED attacks by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula against Southern Transitional Council forces in Abyan and Shabwah governorates.

Across the country, Houthi drone activity increased last week, with drone interceptions by anti-Houthi forces recorded in Hadramawt, Hodeidah, Lahij, Marib, Shabwah, and Taizz governorates. This increase came after Houthi drones prevented tankers from loading oil off the coasts of Hadramawt and Shabwah [the week prior](#). Last week's renewed drone activity led to the temporary closure of Al Mukalla port in Hadramawt ([Aden Al Ghad, 25 October 2022](#)). Drones were also monitored flying over oil facilities in Shabwah governorate ([Khabar News Agency, 25 October 2022](#)). Some sources reported that production was forced to stop in some oil fields in Shabwah as a result of oil not being offloaded at the terminals the week prior ([Mareb Press, 27 October 2022](#)).

In **Syria**, Israel resumed airstrikes against regime forces and pro-Iran and Hezbollah militias in Rural Damascus last week. The strikes also targeted the Dimas Military Air Base and Damascus International Airport, reportedly killing five regime fighters. Meanwhile, Hayat Tahrir al Sham detained civilians and members of the Syrian Liberation Front in Afrin province, after seizing control of towns and villages from the Syrian National Army's 3rd Corps [the week prior](#). Elsewhere, regime shelling of frontline areas controlled by rebel and Islamist factions significantly increased in Aleppo province. Similarly, Turkish and rebel forces resumed shelling of Syrian Democratic Forces-controlled areas in Al Hasakeh province.

In **Iraq**, parliament's approval of a new government under Prime Minister al-Sudani, which ended a year-long government formation crisis ([Al Monitor, 27 October 2022](#)), triggered demonstrations across multiple cities last week. Protests denouncing the sectarian quota system used to form the government were held in major cities, including Basrah, Baghdad, Amara, and As Samawah. In Nassriya city, demonstrators blocked roads with burning tires. Last week's demonstrations coincided with the third anniversary of the [October 2019 anti-government demonstration movement](#), which ousted the Adil Abdul-Mahdi government.

Elsewhere, fighting between Turkish forces and the Kurdistan Workers' Party continued to decline for the third consecutive week last week. Despite the overall decrease, violence increased in the Amadiya district of Dohuk province, where armed clashes between the two sides more than doubled.

In **Iran**, IS militants conducted an attack on a Shiite shrine in Shiraz city, reportedly killing 15 pilgrims. This attack was the deadliest IS attack in Iran since the [September 2018 military parade attack](#) in Ahvaz city. The event prompted demonstrations across the country. Meanwhile, nationwide demonstration events triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini almost doubled last week, with the majority of protests □

remaining peaceful. The number of riots has remained similar over the past two weeks, as some rioters continue to use Molotov cocktails to attack Basij military forces. Demonstrations denouncing Amini's death and expressing solidarity with Iranian protesters were also reported in **Turkey**.

Last week in **Palestine**, eight Palestinian gunmen, one rioter, and one civilian were killed in violent clashes and attacks in the West Bank. On 23 October, a senior militant of the recently formed Lion's Den armed group was killed when an explosive device attached to a motorcycle exploded in Nablus city. The Lion's Den accused Israeli forces of assassinating the militant ([Haaretz, 24 October 2022](#)). Two days later, joint Israeli forces raided Nablus city and clashed with Palestinian gunmen from different factions, reportedly killing five Lion's Den militants. The military claims the operation targeted a makeshift explosive lab belonging to the group ([Haaretz, 25 October 2022](#)). The same day, Israeli forces killed a rioter during clashes with Palestinians who were demonstrating against the Israeli operation in Nablus. Separately, Israeli forces killed two Palestinian gunmen after they reportedly opened fire on the military forces from a passing car at Huwwarah checkpoint. The Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade – the military wing of Fatah – claimed responsibility for the attack ([Arab 48, 28 October 2022](#); [Haaretz, 28 October 2022](#)).

Meanwhile, on 22 October, Israeli soldiers shot a Palestinian worker dead near the border fence southeast of Qalqilyah city, allegedly opening fire as a vehicle carrying the worker sped off while being questioned at a border crossing ([Times of Israel, 22 October 2022](#)). These trends contribute to the 163% increase in average weekly violent events in West Bank in the past month relative to the weekly average for the preceding year flagged by [ACLED's Subnational Threat Tracker](#). The Subnational Tracker also warned of increased violence in the West Bank during the preceding four weeks.

Israel and **Lebanon** signed a historic agreement last week demarcating the maritime border between the two countries in the Mediterranean Sea. Brokered by the US, the agreement marks an end to long-term disputes over the maritime boundary and allows both countries to explore natural gas fields in the sea ([Al Jazeera, 27 October 2022](#)). After the deal was signed, Hezbollah announced the end of the armed mobilization it had threatened if Israel began extracting gas from disputed areas before the agreement was finalized. Israel also reportedly reduced its military alert level on its northern border ([Times of Israel, 29 October 2022](#)).

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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Sherwan Hindreen Ali is an Assistant Research Manager for the Middle East desk and has been with the organization since February 2021. He was originally hired as an Iraq researcher for the ACLED-Religion pilot project. He holds an MA in Islamic Studies from McGill University and a BA in International Studies from the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani. Sherwan's main area of interest is religion and politics in the MENA region.

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