

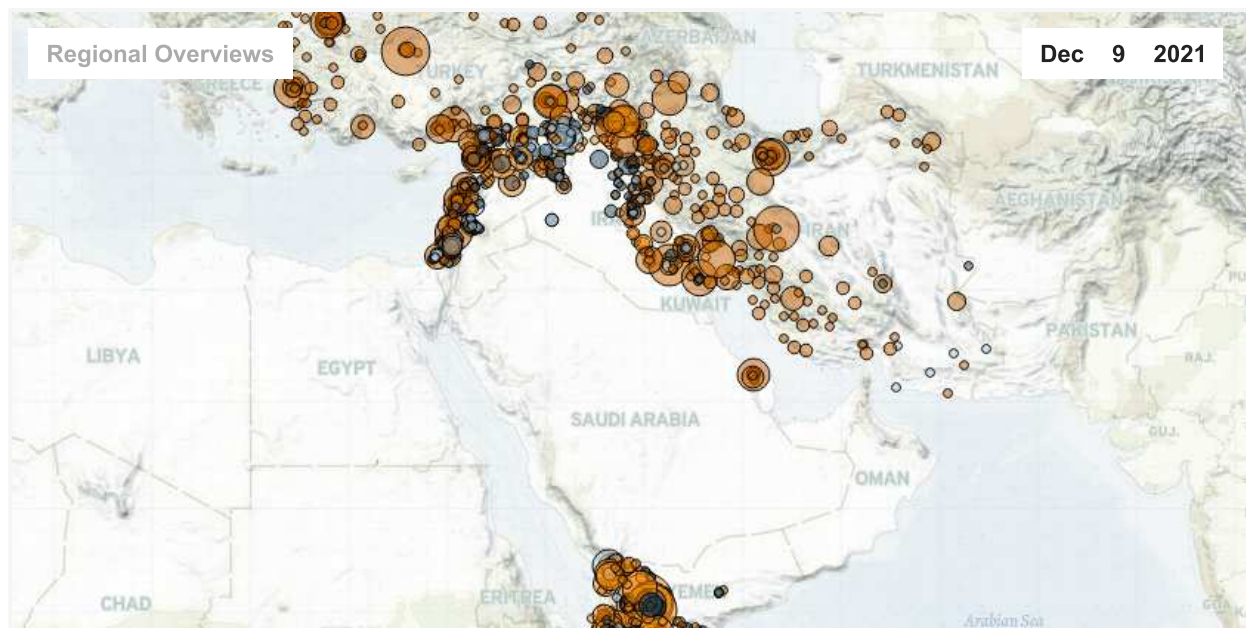
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REGIONAL OVERVIEW: MIDDLE EAST

27 NOVEMBER-3 DECEMBER 2021



Last week in the Middle East, political violence decreased significantly in Hodeidah governorate in Yemen after two weeks of intense clashes between Houthi and National Resistance forces. Clashes continued between Houthi and pro-Hadi forces in Marib governorate, while pro-Hadi forces opened a new front against Houthi forces in Shabwah governorate. Meanwhile, sustained Saudi-led coalition airstrikes on strategic sites in Sanaa seem to impair Houthi air capacities. In Syria, a vehicle-borne IED detonated in Menbij in Aleppo governorate, leading to civilian fatalities. In Iraq, the Islamic State (IS) carried out a series of attacks against



Kurdish forces as well as civilians in the Kurdistan Region. In Iran, Iranian forces and Taliban militants clashed at the Afghanistan-Iran border. In Turkey, health workers staged dozens of protests around the country to demand better wages.

In **Yemen**, a significant decrease in clashes between Houthi forces and National Resistance forces, as well as Saudi-led coalition airstrikes, drove down political violence in Hodeidah governorate last week to its lowest levels recorded in 2021. This comes after [two weeks of dramatic escalation](#) in the governorate sparked by the unexpected redeployment of National Resistance forces from a number of coastal areas to the south of the governorate in [mid-November](#). In neighboring Taizz governorate, a Saudi-led coalition airstrike on a Houthi convoy killed five civilians in one of the deadliest airstrikes on civilians this year ([Xinhua, 4 December 2021](#)).

In Marib governorate, clashes between Houthi and pro-Hadi forces increased last week, although no territorial gains were reported from either side. It is the third consecutive week in which Houthi forces did not register territorial gains. Amid the lack of territorial gains, reports have emerged over the past two weeks of Houthi forces abducting and killing tribal leaders refusing to send fighters to the frontlines ([Khabar News Agency, 28 November 2021](#); [Mareb Press, 28 November 2021](#); [Nukhba Hadramawt, 27 November 2021](#)). Such incidents have been recorded in the governorates of Dhamar, Hajjah, and Ibb.

In Shabwah governorate, pro-Hadi forces opened a new front against Houthi forces in Ain district last week, after an absence of more than two months. Pro-Hadi forces had lost Ain and Bayhan districts, as well as parts of Usaylan, to pro-Hadi forces in [a swift offensive in September 2021](#) that allowed the subsequent Houthi push into Marib governorate. Last week, pro-Hadi forces were able to cut off the Shabwah-Marib road. This contributed to a 471% spike in violence last week relative to the past month in Shabwah governorate (see [ACLED's Early Warning Research Hub](#) for more).

Meanwhile, Saudi-led coalition airstrikes on Sanaa city and neighboring districts continued last week, with Saudi-led coalition sources claiming to have destroyed several Houthi sites for assembling and launching drones and ballistic missiles. It was the fourth consecutive week in which the Yemeni capital was targeted by Saudi-led coalition airstrikes — something that had not been recorded by ACLED



since June 2019. It contributed to a 135% spike in violence last week relative to the past month in Amanat al Asimah governorate, after [a spike the previous week of 300%](#) (see [ACLED's Early Warning Research Hub](#) for more). The Saudi-led coalition also targeted Houthi sites in Sadah governorate. Constrastingly, no Houthi aerial attacks on **Saudi Arabia** were reported last week — for the first time since June 2021 — suggesting that Saudi-led coalition strikes on Houthi missile and drone sites may be impairing Houthi air capacities.

In **Syria**, an unidentified armed group detonated a vehicle-borne IED in Menbij city in the Aleppo countryside last week, killing four civilians and wounding three members of the Turkey-backed National Police Force. Elsewhere, a Turkish drone strike targeted a Syrian Democratic Forces (QSD) position in the Al Baida area in the Al Hasakeh countryside, leading to an unknown number of QSD fatalities. In southern Syria, regime forces shelled Nawa in the Dar'a countryside with rockets, as students left schools and employees left their workplaces. The shelling barrage killed three civilians, including a teacher, and wounded several other civilians.

In **Iraq**, IS militants conducted a series of attacks last week targeting Peshmerga forces and civilians in Iraqi Kurdistan. IS militants used both roadside IEDs and ground attacks to target the Peshmerga, killing 16 Peshmerga fighters in multiple attacks in Al Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk, and Erbil provinces. In Makhmur district of Ninewa, IS militants also killed three civilians, before ambushing a Peshmerga force which responded to the attack. Meanwhile, Turkish forces conducted both artillery barrages and airstrikes targeting Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants in northern Iraq. Strikes were reported in the Amadiya, Barwari Bala, and Nerwa Rekan sub-districts in Duhok province as well as Diana and Mergasur in Erbil province. Elsewhere, clashes took place between tribal militias in the provinces of Al Basrah and Thi Qar last week, contributing to spikes of 300% and 140% last week in the provinces, respectively, relative to the month prior (see [ACLED's Early Warning Research Hub](#) for more). In Al Dawayah in Thi Qar, the fighting killed two school students caught in the crossfire. Meanwhile, in Maysan, unidentified gunmen detonated three IEDs, either targeting civilian homes or vehicles; while there were no casualties reported, the violence contributed to a 233% increase in violence last week relative to last month in the province (see [ACLED's Early Warning Research Hub](#) for more).



In **Iran**, clashes erupted between Iranian soldiers and Taliban forces along the Afghanistan-Iran border last week after the Taliban opened fire at Iranian farmers. Iranian authorities stated there were no casualties and later called the incident a “misunderstanding” ([Al Jazeera, 1 December 2021](#)). Meanwhile, sporadic protests over nationwide water shortages continued last week, following the arrest of dozens of demonstrators during violent demonstrations the week prior. In Isfahan, farmers have been protesting over the past month on the dried-up riverbed of the Zayandeh Rood River, demanding better governmental management of the country’s water supply. The Iranian government attributes the water shortages to the ongoing drought, while protesters accuse the government of continuous mishandling of the country’s limited water resources ([DW, 28 November 2021](#)). Elsewhere, teachers protested in over 60 locations around the country last week to demand improved wages and better working conditions. Specifically, Iranian educators demand the implementation of a salary ranking plan that would increase their wages. Iranian authorities have repeatedly refused to implement the plan ([HRA News, 2 December 2021](#)).

In **Turkey**, health workers staged dozens of protest events outside state hospitals around the country last week to demand better wages for all health workers. The protests come in response to a proposed government bill that would solely raise doctors’ salaries, excluding other healthcare workers ([Bianet, 3 December 2021](#)).

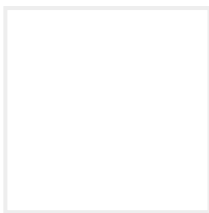






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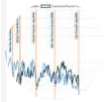
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