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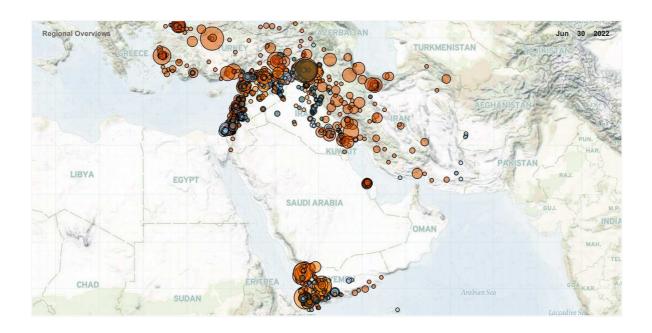
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Regional Overview: Middle East 18-24 June 2022



Last week in the Middle East, overall political violence levels remained stable in Yemen despite increased instability in the south of the country. In Syria, clashes broke out between Islamist factions in rebel-held areas in Aleppo. In Iraq, clashes between tribal militias increased. In Turkey, at least five Turkish soldiers and four Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) members were killed in four clashes in southeast Turkey, while several Turkish governors announced bans on political gatherings targeting LGBT+ groups. In Palestine, Palestinian militants fired rockets toward Israel from the Gaza Strip, prompting Israel to target Hamas positions with airstrikes, while two Palestinians were killed in violent events in the West Bank. In Israel, the Knesset voted to dissolve the current Israeli government, while the crown prince dissolved the parliament in Kuwait.

In Yemen, violence levels remained stable last week, with most truce-related violence taking place in the usual governorates of Hajjah, Hodeidah, Marib, Sadah, and Taizz (see ACLED's Yemen Truce Monitor for more on truce violations). No Saudi-led coalition air raids from fighter jets were reported for the 12th consecutive week and no Houthi drone or missile attacks on Saudi Arabia for the 13th consecutive week. At the political level, no significant developments took place last week. The Houthis proposed changes to the UN proposal to reopen roads in Taizz on 21 June, but no progress was reported (Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, 24 June 2022).

In southern Yemen, presumed Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) militants carried out attacks targeting security forces in Abyan and Shabwah governorates. These contributed to the 300% increase in violence in Abyan last week relative to the past month flagged by ACLED's Subnational Surge Tracker. The Tracker first warned of increased violence to come in Abyan in the past month. These attacks were followed by reports of possible US drone strikes on AQAP targets in Shabwah (Al Khabar al Yemeni, 21 June 2022; Yemen News Portal, 24 June 2022). The deployment of AQAP militants was also reported in Ad Dali governorate last week (Yemen Press Agency, 21 June 2022), where tensions between anti-Houthi forces escalated into clashes. ACLED's Subnational Threat Tracker first warned of increased violence to come in Ad Dali in the past month.

Demonstrations also erupted throughout southern Yemen last week against the deterioration of services and an increase in fuel prices.

Demonstrations took place in Aden, Ad Dali, Lahij, and Hadramawt governorates. In Aden and Hadramawt, these contributed to increases in violence of 140% and 100%, respectively, over the past week relative to the past month, as flagged by ACLED's Subnational Threat

Tracker

In Syria, Turkish military operations against Syrian Democratic Forces (QSD) and People's Protection Units (YPG)-controlled areas in Ar Raqqa, Al Hasakeh, and Aleppo provinces continued to decline for the third consecutive week last week. Aleppo province also witnessed intense clashes among Islamist factions in the districts of Afrin, Al Bab, and Azaz after the Levant Front attacked the headquarters of Ahrar al Sham in two villages in Azaz district. Clashes resulted in the deaths of four fighters and four civilians. Meanwhile, IS militants continued their attacks against regime forces in the Syrian desert last week. Attacks centered on regime positions in the desert of Bishri Mountain in Deir Ez Zor, where 15 regime fighters were killed.

In **Iraq**, clashes between tribal militia groups significantly increased last week, with clashes reported in Al Basrah, Baghdad, Wassit, and Maysan. The increase was most pronounced in Al Basrah province, where rival groups clashed near the Maysan provincial border. Six people were killed in the clash, including one member of the Iraqi police who intervened to stop the clash. This violence contributed to the 58% increase in violence in Iraq in the past month relative to the past year flagged by *ACLED's Conflict Change Map*, which first warned of increased violence to come in the country in the past month.

Elsewhere, fighting between Turkish forces and the PKK last week fell to its lowest levels since the beginning of Turkey's Operation Claw Lock in April. Turkish airstrike events ¹ last week halved compared to the week prior, but the number of shelling events increased by one-third. Despite the decrease, dozens of fighters were killed during fighting between Turkish forces and the PKK. Notably, on 20 June, PKK militants attacked Turkish soldiers in the Al Amadiya district of Duhok, killing 29 Turkish soldiers.

In **Turkey**, at least five Turkish soldiers and four PKK-affiliated militants were killed last week in four separate clashes in Van, Siirt, Hakkari, and Diyarbakir provinces in southeast Turkey. One of the deceased militants was reportedly a high-ranking member of the Free Women's Units (YJA STAR) – the women's military wing of the PKK (TRT Haber, 21 June 2022).

Elsewhere in Turkey, the governors of Istanbul, Mugla, Eskisehir, and Izmir provinces issued temporary bans last week on all forms of political gatherings to prevent LGBT+ groups from staging protests or marches as part of LGBT+ Pride Month (Cumhuriyet, 24 June 2022). While homosexuality is not a crime in Turkey, several government officials, including President Erdogan, have recently made comments describing members of the LGBT community in derogatory terms (Reuters, 27 June 2022).

In **Palestine**, Israeli forces carried out four airstrikes against Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip after Palestinian militants fired a rocket toward Ashqelon city in **Israel** last week. The rocket was intercepted by the Iron Dome, causing neither reports of casualties nor material damage. Israeli airstrikes against Hamas sites, including a weapons manufacturing site, caused material damage but no reported casualties. Israel claims that the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) – a Hamas affiliate – was the faction responsible for the attack (Haaretz, 19 June 2022). This is the first cross-border exchange of rockets between Gazan armed factions and Israel since April of this year.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, two Palestinians were killed in violent events last week. On 19 June, Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian laborer after he tried to enter Israeli territories through a security fence south of Qalqilya city. On 20 June, an Israeli settler stabbed and killed a Palestinian local during clashes between settlers and Palestinians in Isaka village in Salfit governorate. Palestinian sources claim that the settlers entered the village under the protection of Israeli forces, but Israeli forces deny this and later arrested the settler (Haaretz, 22 June 2022). This violence contributed to the 49% increase in violence in Palestine in the past month relative to the past year flagged by ACLED's Conflict Change Map, which first warned of increased violence to come in the country in the past month.

Last week in Israel, the Knesset passed a preliminary bill to dissolve the current government. This marks the end of Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's "change government" and sets up the country for its fifth election in three and a half years (Times of Israel, 22 June 2022). Foreign Minister Yair Lapid will serve as caretaker prime minister until a new government is formed (Times of Israel, 22 June 2022).

In **Kuwait**, Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmad dissolved the parliament on 22 June and called for early elections after a political deadlock between the government and the parliament (Reuters, 22 June 2022). The dissolution of parliament follows an open sit-in by opposition MPs in the parliament complex from 14 to 22 June, which was accompanied by a rare series of protests in the capital throughout last week. The last time the parliament was dissolved was in 2016.



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