

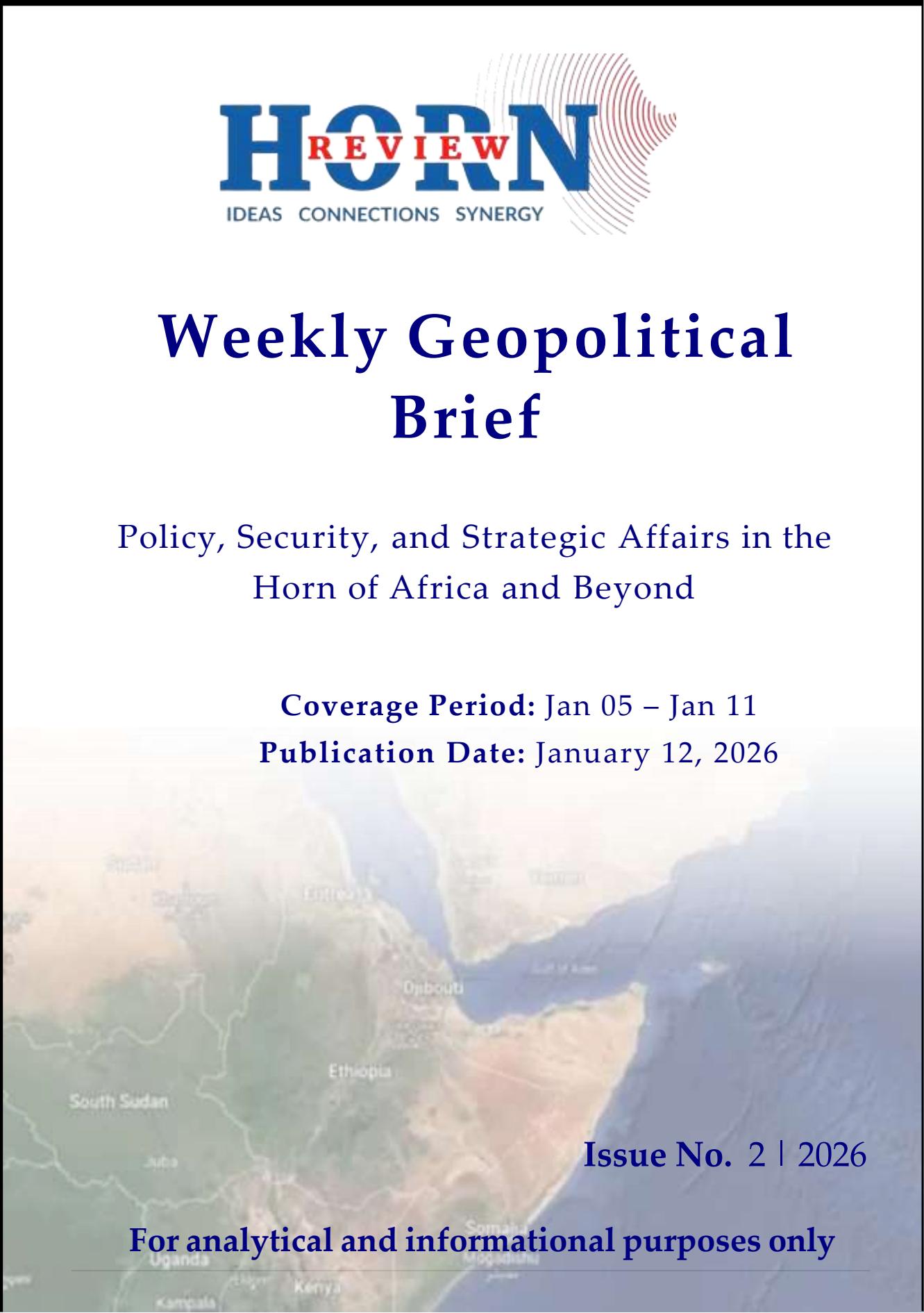


# Weekly Geopolitical Brief

Policy, Security, and Strategic Affairs in the  
Horn of Africa and Beyond

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For analytical and informational purposes only

## Horn Review: Weekly Brief

**Jan 05 – Jan 11, 2026**

### 1. Ethiopia

On January 10, 2026, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed officially launched construction of the \$12.5 billion Bishoftu International Airport (BIA) in Bishoftu (45 km southeast of Addis Ababa). This mega-project, led by Ethiopian Airlines, will become Africa's largest aviation hub with four runways and an initial capacity of 60 million passengers annually (expanding to 110 million). Initial earthworks (\$610 million) are underway, with full construction starting in August 2026 and completion targeted for 2030. It aims to relieve pressure on Bole International Airport and boost trade, tourism, and AfCFTA connectivity.

This is widely regarded as a landmark infrastructure milestone and Africa's biggest aviation project to date.

Alongside this infrastructure milestone, Addis Ababa continued to fortify institutional systems and regional diplomatic relations. This week, high-level engagements with international partners, notably the United Arab Emirates (UAE), reaffirmed Ethiopia's strategic partnerships across economic, security, and climate domains. Discussions with UAE counterparts emphasized cooperation on regional stability, humanitarian coordination, and joint action on global environmental agendas, especially in anticipation of upcoming multilateral forums focused on sustainable development and water resource solutions.

On January 8, 2026, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met PM Abiy Ahmed in Addis Ababa (first stop of his Africa tour), pledging enhanced cooperation in infrastructure, green energy, digital economy/AI, and Belt and Road initiatives under their "all-weather strategic partnership." Discussions emphasized trade upgrades and FOCAC outcomes.

Ethiopia has expanded its Gulf engagement by formalizing a new cooperation framework with the Sultanate of Oman through a landmark MoU and inaugural political consultations in Addis Ababa. The partnership covers trade, investment, agriculture, energy, banking, pharmaceuticals, and regional security, reinforcing Ethiopia's role as a key diplomatic actor while leveraging reforms to attract Omani investment and deepen bilateral ties.

In addition to these developments, the Council of Ministers has formally approved a draft regulation to establish the Ethiopian Health Products Regulatory Authority. This legislative move is designed to create a more robust and modern oversight system for medical products and healthcare services. By streamlining the regulatory framework, the government aims to ensure the quality and safety of pharmaceuticals while further

accelerating the growth of domestic drug production, which has already seen a significant increase in recent years.

The 2026 China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges was officially launched on January 8, 2026 (local time), at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reading a congratulatory letter from President Xi Jinping and key addresses from Ethiopian President Taye Atske Selassie, AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, and others. This historic initiative, marking 70 years of China-Africa diplomatic ties, aims to deepen cultural, educational, youth, tourism, and arts exchanges among over 2.8 billion people, including expanded scholarships, streamlined visas, and a fast-track business corridor, while releasing a list of 58 key activities to strengthen mutual learning, solidarity, and the foundation of an all-weather community with a shared future.

## **2. Sudan**

This week marked 1,000 days since the outbreak of Sudan's war, with intensified fighting, deepening humanitarian collapse, and continued international alarm underscoring the entrenchment of the conflict.

Humanitarian agencies issued stark warnings as Sudan crossed the milestone. The United Nations, IOM, and international NGOs stressed that Sudan has become one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises, with more than one-third of the population displaced and urgent needs expanding across food security, shelter, health care, and protection. The IOM called for urgent and sustained international action, warning that displacement continues to accelerate amid ongoing violence and access constraints.

Fighting and hunger displaced at least 65,000 people in Kordofan, while insecurity spread into key urban and strategic centers. In El-Obeid, renewed clashes and RSF drone activity disrupted civilian life, with attacks reported on the airport and power infrastructure, compounding earlier electricity outages and reinforcing concerns over the targeting of critical services. Drone operations also extended northward, where the Sudanese army intercepted RSF drones aimed at the Merowe Dam, highlighting the growing militarization of energy infrastructure and the strategic use of long-range aerial warfare.

In Darfur, limited UN access to El-Fasher revealed catastrophic conditions following RSF control. UN teams described the city as a "crime scene," citing widespread destruction, killings, and acute shortages of food, water, and medical supplies. Displacement camps across Darfur continued to swell, while civilians faced heightened protection risks amid lawlessness and the collapse of basic services. Testimonies brought to light this week documented widespread sexual violence, reinforcing concerns over systematic abuse and entrenched impunity, particularly affecting women and children.

Security developments extended across multiple regions. Near the Chadian border, the

Sudanese army and allied joint forces engaged RSF units amid continued clashes in North and West Darfur. In West Kordofan, the RSF reportedly transferred dozens of detainees from Al-Nuhud to Nyala, raising alarm among local responders over the fate of civilians held in RSF custody. Elsewhere, Sudanese authorities reported retaking a previously RSF-held town, followed by the release of hundreds of civilians detained during RSF control.

Politically, SAF Chairman Abdel Fattah al-Burhan ordered the release of approximately 400 female inmates, many accused of cooperating with the RSF, including mothers detained with children. The move was presented as a humanitarian gesture amid mounting international scrutiny, though humanitarian actors cautioned that such steps do not alter the broader scale of civilian suffering or detention practices nationwide.

Diplomatic activity intensified but remained contested. The United States and Saudi Arabia renewed efforts to push for a humanitarian truce, while the African Union, Ethiopia, and the UAE called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to facilitate aid access. Sudan's foreign ministry publicly criticized the African Union's role following joint statements, reflecting Khartoum's continued sensitivity toward external mediation frameworks and perceived bias.

External military dynamics also featured prominently. Reporting indicated that Pakistan may be nearing a major arms supply deal with Sudan, potentially involving weapons and aircraft, highlighting continued arms inflows despite Sudan's worsening humanitarian catastrophe and international concern over militarization.

### **Assessment:**

At the 1,000-day mark, Sudan's war remains deeply entrenched. RSF drone warfare, fighting in El-Obeid and border regions, mass displacement in Kordofan and Darfur, and pervasive protection abuses underscore the scale and persistence of civilian suffering. Limited detainee releases and diplomatic initiatives offer symbolic or procedural relief but do not address the structural drivers of the conflict. With humanitarian needs accelerating and indications of continued arms acquisition, prospects for stabilization remain remote absent a fundamental shift in the security and political trajectory.

### **3. Egypt**

Egypt reinforced its position as a regional stabilizer and sovereignty maximalist through intensified mediation on Gaza, Libya, Sudan, and Somalia, framing its diplomacy around state integrity and opposition to unilateral territorial or security arrangements.

Cairo escalated its diplomatic rejection of Israel's recognition of Somaliland, reaffirming on January 11 that any recognition of Somaliland constitutes a direct threat to Somalia's sovereignty and a destabilizing precedent for the Horn of Africa.

Egypt aligned explicitly with Saudi Arabia on Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and Gaza, underscoring converging positions on preserving territorial unity amid widening Saudi–UAE divergences, particularly over Sudan and southern Yemen.

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi endorsed Saudi Arabia’s proposal to host an inclusive conference for southern Yemeni factions, signaling Cairo’s preference for Saudi-led political processes over UAE-backed proxy consolidation.

Egypt deepened its central role in Gaza’s post-war planning during high-level talks with EU High Representative Kaja Kallas (January 8–10), positioning itself as the primary intermediary between Europe, Israel, and Palestinian institutions.

Cairo advanced proposals for an international stabilization force in Gaza and the formation of a Palestinian technocratic governing committee, reflecting Egypt’s effort to prevent both Hamas re-entrenchment and Israeli security re-occupation.

Egypt continued large-scale humanitarian operations, dispatching aid convoys (exceeding 100 total since October 2023) and expanding distribution points in northern Gaza, reinforcing its role as the principal logistical gateway.

Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty intensified engagement with UN and AU relief agencies to press for expanded humanitarian corridors for both Gaza and Sudan, linking the two crises diplomatically.

Egypt used the Somaliland crisis to reassert itself as a defender of post-colonial borders in Africa, framing recognition debates as existential threats to regional order rather than isolated diplomatic disputes.

Cairo coordinated closely with Mogadishu and regional organizations, viewing the Somaliland issue through the same sovereignty lens applied to Libya and Sudan.

On January 11, Egypt and Sudan issued a joint statement reaffirming unified opposition to unilateral actions in the Eastern Nile Basin, reinforcing Egypt’s continued hard-line stance on the GERD and signaling sustained diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia.

Egypt intensified security coordination with eastern Libyan authorities as Defense Minister Mohamed Zaki met Lieutenant General Saddam Haftar in Cairo on January 11, focusing on border security, counterterrorism, and military cooperation.

Cairo maintained its backing of Sudan’s de facto authorities in coordination with Saudi Arabia, positioning itself against perceived UAE influence through the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Egypt’s Libya and Sudan posture reflected a broader strategy of supporting centralized military actors over fragmented political processes, prioritizing border security and regime stability.

Egypt expanded its West African security footprint by agreeing with Burkina Faso on January 8 to a new roadmap for counter-terrorism and economic cooperation, reflecting Cairo’s growing interest in Sahel security as a downstream threat vector.

This engagement aligns Egypt with non-Western security partnerships in the Sahel while avoiding overt alignment with AES political structures.

Egypt secured further European financial backing as the EU confirmed the imminent disbursement of a €1 billion macro-financial assistance tranche, reinforcing Egypt’s role as a pillar of EU external migration and security strategy.

EU–Egypt consultations finalized enhanced cooperation frameworks on irregular migration, organized crime, and border management, deepening functional security interdependence.

On January 7, Egypt approved draft extradition and mutual legal assistance agreements with Spain, signaling incremental alignment with European judicial cooperation mechanisms.

Egypt entered a period of quiet political transition as the current House of Representatives approached the end of its five-year term in January 2026, though without signs of competitive electoral mobilization.

Monitoring reports continued to highlight entrenched restrictions on political freedoms, with Cairo prioritizing external mediation credibility over domestic political liberalization.

The regime’s internal stability narrative increasingly emphasized Egypt’s role as a regional “center of gravity,” offsetting domestic constraints through diplomatic indispensability.

#### **4. Eritrea**

On January 6, the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSAPDO) issued a joint statement with the Eritrean Afar National Congress (EANC) via its official Facebook account. The statement affirmed a shared position on issues such as the “right to self-determination,” identified the PFDJ as a “common enemy,” and asserted the legitimacy of efforts to overthrow it.

The EANC is a longstanding opposition group that, while more active in earlier periods, continues to maintain an organizational presence within the Eritrean diaspora. The joint declaration signals a notable escalation in opposition coordination, particularly among Afar constituencies in the Danakil region along the Red Sea coast, including the port city of Assab.

The Ministry of Information advanced familiar narrative themes through two articles published on its website during the week. Both pieces targeted Ethiopian media outlets

and political figures, including the ruling Prosperity Party, over their interpretations of Eritrean history. This approach reflects a long-standing PFDJ strategy, evident since the armed struggle, aimed at historically decoupling Eritrea from Ethiopia and constructing a distinct national narrative grounded in selective historical interpretation and mythology.

On January 9, Fesehatsion Petros, Eritrea's Ambassador to Italy and non-resident Ambassador to Sweden, conducted a “seminar” for Eritreans in Sweden. The outreach comes amid moves by several European governments, including Sweden, to curtail PFDJ influence over Eritrean diaspora communities.

On January 9, the UNDP reported that the State of Eritrea had inaugurated a new digital customs management system. Developed with UNDP support and international partners, the system replaces legacy software in use since 2007 with a modern, adaptable digital platform. The initiative is widely viewed as part of broader PFDJ efforts to modernize select state functions and recalibrate governance practices in support of regime durability in a changing global environment.

## **5. Djibouti**

The most significant event of the week was the working visit of Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed to Djibouti on 11 January 2026. The discussions between Prime Minister Abiy and President Guelleh were framed in both bilateral and regional contexts.

The bilateral talks centered on the relationship the Doraleh Multi-Purpose Port and the Ethiopia-Djibouti railway, which collectively facilitate over ninety percent of Ethiopia's import export trade. The Djiboutian leadership has consistently expressed a strategic interest in preserving this vital economic partnership, which is a linchpin of Djibouti's own port economy. The discussions, therefore, likely at receiving direct assurances regarding the continuity and primacy of the existing corridor irrespective of Ethiopia's pursuit of alternative maritime access. Public statements emanating from the visit emphasized mutual commitment to historic ties and economic integration, suggesting a diplomatic effort to manage potential friction.

## **6. South Sudan**

This week, South Sudan faced escalating protection concerns, renewed armed hostilities, mounting pressure over aid governance, and growing uncertainty around the 2026 electoral timeline, alongside continued humanitarian strain and international security engagement.

Human rights and protection concerns featured prominently. Rights groups and Human Rights Watch reported mass arbitrary arrests of civilians, particularly under abusive anti-gang operations, warning that security forces have detained civilians without due process and subjected some to mistreatment. The United Nations reported that while overall

conflict-related deaths declined, abductions increased, indicating shifting patterns of violence that continue to endanger civilians.

Armed hostilities persisted across several regions. Persistent fighting continued to impact civilians, disrupting livelihoods and humanitarian access. Conflict-related insecurity remains a central obstacle to stabilization, particularly in areas already facing displacement and food insecurity.

The humanitarian situation remained severe. Food security assessments warned that conflict and access constraints are sustaining emergency-level food insecurity, with parts of Upper Nile, including Nasir, facing continued risk of famine conditions. Humanitarian organizations, including Direct Relief, reported ongoing medical assistance to displaced communities, underscoring the scale of unmet health needs amid constrained operating environments.

Aid governance emerged as a major flashpoint. The United States halted or reviewed aid to parts of South Sudan, including Ayod County and Western Bahr el Ghazal, citing government interference and obstruction. South Sudanese authorities rejected these claims as unfounded and stated they had not been formally notified of suspensions, while civil society activists warned that aid disruptions risk worsening an already severe humanitarian crisis. Parallel reporting highlighted broader scrutiny over the misuse of U.S. aid, intensifying international pressure on Juba.

Political uncertainty deepened ahead of the proposed 2026 elections. Violence surges were reported as undermining electoral preparations, reinforcing concerns that insecurity, delayed reforms, and weak institutions threaten the feasibility of credible polls. President Salva Kiir carried out a limited cabinet reshuffle, replacing opposition ministers, while a former MP demanded restoration of citizenship rights following a continental court ruling, adding to debates over political inclusion and accountability.

International and regional engagement continued alongside domestic pressures. South Sudan confirmed it will host the Nile Basin Initiative summit in 2026 and is preparing to host regional Nile Day celebrations, signaling sustained diplomatic engagement on transboundary water governance. In the security sphere, China's 12th Peacekeeping Infantry Battalion completed UN induction training and was deployed to South Sudan, reinforcing UNMISS capabilities amid ongoing civilian protection challenges. Authorities also tightened security procedures at Juba International Airport, restricting access to the airside.

External dynamics continued to shape South Sudan's outlook. Analysis highlighted the spillover effects of Sudan's war, particularly through oil dependence, economic vulnerability, and cross-border instability, reinforcing South Sudan's exposure to regional shocks.

## **Assessment:**

This week's developments highlight South Sudan's persistent fragility across security, governance, and humanitarian domains. Arbitrary arrests, continued hostilities, rising abductions, and food insecurity point to sustained civilian vulnerability. At the same time, disputes over aid governance and electoral readiness contrast with increased international security engagement through UN peacekeeping. Together, these dynamics underscore the gap between stabilization efforts and realities on the ground.

## **7. Somalia and Somaliland**

### **Somalia**

The Federal Government of Somalia issued a series of strong condemnations of the Israeli Foreign Minister's visit to Hargeisa, characterizing it as an unauthorized entry and a brazen violation of its sovereignty. In its formal denunciation, Somalia's Foreign Ministry denounced the diplomatic engagement as an illicit incursion into sovereign territory and an unacceptable interference in its internal affairs, declaring any such agreements made without the explicit consent of Mogadishu to be "illegal, null, and void."

Somali officials, including the Minister of Defence, expanded on these condemnations in international media, articulating deeper strategic concerns that the move could be linked to broader regional agendas, specifically alleging the possibility of plans for population resettlement and the establishment of foreign military infrastructure. In stark contrast, authorities in Hargeisa defended the nascent diplomatic relationship with Israel, with senior officials framing it as a necessary and pragmatic step after decades of seeking international engagement and a vital path toward securing development and long-sought formal recognition as an independent state.

### **U.S. Suspension of Assistance to Somali Federal Government**

On Wednesday, 8 January, the U.S. State Department announced the suspension of all U.S. assistance programs that directly or indirectly benefit the Somali Federal Government. This decision communicated via a formal statement, was based on what U.S. officials described as a zero-tolerance policy for waste, theft, and diversion of life-saving assistance.

**Core Allegations:** The U.S. cited deep concern over reports that FGS officials had ordered the demolition of a U.S.-funded World Food Programme (WFP) warehouse at the Mogadishu Port with no prior notification to international donors. The U.S. further alleged the illegal seizure of 76 metric tons of donor-funded food aid intended for vulnerable Somalis. A senior State Department official, speaking on background, indicated the decision followed the alleged direction of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who they claimed ordered the warehouse demolition.

**Somalia's Response:** The FGS issued a firm and comprehensive denial. It asserted that all humanitarian aid including U.S.-donated supplies remained under the custody and control of the WFP. The government attributed the demolition to expansion work at the Mogadishu Port insisting it had not affected any aid storage. This position was corroborated by an anonymous WFP staff member in Mogadishu, who told the AFP news agency that while the warehouse was partially demolished over the weekend without WFP's knowledge, "there was no looting involved". The State Department explicitly conditioned the resumption of aid on the Somali government taking accountability for its unacceptable actions and taking appropriate remedial steps.

### **China's Diplomatic Posture and Postponed High-Level Visit**

**Postponement of Foreign Minister's Visit:** Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was scheduled to arrive in Mogadishu on Friday, 9 January, as part of his annual New Year tour of Africa. This would have been the first visit by a Chinese foreign minister to Somalia since the 1980s. However, the visit was postponed. The Chinese Embassy in Mogadishu officially attributed this to a "schedule change" resulting from "friendly negotiation between the foreign ministries".

**Rejection of Security Concerns:** The embassy was compelled to issue a statement to counter speculation and alleged disinformation. It specifically rejected as a "shameful fabrication" a letter shared online by Somaliland's Minister of Presidency which claimed the postponement was due to security fears in Mogadishu. The Chinese statement concluded with a pointed reminder "Whatever you do, you can never change the reality that Somaliland is part of Somalia".

**High-Level Phone Call & Reassurance :** Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a phone conversation with his Somali counterpart, Foreign Minister Abdisalam Dhaay, on Sunday, 11 January. During this call, Wang delivered a significant diplomatic statement affirming that China will consistently support Somalia in safeguarding its national sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. Crucially, he linked this to China's core interest, stating China opposes any attempts by Somaliland to collude with Taiwan authorities to seek independence. This explicitly ties China's support for Somalia's territorial integrity to Somalia's adherence to the One China Principle. Wang emphasized that the China-Somalia strategic partnership will not be affected by any temporary event.

### **The UAE-Somalia Rift and the Al-Zubaidi Affair**

**Investigation and Allegations:** On 8 January, Somalia's National Immigration and Citizenship Agency launched an urgent investigation into the alleged unauthorized use of its airspace and airports to facilitate the transit of Aidarous al-Zubaidi, the head of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council in Yemen. Reports indicated al-Zubaidi was transported from Berbera in Somaliland to Mogadishu, and then to Abu Dhabi.

**Somalia's Retaliation and UAE Withdrawal:** In response, the FGS imposed an immediate ban on all UAE military and cargo aircraft from Somali airspace. Complying with this order, the United Arab Emirates began a withdrawal of its military personnel and assets from Somali territory. This incident exposed and exacerbated the underlying tensions from the Saudi-UAE rivalry in Yemen, pulling Somalia directly into the conflict.

### **Somaliland**

A principal development was the visit of Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar to Hargeisa on January 6, following Israel's earlier announcement of recognition. This prompted a series of swift and firm diplomatic responses from a broad coalition of nations and multilateral organizations in support of Somalia's sovereignty and territorial unity. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar arrived in Hargeisa, marking the first high-level diplomatic visit since Israel's December 26 recognition of Somaliland's independence. He was received by government officials and met with President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi. Sa'ar announced that the two governments would "soon" open embassies and appoint ambassadors, stating, "Nobody will determine for Israel who we recognise". Somaliland officials hailed the visit as a defining moment for deepening relations.

The African Union Peace and Security Council convened an emergency ministerial session on January 6. The Council expressed concern viewing the recognition as a challenge to the stability, unity, and territorial integrity of Somalia. It called for respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of AU member states. Subsequently, on January 8, a coalition of 22 nations, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye, alongside the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), issued a joint statement. This statement firmly rejected actions perceived as violating Somalia's sovereignty and affirmed their support for its unity. India also separately reiterated its consistent position of supporting Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

## **8. Yemen**

The Saudi-led coalition-initiated airstrikes against the Southern Transitional Council (STC) after the group's leader, Aidarous al-Zubaidi, fled to an unknown location before peace talks. This marks a significant escalation in ongoing tensions.

The Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) expelled Aidarous al-Zubaidi for committing high treason, citing actions that harmed state unity and security. He has been referred to the public prosecutor, further straining relations with the STC.

The PLC convened an emergency meeting to address recent security developments, resulting in the dismissal of several key military commanders and ministers. This decision aims to reinforce the council's control amid rising tensions in southern Yemen.

The STC announced its self-dissolution as part of a strategy to prepare for a comprehensive southern dialogue in Riyadh. The council admitted it had failed to achieve its primary objectives and called for renewed political engagement.

In a twist, some STC members denied claims of the group's dissolution, indicating internal divisions. This contradiction highlights ongoing fractures within the STC as it navigates external pressures and political instability.

Yemen's PLC stated that all military forces in the south will now operate under the command of the Saudi-led coalition. This decision follows the STC's recent military failures and aims to unify efforts against the Houthi forces.

Thousands rallied in Aden in support of the STC, waving flags of former South Yemen and demanding independence despite prohibitions from pro-Saudi officials. The protests underscore persistent local support for the STC amid unrest.

The STC lost control of all territories it held in a significant setback for the UAE. The PLC has now regained control over all non-Houthi territories in Yemen, marking a crucial shift in the civil war landscape.

New reports confirm that Aidarous al-Zubaidi fled Yemen by sea to Somaliland before being transported to Al Reef Air Base in Abu Dhabi. This flight indicates a critical change in leadership dynamics within the STC.

The UAE-backed STC refuted rumors of its disbandment, emphasizing internal conflicts within the group. This denial illustrates the complexities of the situation as tensions rise between competing factions in the Yemeni civil war.

## **9. The Gulf Countries**

### **Saudi Arabia**

On January 4, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed enhancing security and stability in a phone call that emphasized mutual interests.

On January 5, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan met with Somali Foreign Minister Abdisalam Abdi Ali in Riyadh to reaffirm Saudi Arabia's commitment to Somalia's sovereignty and stability.

Prince Faisal also met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi on January 5 in Cairo, where they discussed regional developments and strategies to enhance cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

On January 7, a Saudi-led coalition launched air strikes against Yemen's separatist STC forces after their leader, Aidarous al-Zubaidi, went missing, resulting in government forces taking control of strategic areas in Aden.

On January 7, Prince Faisal bin Farhan arrived in Washington for an official visit to discuss bilateral relations with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

On January 8, during a visit by Pakistan's Chief of Air Staff, both nations committed to enhancing bilateral defense cooperation, focusing on joint training and operational collaboration.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia held their inaugural Naval Forces Cooperation Meeting on January 8 in Ankara, aimed at strengthening military ties and enhancing security in regional waters.

Talks commenced on January 8 between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to convert \$2 billion in Saudi loans into a JF-17 Thunder fighter jet deal, enhancing military cooperation.

On January 8, Saudi ambassador Mohammed Al Jaber met with the STC delegation to address unrest in southern Yemen, discussing plans for an upcoming dialogue conference.

On January 8, Sudan's Al-Burhan met with Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister Waleed Al-Khuraiji in Port Sudan to discuss efforts aimed at ending ongoing conflict and ensuring national unity.

Reports surfaced on January 8 that Al-Zubaidi fled to the UAE via Somaliland, escalating tensions between Saudi Arabia and the UAE amidst military confrontations in Yemen.

On January 9, Saudi Arabia joined other nations in condemning an Israeli official's visit to Somaliland, asserting it violates Somalia's sovereignty and undermines regional stability.

The joint statement by Saudi Arabia and its allies reiterated their commitment to Somalia's territorial integrity and unity, urging Israel to respect international law regarding Somaliland.

## **UAE**

UAE and AU deepen ties in Addis Ababa: cooperation on Agenda 2063, AfCFTA, water resilience and the UAE's \$1bn "AI for Development" pledge.

UAE and AU call for an immediate humanitarian truce in Sudan, demand accountability and press for a civilian-led transition.

Saudi accuses the UAE of aiding STC leader Aidarous al-Zubaidi's exit to Abu Dhabi, worsening Riyadh–Abu Dhabi tensions over Yemen.

UAE coordinates with Egypt and Saudi/US quad on Sudan and Gaza humanitarian corridors; Abu Dhabi and Cairo pledge tighter diplomatic sync.

Muslim Brotherhood concerns prompt the UAE to cut some UK scholarships for Emirati students, signaling cooling ties with select British institutions.

Gulf carriers (Emirates, flydubai, Etihad) resumed most flights to Iran after a brief suspension amid protests; travelers warned of volatility.

UAE raised maritime/territorial concerns (islands occupied by Iran) during AU talks, seeking regional attention and diplomatic resolution.

### **Qatar**

Qatar expressed regret over damage to its Kyiv embassy from shelling, confirming all staff are safe. The Ministry underscored the need for protecting diplomatic missions and reiterated its commitment to a peaceful resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

A humanitarian ship with over 2,428 tons of aid departed for Sudan, supported by Qatar and Turkey, reflecting both nations' commitment to urgent assistance amid ongoing conflict and food insecurity.

Following the U.S. capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, Qatar assisted in efforts to confirm his safety, drawing gratitude from Venezuela for promoting dialogue and respecting international law during the crisis.

Qatar condemned Israeli restrictions blocking the reopening of the Rafah crossing into Gaza, emphasizing that humanitarian aid should not be used as political leverage, while ongoing violence undermines ceasefire efforts.

## **10. Africa and The Sahel Region**

### ***Cross-Cutting Developments***

The AES's joint statement on January 8 condemning the U.S. "illegal abduction" of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and military strike positions the alliance as a defender of international norms, drawing parallels to their own anti-imperialist struggles.

### **Mali**

On January 8, 2026, Mali, as part of the AES, joined in condemning the U.S. intervention in Venezuela, labeling it an act of aggression and calling for UN intervention to uphold international law. This stance underscores Mali's alignment with AES partners in advocating for global sovereignty.

Reports from January 7, 2026, highlighted border tensions with Burkina Faso in towns like Djibasso, where Burkinabe locals accused Mali of insufficient cooperation against terrorism. This incident strains AES unity but has prompted discussions for enhanced bilateral security coordination.

### **Burkina Faso**

On January 7, 2026, Burkina Faso authorities announced the thwarting of a destabilization plot, including an alleged assassination attempt on President Ibrahim Traoré, reportedly

funded externally. This event highlights persistent internal threats amid geopolitical tensions. A recap of Sahel events from January 5-9 noted arrests related to this “attempt at destabilization” over the preceding weekend.

As AES chair, Burkina Faso led the January 8, 2026, condemnation of U.S. actions in Venezuela, framing them as aggression and emphasizing global sovereignty. This action reinforces the alliance’s unified diplomatic front.

Local protests in Djibasso on January 7, 2026, accused Mali of lax cooperation on terrorism, potentially challenging AES security coordination but leading to calls for improved talks.

During this week, Burkina Faso’s army conducted operations against JNIM (jihadist) groups using Bayraktar TB2 SİHA drones, with footage released showing active counter-terrorism efforts.

### **Chad**

From January 5-11, 2026, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Chad, with discussions focusing on economic ties and regional stability. This occurred amid a recent foiled attack on the presidential compound, highlighting Chad’s efforts to balance international partnerships.

During this period, Chad expressed interest in joining the AES through delegation visits and bilateral discussions, though no formal accession was confirmed by January 11. The country continues to emphasize counter-terrorism cooperation via the G5 Sahel and MNJTF, including operations against Boko Haram with neighbors like Niger.

Chad’s hosting of over 1.5 million Sudanese refugees prompted calls for international aid to maintain border stability, with UNHCR updates urging global support during this week. Internal security tensions, including post-election measures, influence Chad’s cautious approach to regional alliances.

## **11. North Africa**

### **Morocco**

A U.S. FBI delegation visited Morocco from January 4 to 6 to assess security measures for the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) finals. They inspected arrangements at Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium and focused on enhancing their collaborative security protocols for future events.

Massad Boulos, President Trump's advisor, reaffirmed U.S. support for Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara following the adoption of UN Resolution 2797. He emphasized the need for economic openness from Algeria to improve regional relations and drive progress on the issue.

Morocco is enhancing military ties with Israel, signing a new joint military work plan during a recent meeting in Tel Aviv. The focus is on advanced technologies, including drones and air defense systems, amidst Morocco's broader strategy to modernize its military capabilities.

## **Algeria**

### ***Security Council Meeting on Border Tensions***

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune led a High Security Council meeting on January 8, focusing on national defense and border security amid rising tensions with Morocco and Mali. The discussions highlighted the military's influential role in governance, while political reforms were notably absent. The meeting underscored a security-first approach as Algeria confronts both internal stability and external challenges.

### ***Legislative Action on French Colonization***

Algeria's parliament unanimously passed a law declaring French colonization a "state crime," demanding an official apology and compensation for historical abuses, such as nuclear testing and torture. This move further strains relations with France, especially after France's recognition of Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara in 2024. French officials condemned the law as hostile, reflecting ongoing tensions around the colonial legacy.

## **Libya**

Minister of Planning Mohamed Al-Zidani attended the inaugural Board meeting, outlined Libya's planning priorities and committed to implementing recommendations aligned with the UN SDGs; the meeting emphasized Arab cooperation on development challenges.

The U.S. State Department's travel advisory continues to list Libya as Level 4: "Do Not Travel" because of crime, terrorism, armed conflict, kidnapping and unexploded ordnance; the advisory was reiterated in recent reviews and remains in effect.

The Egyptian MOD reported a meeting with Libyan National Army deputy commander Saddam Haftar covering military cooperation and regional security; the encounter follows continuing security and political coordination between Cairo and eastern Libyan actors.

Discussions and statements in Tripoli/Tobruk continue around the 2019 Turkey–Libya maritime memorandum; pro-Tripoli voices and Turkish officials defend the deal, while eastern Libyan parliamentary figures and regional neighbors (Greece, Egypt) reject its legality and press for renegotiation or multilateral talks. This remains a live political and diplomatic issue.

## 12. Middle East

### Israel

Israeli drone and artillery strike in Gaza (including Khan Younis and Gaza City) killed multiple Palestinians in early January, with local health authorities reporting deaths that parties have characterized as violations of the October ceasefire. Humanitarian conditions in Gaza remain severe given winter conditions and displacement.

Netanyahu told the Security Cabinet about his recent meeting with President Trump; reporting says Trump signaled support for Israeli actions against Hezbollah and stressed the need to disarm the group, a key security priority for Israel.

In a January 5 cabinet meeting Netanyahu publicly expressed support for the Iranian people's "aspirations for freedom," calling the moment potentially decisive for Iran's future.

Netanyahu announced Bulgarian diplomat Nickolay Mladenov as the designated head/administrator for the U.S.-backed Gaza "Peace Board", a new mechanism intended to oversee governance and security arrangements in Gaza, part of a U.S. proposal to stabilize the enclave while pressing for Hamas disarmament.

Israeli air operations hit sites in southern and eastern Lebanon, including reported strikes linked to Hamas operatives; these actions followed ceasefire tensions and coincided with Lebanese army deliberations about Hezbollah's weapons in border areas.

Israeli reports say Netanyahu asked Russian President Vladimir Putin to pass a message to Tehran assuring Israel had no current intention to start a war, a diplomatic effort aimed at de-escalation amid the Iran unrest and wider regional tensions.

Foreign Minister Gideon Saar traveled to Somaliland and announced plans for an Israeli embassy there; Somalia's government criticized the visit and called it interference in its internal affairs. The recognition of Somaliland by Israel has drawn regional backlash.

Israeli naval vessels fired warning shots after an Egyptian ship departed Sinai and entered waters Israel considers restricted near Gaza; the Egyptian vessel turned back and Israeli military sources said Egypt acknowledged responsibility for the incident.

### Turkey

The Foreign Ministry confirmed the meeting in Ankara; no detailed readout was published, but officials framed it as another signal of Türkiye's firm support for the Palestinian cause and defense of UNRWA's humanitarian role.

Erdogan publicly expressed solidarity with Palestinians, announced an offer to send aid through UN mechanisms and sharply criticized Israel's conduct and blockade; Turkish

reporting repeated casualty figures attributed to the Gaza offensive. Israeli authorities reportedly rejected Erdogan's proposed delivery channel.

Ankara intensified mediation and civilian-protection efforts as fighting resumed in Aleppo's Sheikh Maqsood and Achrafieh neighborhoods; Turkish intelligence (MIT) was reported active in facilitating dialogues and evacuations, though operations were complicated by YPG/PKK resistance and subsequent limited Syrian government operations.

Foreign Minister Fidan criticized the YPG's separatist agenda, accused it of coordinating with outside actors (including Israel in his remarks) and called for withdrawal from Aleppo neighborhoods to allow government authority and stability.

Multiple outlets say Turkey is seeking membership in the defense pact between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (signed Sept 2025). Turkish Defense Ministry has not publicly confirmed; if true, membership would be a major shift in regional security alignments.

Defense officials from both countries attended the first formal naval cooperation meeting at the Naval Forces Command Headquarters; this is a concrete step in deepening military ties after recent diplomatic rapprochement.

Indian and regional outlets reported Ankara stepped back from the mediation effort following repeated failed rounds of talks (Turkey/Qatar/Saudi mediation) and disagreements over Pakistan's demands; Turkish, Afghan and Pakistani governments issued few public comments at time of reporting.

Erdogan outlined a legislative agenda touching child protection online, social assistance reforms and implementation of Turkey's "Century of Turkey" programme; he stressed fiscal discipline under the approved budget.

In an interview with Libya Al-Ahrar TV, Admiral Yaycı (the memorandum's architect) said the deal secures roughly 39,000 km<sup>2</sup> of maritime area for Libya/Türkiye cooperation; this claim has prompted pushback from Greece, Egypt and some Libyan figures who continue to dispute the agreement's legality.

## **Iran**

Protests that began over economic grievances have spread to more than 100 cities. Multiple outlets report heavy crackdowns, nationwide internet restrictions and mounting fatalities, reporting ranges from dozens to more than 200 dead depending on the source and time of counting. Verification is difficult because of communication blackouts and differing tallies from hospitals, rights groups and state media.

President Trump publicly warned Iran's leadership against harming demonstrators and made repeated threats of strong action if protesters are attacked; U.S. officials and former

U.S. figures have voiced support for the demonstrators. These statements have intensified Tehran's rhetoric about foreign interference.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has publicly blamed foreign enemies for the unrest, describing elements of the protests as backed by outsiders and calling for a firm response to what he frames as foreign interference.

Chief Justice Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei warned there will be "no leniency" for anyone judged to be helping foreign enemies amid the unrest, signaling tougher legal measures against protesters accused of ties to outsiders.

President Pezeshkian publicly instructed security forces to distinguish between unarmed/peaceful protesters and violent actors and to avoid cracking down on peaceful demonstrators, an official line intended to limit casualties even as hard-liners push for harsher measures.

Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi framed recent threats from the U.S. and Israel as part of a "soft-war" campaign to destabilize Iran and warned that such external pressure would be treated as a direct threat; he emphasized armed forces readiness. (Reporting appears in Iranian state and regional outlets.)

Reza Pahlavi has issued public appeals for widespread strikes, evening gatherings and the reclaiming of streets, urging protesters to expand actions and promising he would return if a revolution succeeds; he explicitly sought U.S. support and praised Trump's warnings.

Reporting indicates the movement lacks a single, unified leadership; that has complicated coordination even as popular unrest spreads and calls for strikes and city-takeovers circulate.

The collapse in the rial's value and sharp economic hardship are cited repeatedly as the immediate cause of the demonstrations; currency collapse, inflation and unemployment are fueling popular anger that has broadened into political demands.

Authorities have increased arrests and security deployments; funerals for killed protesters have often become further flashpoints for demonstrations. Human-rights groups report thousands detained in different provinces.

China, Russia and Iran began a multilateral naval exercise off Cape Town (reported as a BRICS-linked drill), featuring participating vessels from China and Russia alongside Iranian ships. The exercises were presented as maritime safety/anti-piracy training but carry geopolitical signaling value given tensions around Iran.

## **Syria**

Clashes between Syrian government forces and Kurdish SDF/PKK elements in and around Sheikh Maqsoud and adjacent districts renewed in early January. Reports describe civilian deaths (various outlets give differing tolls), closure of major hospitals, suspension

of some airport operations and tens of thousands displaced as fighting spread through Kurdish and government-held neighborhoods. The UN called urgently for de-escalation and protection of civilians and infrastructure.

State media and some international outlets reported negotiated evacuations/withdrawals of SDF elements from parts of Aleppo (Ashrafiyah/Sheikh Maqsoud) under terms that remain contested by Kurdish authorities; movement of fighters and civilians to northern and eastern Syria was reported as part of these arrangements. Verification is uneven amid competing official narratives.

Local authorities have opened temporary shelters and humanitarian corridors while the UN and aid groups warned that winter conditions and infrastructure damage (including hospital suspensions) are sharply worsening civilian suffering.

### **13. Europe**

Britain has characterized the current NATO consultations with European partners concerning Russian and Chinese activities in the Arctic—including potential operations linked to Greenland—as standard and routine diplomatic engagement. Officials stressed that the Arctic is experiencing increased geopolitical competition and reiterated the UK's firm commitment to enhancing NATO's overall deterrence and defense posture in the region.

The British government has launched the "Nightfall" initiative, which involves an open competition to quickly design and produce a new ground-launched ballistic missile specifically tailored for Ukraine. This deep-strike weapon is intended to deliver a 200 kg warhead beyond 500 km, significantly bolstering Ukraine's long-range defense capabilities against Russian forces.

Nordic diplomats and security officials have firmly denied U.S. President Trump's statements alleging the presence of Russian or Chinese naval vessels and submarines near Greenland in recent years. Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen described such claims—particularly those mentioning activity in areas like the Nuuk fjord—as unsupported by NATO intelligence or commercial vessel tracking data.

Oslo's primary international airport temporarily shut down one of its two runways for approximately 20 minutes on Sunday after airport authorities detected a small recreational drone flying in the vicinity. Normal flight operations resumed shortly afterward, according to statements from airport operator Avinor.

Poland has formally summoned the Hungarian ambassador to convey strong disapproval following Hungary's decision to grant asylum to two Polish citizens. This latest diplomatic incident further aggravates already tense bilateral relations, building on Hungary's previous controversial granting of asylum to former Polish deputy justice minister Marcin Romanowski in 2024 amid corruption allegations.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has advocated for renewed European dialogue with Russia to facilitate negotiations aimed at ending the war in Ukraine, echoing recent comments by French President Macron. While she supports the appointment of a dedicated EU envoy to engage directly with President Putin, she believes Russia's rapid reintegration into the G7 format remains premature and confirmed that Italy will not deploy troops to Ukraine for any peacekeeping mission.

The Russian government announced that the United States has released two Russian nationals who had been detained aboard an oil tanker. Moscow stated that the release occurred directly in response to its official request made to Washington authorities.

Senior advisers to U.S. President Donald Trump recently conducted meetings with official representatives from both Denmark and Greenland. According to a Danish government source, these discussions form part of the United States' continuing diplomatic interest in the strategic Arctic territory.

The British Prime Minister held a telephone conversation with U.S. President Trump to outline the United Kingdom's official position concerning Greenland. The call took place against the backdrop of significantly heightened international attention and debate surrounding the future status of the autonomous Danish territory.

European Union officials have convened a special meeting of agriculture ministers in an effort to generate sufficient political support for finalizing the long-delayed EU-Mercosur free trade agreement. The gathering aims to address remaining concerns, particularly from farming communities, and build the necessary consensus for approval.

Denmark's Prime Minister has publicly stated that President Trump is genuinely intent on pursuing some form of U.S. takeover or acquisition of Greenland. The comment underscores the seriousness with which Copenhagen views the repeated American expressions of interest in the strategically important Arctic island.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has firmly declared that the future of Greenland must be decided solely by its own people and legitimate authorities. His statement serves as a clear rejection of any external imposition on the territory's political status or governance arrangements.

Russia launched its powerful nuclear-capable Oreshnik hypersonic missile (for only the second time in the war) against a target in western Ukraine near the Polish border. European allies, including Britain, France, and Germany, condemned the strike as escalatory and an attempt to intimidate support for Ukraine, while EU officials described it as a warning to the West amid ongoing ceasefire talks.

The UK announced 200 million pounds (\$270 million) in funding to upgrade equipment, communications, and counter-drone systems in preparation for potential troop deployment to Ukraine as part of a multinational force for post-ceasefire security guarantees. This

came shortly after Russia's Oreshnik strike and followed Britain's pledge (along with France) to contribute soldiers if a peace agreement is reached.

Leaders from major European powers (including France, Germany, and Nordic countries) and Canada issued joint statements affirming that Greenland's future belongs solely to its people and Denmark, rejecting external imposition. They emphasized collective Arctic security through NATO while offering increased investments in the region in coordination with the US.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio indicated the Trump administration would not back down from pursuing control of Greenland, even as he prepared to meet Danish leaders the following week. This heightened concerns among European allies, who began contingency planning in case of US military action, which could severely damage NATO unity.

Reports detailed Denmark's challenging position in defending Greenland, a territory already moving toward greater autonomy, while maintaining geopolitical relevance in the Arctic. Copenhagen has boosted its Arctic defense spending significantly in response to US pressure, stressing that any US seizure would end NATO as an effective alliance.

On January 6, 2026, French President Emmanuel Macron hosted a key summit in Paris for the "Coalition of the Willing" (around 35 countries, with 27+ leaders attending), including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and, for the first time, U.S. envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. The meeting focused on finalizing robust, multilayered security guarantees for Ukraine to deter future Russian aggression post-ceasefire, with the U.S. explicitly backing binding commitments for the first time.

## **14. The United State**

Maduro and his wife pleaded not guilty in Manhattan federal court to charges including narco-terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering, and conspiracy. Maduro described himself as a "prisoner of war" captured at his Caracas residence. Trump reiterated U.S. intent to "run" Venezuela temporarily for a "safe transition," with U.S. oil firms to refurbish infrastructure and reclaim interests.

**Trump Reiterates Greenland Demands:** Trump threatened to pursue acquisition of Greenland from Denmark "the soft way" if not "the hard way" or "whether they like it or not," citing Arctic security against Russia/China. White House stated "all options" (including military) remain open, though diplomacy is preferred. Denmark's PM warned U.S. action against a NATO ally would destabilize the alliance; joint European statements defended sovereignty. Secretary Rubio planned meetings with Danish/Greenlandic officials.

Trump directed U.S. exit from 66 international organizations, conventions, and treaties deemed contrary to U.S. interests (e.g., IPCC, certain UN bodies, climate/labor/population

funds). This aligned with reducing multilateral commitments and focusing on bilateral, interest-based diplomacy.

Dozens of U.S. military planes (tankers, transports) moved to the Middle East for logistical support and heightened readiness. Iran boosted air defenses with exercises and radar/missile deployments in cities including Tehran, framing it as "national deterrence."

Trump warned of U.S. intervention if Iran violently suppresses demonstrators. Iranian officials threatened U.S. bases as "legitimate targets" and warned of regional destruction. Israel remained on high alert for potential U.S. involvement against Iran.

The Senate (including some GOP members) advanced a resolution requiring congressional notification and limits on further unilateral military actions in Venezuela or similar operations. The administration dismissed it as "fake" and "unconstitutional," with VP JD Vance stating it would not alter foreign policy conduct. This highlighted tensions over executive authority in interventions framed as law enforcement with military support.

Administration rhetoric expanded warnings to Colombia (accusations of cocaine production; suggestions of potential intervention), Mexico (drug trafficking/migration), Cuba (demands for a "deal" or consequences; no more oil/money flows), and Panama (canal control amid crime cooperation).

Trump pushed for a \$1.5 trillion defense budget (50%+ increase), potentially renaming elements to emphasize a "Department of War" posture. This signals preparation for sustained deterrence, interventions, and countering transnational threats across regions.

Trump directed Secretary of State Marco Rubio to lead the Venezuela "overhaul," focusing on restoring oil production, setting up an interim government, and prioritizing recovery over immediate elections.

On January 9, US forces seized a fifth Venezuelan-linked oil tanker, the Olina, in the Caribbean as part of efforts to disrupt illicit oil trade.

Also on January 9, Venezuela's interim government under Delcy Rodríguez initiated exploratory talks to restore diplomatic ties with the US, including a planned delegation to Washington.

President Trump confirmed on January 9 a planned White House meeting next week with Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado to discuss the country's future.

US officials engaged in preliminary discussions on January 10 about potential military action against Iran, including airstrikes on military sites, amid ongoing protests, though no imminent attack was indicated.

On January 11, Trump stated the US military is considering "very strong options" for intervention if Iran suppresses demonstrators violently, while noting Iranian leaders' outreach for negotiations.

## 15. Eurasia

Escalating anti-government protests in Iran: Widespread demonstrations continued across Iran, evolving from economic issues to calls for regime change, with clashes in Tehran and other cities leading to at least 65 deaths and over 2,300 arrests by January 9. Protesters rallied overnight following appeals from the exiled crown prince, amid internet outages and accusations from Supreme Leader Khamenei of U.S. orchestration.

Clashes in Aleppo, Syria, causing new displacements: Syrian government forces and the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) engaged in renewed fighting around Aleppo, leading to civilian displacements and heightened tensions in the region, as the fragile post-Assad dynamics continued to unravel.

Japan protests China's gas drilling in the East China Sea: Japan lodged a formal protest over China's deployment of a mobile gas-drilling vessel near the median line in the East China Sea, highlighting ongoing territorial disputes and unsettled maritime boundaries, with the Japanese Coast Guard issuing navigation warnings.

China imposes dual-use export controls on Japan: China introduced new export controls on dual-use items targeting Japan, which Japan protested as potentially affecting rare earth supplies; China clarified the measures aim at military uses without impacting civilian trade.

South Korea strengthens ties with China: South Korean President Lee Jae-myung's state visit to China laid the foundation for fully restoring bilateral relations, focusing on economic and cultural exchanges after summits with Xi Jinping.

EU approves Mercosur trade deal: After 25 years of negotiations, EU countries approved the trade agreement with the South American Mercosur bloc via qualified majority, despite opposition from France, Poland, Austria, Ireland, and Hungary, potentially reshaping transatlantic trade dynamics.

Deepening freeze in EU-China trade relations: EU-China ties deteriorated further with no prospects for improvement ahead of German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's upcoming visit to China, amid U.S. pressures and ongoing disputes over tariffs and regulations.

Russia launches over 200 drones at Ukraine: Russia escalated its military campaign into 2026 by firing more than 200 drones at Ukrainian targets on January 1-3, prompting President Zelenskyy to condemn the attacks as a continuation of the war, with Europe marking the new year amid heightened security concerns.

India and Pakistan exchange nuclear facilities lists: For the 35th consecutive year, India and Pakistan exchanged lists of nuclear installations on January 1, adhering to a 1988 agreement to prevent attacks on such sites, offering a rare gesture of stability amid ongoing tensions.

China conducts major military drills near Taiwan: China held large-scale "Justice Mission 2025" exercises involving missiles, aircraft, and naval forces simulating a blockade around Taiwan on December 29-30 (spilling into early January reporting), drawing criticism from Taiwan and the U.S. for provocation.

## **16. International and Regional Organizations**

### **United Nation**

Somalia continued its rotating presidency of the UN Security Council for January 2026, placing a sovereignty-sensitive member at the center of Council agenda-setting.

On 5 January, the Security Council held an emergency meeting on a U.S. military intervention in Venezuela, with the Secretary-General calling for adherence to the UN Charter.

On 10 January, the Council scheduled an emergency session for 12 January to address Russia's use of an "Oreshnik" ballistic missile in Ukraine.

Between 5 and 7 January, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations visited Lebanon to assess UNIFIL operations and implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701.

UNSMIL announced the resumption of the governance track of Libya's political dialogue, holding in-person talks in Tripoli following weeks of virtual consultations.

Protests erupted near UNSMIL headquarters in Janzour, with demonstrators accusing the mission of prolonging political deadlock and calling for a clear electoral roadmap and an end to foreign interference.

On 5 January, the UN Human Rights Office warned that Uganda's upcoming presidential election would take place amid widespread repression, intimidation, and the use of excessive force against opposition supporters.

The UN launched the *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026* report on 8 January, projecting global growth of 2.7% and highlighting risks from geopolitical tensions and trade fragmentation.

The General Assembly formally marked the start of 2026 as the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development.

Following a U.S. executive order on 8 January, Washington announced withdrawal from 66 international organizations, prompting the Secretary-General to stress that assessed UN contributions remain a legal obligation.

On 5 January, UN agencies reported escalating humanitarian risks in Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine, and Ethiopia, driven by funding shortages, displacement, and renewed violence.

### **Africa Union**

The Peace and Security Council held its 1324th emergency ministerial session on 6 January to address Israel's 26 December 2025 recognition of Somaliland, placing the issue formally on the AU's continental security agenda.

On 7 January, the AU officially condemned and rejected the recognition, declaring it "null and void" and reaffirming Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity under international law.

The Democratic Republic of Congo formally assumed the rotating chairmanship of the PSC on 5 January, shaping Council priorities during a period of heightened diplomatic tension.

The 9th China–AU Strategic Dialogue convened in Addis Ababa on 8 January, where AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi launched the 2026 China–Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges and discussed zero-tariff trade measures and peace in the Horn of Africa.

A high-level AU–UAE meeting on 6 January reaffirmed cooperation on "Silencing the Guns by 2030" and coordination ahead of the 2026 UN Water Conference.

On 9 January, the AUC Chairperson met Burundi's Permanent Representative to discuss preparations for Burundi's upcoming chairmanship of the African Union.

A formal publication titled "*Somaliland's Case for Recognition*" was released on 10 January, challenging the AU Chairperson's position and accusing the AU of prioritizing political expediency over historical interpretation.

The AUC Chairperson commended the peaceful conduct of Guinea's presidential election on 5 January following the announcement of results on 4 January.

Between 8 and 9 January, the AU announced the deployment of election observation missions to Benin, ahead of elections held on 11 January, and to Uganda, where polls are scheduled for 15 January.

On 5 January, the AU confirmed that the 2026 African Union Summit would begin on 12 January in Addis Ababa with the 51st Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives' Committee, under a theme focused on water and sanitation.

## **Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)**

On 6 January, IGAD aligned with the African Union in rejecting Israel's unilateral recognition of Somaliland, reaffirming Somalia's sovereignty and internationally recognized borders.

IGAD joined regional partners in condemning an Israeli official's visit to Somaliland on 6 January, describing it as a violation of Somalia's territorial integrity.

The Secretariat urged international actors to prioritize dialogue and regional stability, warning against unilateral actions that could exacerbate tensions in the Horn of Africa.

Between 8 and 10 January, a joint AU-COMESA-IGAD Election Observation Mission arrived in Uganda to monitor general elections scheduled for 15 January.

On 8 January, the mission began logistical coordination with the Uganda Electoral Commission as polling materials were dispatched nationwide, with preliminary findings expected on 17 January.

IGAD initiated implementation of its 2026–2030 Strategy, activating the 2026 Work Plan for the Food Systems Resilience Programme to address climate and agricultural vulnerabilities.

Preparations continued for the 72nd Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF 72), scheduled for 26–27 January in Nairobi to release the March–May 2026 seasonal forecast.

## **European Union (EU)**

As of January 2026, shipping companies are required to cover 100% of compliance costs under the EU Emissions Trading System, completing the phase-in that began in previous years.

New rules that entered into force on 8 January expanded the EU ETS to include methane and nitrous oxide emissions from maritime transport.

On 5 January, the European Commission registered a European Citizens' Initiative calling for stricter ethics, transparency, and integrity rules for European political parties.

The official opening ceremony of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU was held on 8 January, outlining cultural and strategic priorities for the term that began on 1 January.

Between 6 and 8 January, the EU publicly aligned with the AU in condemning Israel's recognition of Somaliland, reaffirming support for Somalia's territorial integrity and urging dialogue between Mogadishu and Hargeisa.

Reports published between 7 and 9 January outlined the EU's 2026 "de-risking" trade strategy, highlighting efforts to reduce dependency on China and the United States while navigating internal divisions over the EU–Mercosur agreement.

On 9 January, analysts noted that EU–India trade negotiations are nearing completion, with the scope narrowed to exclude sensitive sectors such as energy and raw materials.

New 2026 projections under the EU Security Action for Europe (SAFE) instrument highlighted the growth of common borrowing mechanisms to finance defense and security investments.

On 9 January, the Commission advanced preparations under the Industrial Accelerator Act to prioritize EU firms in public procurement and introduce domestic content requirements.

The EU confirmed plans to disburse €1 billion to Egypt as President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and EU leaders reaffirmed their strategic partnership.

### **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**

Between 10 and 11 January, an ECOWAS high-level delegation led by Presidents Julius Maada Bio and Bassirou Diomaye Faye held talks in Guinea-Bissau with the ruling military authorities on transition timelines and the release of political detainees.

On 5 January, Guinea's Supreme Court validated General Mamady Doumbouya's presidential election victory, ahead of his inauguration scheduled for 17 January.

ECOWAS observers were deployed to Benin between 10 and 11 January to monitor general elections held on 11 January amid heightened security measures.

On 10 January, the Alliance of Sahel States advanced its independent economic integration agenda by adopting a 2026 coordination framework for strategic goods.

Analysts noted continued diplomatic engagement between ECOWAS members and AES states during the week, aimed at preventing cross-border security miscalculations.

A regional airfare tax reduction policy took effect on 1 January, though reports between 5 and 9 January highlighted implementation challenges for airlines.

ECOWAS reaffirmed its commitment to launching the Eco single currency by 2027, urging member states to meet financial and institutional benchmarks.



# HORN REVIEW

IDEAS CONNECTIONS SYNERGY

Ideas

Connections

Synergy