



# Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

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# Horn Review: Weekly Report

May 04 – May 10, 2026

## 1. Ethiopia

Ethiopia's Ethiopia continued to strengthen South-South and regional partnerships this week as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed welcomed Mozambican President Daniel Francisco Chapo for high-level talks focused on trade, investment, and regional peace. The visit, which included tours of development sites and the National Palace Museum, culminated in new cooperation agreements, underscoring Ethiopia's commitment to African-led integration and mutual prosperity. This diplomatic momentum extended to Djibouti, where PM Abiy attended the inauguration of President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh for a fifth term, reaffirming strategic ties in trade, transport, and connectivity that remain vital for Ethiopia's access to the sea.

Building on this outward engagement, Ethiopia advanced bilateral relations with European and Eurasian partners. Prime Minister Abiy held productive phone talks with Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten to deepen cooperation in trade, investment, and agriculture, highlighting the Netherlands' role as a key European partner. Separately, an Azerbaijani delegation conducted high-level meetings with Ethiopian ministers of Water and Energy and Agriculture, exploring opportunities in renewable energy, sustainable development, agricultural processing, and digital public services. These interactions reflect Addis Ababa's proactive diversification of international partnerships amid global economic shifts.

Domestically, the government emphasized narrative-building and responsible media as pillars of national development. At a consultative forum on "Media Progress for Narrative Building," PM Abiy urged media institutions to prioritize truth-based, in-depth reporting over polarization, leveraging reforms and technologies like AI to foster unity and support Ethiopia's prosperity agenda. This focus on cohesive national storytelling aligns with broader efforts to sustain economic transformation and public confidence during a period of reform.

In the realm of regional security, Ethiopia delivered a firm and measured response to escalating tensions with Sudan. On May 5, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs categorically rejected Sudan's baseless accusations, including claims of Ethiopian involvement in drone strikes, while exposing the Sudanese Armed Forces documented support for TPLF elements, including arms supplies and the use of Sudanese territory as a launchpad for anti-Ethiopian activities. Ethiopia rightly framed these Sudanese claims as driven by external nefarious agendas yet maintained strategic restraint by reaffirming its commitment to the Sudanese people, historic ties, and a civilian-led peace process with no military solution to Sudan's conflict. This calibrated posture, strong on facts and

sovereignty, restrained in tone, showcases diplomatic maturity and prevents adversaries from dragging Ethiopia into unwanted escalation.

This Sudan episode must be understood boldly as part of a wider pattern of hybrid pressure against Ethiopian sovereignty. By hosting and arming TPLF remnants, elements within Sudan are not acting in isolation but appear aligned with broader efforts to destabilize Ethiopia's northern and western frontiers. Ethiopia's response is strategically sound: it flips the narrative, highlights verifiable threats, and positions Addis Ababa as the responsible actor prioritizing regional stability. Such firmness, paired with patience, prevents miscalculation while signaling that provocations will not go unanswered. In a volatile Horn of Africa, this approach protects Ethiopia's core interests without compromising its long-term consolidation goals.

Regional stability faced renewed scrutiny amid escalating tensions in Tigray and cross-border accusations with Sudan. Ethiopia firmly rejected what it called baseless Sudanese allegations, while accusing elements of the Sudanese Armed Forces of supporting TPLF activities and allowing anti-Ethiopian forces to operate from Sudanese territory. In a measured yet resolute response, Addis Ababa reaffirmed its commitment to Sudanese people, historic ties, and a civilian-led peace process, warning against external agendas destabilizing the Horn. This diplomatic firmness seeks to contain spillover while protecting sovereignty.

At the heart of northern Ethiopia's challenges lies a high-stakes post-war renegotiation of power. The TPLF's restoration of its pre-war regional council and election of Debretsion Gebremichael as president directly challenges the Pretoria Agreement and the federally recognized Tigray Interim Administration under Lt. Gen. Tadesse Worede, who branded the move "illegal" and warned of dangerous consequences. TPLF forces even occupied government halls under armed protection for cabinet meetings. Yet this assertion operates under severe constraints: lacking federal recognition, financial control, broad international legitimacy, and sufficient military or popular backing for sustained parallel governance. War fatigue, economic devastation, and societal resistance further limit escalation risks. The federal government, wielding constitutional authority over coercive power, continues strategic patience and gradual consolidation, favoring long-term reassertion of national order over immediate confrontation. While risks of miscalculation persist, the trajectory points to constrain instability rather than viable de facto separation or restored TPLF dominance.

Overall, this week illustrated Ethiopia's dual focus: assertive diplomacy and internal reforms to drive development, paired with firm defense of constitutional integrity amid lingering post-conflict frictions. The government's measured approach signals confidence in its structural advantages while prioritizing stability and integration.

## 2. Sudan

This week, Sudan's conflict entered an increasingly volatile regional phase as battlefield escalation, diplomatic confrontation, humanitarian deterioration, and external rivalries converged into a broader Horn of Africa security crisis. The week was marked by Sudan's accusations against Ethiopia and the UAE over drone operations, intensified fighting along the Blue Nile corridor near the Ethiopian border, renewed international ceasefire pressure, and mounting concern that the war is steadily transforming into a prolonged regionalized conflict with destabilizing implications beyond Sudan itself.

The most consequential development of the week emerged on May 5, when Sudan accused Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates of facilitating drone attacks against strategic infrastructure in Khartoum, including Khartoum International Airport. Sudanese officials alleged that Ethiopian territory had been used as a launch platform for Rapid Support Forces (RSF) drone operations targeting the capital and other strategic facilities. Addis Ababa firmly rejected the allegations and reiterated its longstanding position of non-interference in Sudan's internal conflict. Ethiopian responses emphasized restraint, regional stability, and the importance of diplomatic engagement rather than escalation.

The accusations came amid a rapidly deteriorating regional security environment and reflected growing pressure on Sudan's military leadership following repeated drone strikes against key infrastructure. However, no publicly verified evidence was presented linking Ethiopia directly to the attacks. Regional observers noted that Addis Ababa has consistently avoided overt alignment with either side in Sudan's war despite facing security spillovers along its western frontier. The accusations nonetheless significantly heightened tensions between the two neighboring states and fueled fears of a broader interstate confrontation in an already fragile border region.

The border dimension of the war intensified further after Sudanese army forces reportedly recaptured positions near the Ethiopian frontier following clashes with RSF-aligned groups in the Blue Nile region. Parallel to these developments, the SPLM-N faction allied with the RSF announced the capture of additional strategic towns south of Kurmuk, including Dukan and Keren Keren, consolidating the coalition's presence near Ethiopia's borderlands. The movement claimed continued advances toward Khor Hassan while Sudanese military officials accused external actors of facilitating RSF logistical operations in southeastern Sudan. The Blue Nile front has increasingly evolved into one of the conflict's most geopolitically sensitive theaters due to its proximity to Ethiopia and South Sudan.

The Tigray dimension also resurfaced during the week after the Tigray People's Liberation Front rejected Ethiopian government accusations that Sudanese actors were coordinating with anti-state elements linked to Tigray. Addis Ababa had earlier warned that Sudan was becoming a hub for anti-Ethiopian armed networks operating along the

frontier. The TPLF denied involvement and called for restraint, while warning that escalating rhetoric risked dragging the wider Horn into deeper instability. The exchange underscored Ethiopia's growing security concerns regarding the spillover effects of Sudan's prolonged conflict and the possibility of cross-border militant entanglements.

International concern over the regionalization of Sudan's war deepened throughout the week. Speaking in Italy, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio described Sudan as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises and warned that the conflict had increasingly evolved into a proxy war involving multiple regional actors. Rubio confirmed ongoing U.S. efforts through the Quad mechanism involving the United States, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt to pressure the warring parties toward a humanitarian ceasefire. He stressed the need for safe humanitarian zones while warning against the continued militarization of regional rivalries through Sudanese territory.

International diplomatic engagement around Sudan also intensified at the United Nations. Security Council briefings highlighted concerns over instability in Sudan and Abyei, the expansion of fighting toward border areas, and the mounting humanitarian burden on neighboring countries including South Sudan and Ethiopia. Russia continued emphasizing state sovereignty and opposition to external pressure campaigns, while Sudanese diplomatic outreach expanded through religious and international mediation channels, including consultations with the World Council of Churches regarding peace efforts.

Military rhetoric from both sides hardened considerably during the week. Sudanese army chief and Sovereign Council Chairman Abdel Fattah al-Burhan declared that there would be "no negotiation or peace" with the RSF and vowed to continue what the army calls the "Battle of Dignity" until the rebellion is eliminated. Burhan accused "mercenaries and traitors" of attempting to hijack Sudan and rejected externally imposed political solutions. Simultaneously, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo claimed that RSF manpower had expanded significantly since the war began and stated that the group was prepared for a conflict lasting decades if necessary. These competing narratives reflected the widening gap between battlefield calculations and diplomatic mediation efforts.

Khartoum International Airport officially reopened during the week after temporary suspension caused by drone strikes. Sudanese authorities restored domestic and international airspace operations, and Sudanese airlines resumed flights between Port Sudan and Khartoum. Sudan's Civil Aviation Authority described the reopening as a major step toward restoring national connectivity and operational sovereignty. At the same time, aviation experts estimated that Sudan had already lost more than \$1 billion in aviation-related revenue due to prolonged airspace closure since the outbreak of war in April 2023.

Humanitarian conditions continued deteriorating across multiple regions of Sudan. International organizations warned of worsening famine-driven displacement, particularly

in Darfur and Kordofan, where thousands of civilians continued fleeing violence and food insecurity. Population movement reports documented large-scale displacement in North Darfur and North Kordofan, while aid agencies warned that insecurity continued obstructing humanitarian access.

The health sector suffered additional severe blows during the week. In Dilling, South Kordofan, approximately ten hospitals and health centers were reportedly forced out of service following RSF and SPLM-N attacks involving artillery and drones. Medical groups warned that the city's healthcare system was nearing collapse amid shortages of staff, medicine, and functioning facilities. Sudanese aviation authorities also issued public health warnings over Hantavirus risks as airports reopened to international travel following a WHO alert linked to an outbreak aboard an Atlantic cruise ship.

European engagement with Sudan's humanitarian crisis became more visible as a French parliamentary delegation visited displacement camps in Port Sudan and met survivors of atrocities in Khartoum and Darfur. Delegation members pledged to raise evidence of abuses before French institutions, while Sudanese officials amplified calls for accountability over alleged RSF crimes.

Environmental concerns also emerged after reports linked toxic gold mining waste in Sudan's Red Sea State to camel deaths and broader ecological risks. The issue reflected the growing intersection between conflict economies, weak governance, and environmental degradation in wartime Sudan.

By the end of the week, Sudan's conflict appeared increasingly shaped by five interconnected dynamics: the expansion of drone warfare, the widening regionalization of the conflict, intensifying border sensitivities involving Ethiopia, the entrenchment of rival military coalitions, and the deepening humanitarian catastrophe. Despite accusations directed toward Addis Ababa, Ethiopia largely continued positioning itself publicly as a state seeking regional stability and diplomatic restraint amid a war whose spillover risks increasingly threaten the wider Horn of Africa and Red Sea region.

### **3. Egypt**

This week's dominant thread is Egypt's effort to position itself as an indispensable crisis manager. Abdelatty's contacts with Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Turkey, Germany and the US envoy all centered on stopping escalation, especially around US-Iran talks and Gulf security. The pattern looks less like altruistic mediation than a bid to keep Cairo inside every serious regional file.

The Saudi track shows how Egypt is aligning with Riyadh to shape a common de-escalation line. Prince Faisal bin Farhan's calls with Abdelatty were framed as coordination on regional developments and stability, while another Saudi report linked the

contact to wider economic repercussions. That suggests Cairo wants Saudi backing not just for diplomacy, but for buffering market shocks and reinforcing its Arab centrality.

Doha appears to be the other operational hub. Qatar's prime minister spoke separately with the Saudi and Egyptian foreign ministers about the US-Iran ceasefire, mediation, and restoring talks, and Egypt's own readout echoed support for diplomacy and a sustainable agreement. Cairo benefits because Qatar can transmit messages to Washington and Tehran, while Egypt avoids being sidelined by more agile mediators.

The Turkish call and the Saudi-Russian call widen the frame beyond the Gulf. Anadolu said Fidan and Abdelatty discussed the Iran-US negotiation track, while Saudi Gazette reported Riyadh briefing both Moscow and Cairo on regional security, economic fallout and stability. The strategic logic is clear: Egypt is trying to avoid a rigid camp structure and keep channels open to every heavyweight that can influence oil, shipping, or ceasefire politics.

On the Gulf front, Egypt doubled down on public solidarity with Abu Dhabi. Sisi met President Mohamed bin Zayed in the UAE, condemned Iranian attacks on UAE territory, and backed all Emirati security measures. That posture is not just about principle; it helps reassure wealthy Gulf partners, protects investment relationships, and signals that Cairo will not drift toward any Iran reset that unsettles Gulf capitals.

Sisi's talks with Macron in Alexandria were broader but no less strategic. The two discussed trade, investment, education, transport and regional crises; Sisi also pressed for humanitarian access in Gaza and the second phase of the truce. Egypt is using Paris as a European amplifier for its regional line, while also trying to extract economic and diplomatic value from its role as Gaza's gatekeeper.

Egypt's outreach to Syria and its condemnation of the Bannu bombing show the same pattern in different registers. Shaibani's Cairo visit revived diplomatic ties, but also exposed Egypt's tougher, security-minded approach to refugees and foreign fighters. The Pakistan statement, meanwhile, projects anti-terror credibility. Together, these moves serve a hard-nosed interest: keeping Egypt seen as a stabilizer while limiting spillovers from Syria and South Asia into its own economy and security.

#### **4. Eritrea**

Reuters reported on May 5 that the United States is preparing to lift sanctions on Eritrea and improve ties with Asmara, amid growing geopolitical competition around the Red Sea. The report links the move to Eritrea's increasing strategic importance as instability around the Strait of Hormuz and wider regional tensions elevate the significance of Red Sea routes. Reuters also noted that the move appears partly aimed at discouraging any Ethiopian attempt to secure sea access through force amid renewed tensions between Addis Ababa and Asmara.

In a statement published on May 6, Eritrea's Ministry of Information responded to reports that the United States may soon lift sanctions on the country by reiterating its long-standing position that both UN and U.S. sanctions were unjustified, unlawful, and politically motivated. The statement focused heavily on condemning past Western policy toward Eritrea, particularly under the Obama and Biden administrations, while demanding accountability for what it described as fabricated allegations and unfair coercive measures. Notably, the response offered little indication of policy change, reform, or concessions on Eritrea's part, instead reinforcing Asmara's traditional posture centered on sovereignty, resistance to external pressure, and rejection of criticism. The tone of the statement suggests that any future rapprochement with Washington is likely to face the same structural difficulties that have hindered past engagement efforts.

According to a report published by the UNDP on May 8, Eritrea has continued efforts to strengthen its national statistical and data systems through the Joint Programme on Data for Development (D4D). The report highlighted the completion of the Fourth Round Eritrea Population and Health Survey (EPHS 2025), described as the country's most extensive population and health survey in over a decade, alongside expanded use of digital data collection technologies and progress in national economic statistics. The development is indicative of the broader increase in engagement between Eritrea and parts of the UN system, particularly in technical and development sectors, despite continued international criticism of the Eritrean government's governance record, political repression, and restrictions on civil liberties.

An opinion piece published in the Jerusalem Post on May 10 argued in favor of a reimaged regional framework between Ethiopia and Eritrea centered around Ethiopia's pursuit of Red Sea access. Written from a strongly pro-Ethiopian perspective, the article framed Ethiopia's interest in Assab and maritime access as a strategic and economic necessity rather than an expansionist ambition, while emphasizing the historical interconnectedness between Ethiopians and Eritreans prior to Eritrea's independence. The piece advocated for negotiated arrangements such as shared governance models, economic confederation, or long-term maritime agreements, arguing that the current regional order limits broader economic integration in the Horn of Africa. It also suggested that Western powers should support diplomatic frameworks facilitating Ethiopian access to the Red Sea, portraying the issue as tied to wider international strategic and trade interests.

## **5. Djibouti**

Djibouti's political and diplomatic trajectory reflected a deeper consolidation of President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh's sixth-term administration while simultaneously reinforcing the country's strategic alignment with Ethiopia and its growing importance within Red Sea geopolitics. During International Workers' Day celebrations, President Guelleh

announced the finalization of the National Employment Strategy 2035, a long-term policy centered on the “Djiboutianization” of the workforce in logistics and digital sectors, reflecting the government’s effort to reduce structural dependence on foreign labor while preparing the economy for technological and infrastructural expansion linked to the Red Sea corridor.

Parallel to this, the Ministry of Labor initiated discussions on revising the national minimum wage in response to inflationary pressures and the increasing cost of living in Djibouti City, signaling concern over domestic socio-economic stability amid rapid urban and port-centered economic growth. Administrative reforms also emerged during this period when the Presidency introduced seasonal working-hour adjustments for public institutions to reduce pressure on national energy grids and maintain productivity during the summer season, demonstrating the state’s continued emphasis on centralized administrative management and efficiency.

Diplomatically, the period highlighted Djibouti’s attempt to position itself not merely as a host state for foreign military actors but as an indispensable regional mediator and logistical anchor in the Horn of Africa. Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf reaffirmed Djibouti’s role as the primary logistical hub for the European Union’s Operation ASPIDES, linking the country directly to European maritime security architecture in the Red Sea at a time of heightened instability around the Bab el-Mandeb corridor. Simultaneously, Djibouti deepened development cooperation with the European Union through a new agreement on water and energy resilience, particularly focused on expanding desalination capacity in the capital.

As foreign delegations arrived ahead of President Guelleh’s inauguration, high-level representatives from China, France, and the United States reportedly engaged Djiboutian authorities on the future renewal of long-term military base agreements, underscoring how Djibouti continues to leverage its geography to balance competing global powers without fully aligning against any side. The inauguration week also revealed the expansion of Djibouti’s Gulf and African diplomatic outreach, with Oman seeking enhanced cooperation on port management and free trade zone investment, while Egypt intensified engagement through infrastructure and food security projects. These developments reflected a broader regional competition over influence in Red Sea logistics and maritime infrastructure, particularly as Gulf and North African actors increasingly view Djibouti as a strategic gateway into the Horn of Africa and East African trade systems.

The centerpiece of the week was President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh’s official swearing-in ceremony for a sixth term at the People’s Palace under an extensive security operation involving the National Police and Republican Guard, as more than thirty heads of state and senior dignitaries attended the event. Beyond the symbolism of regime continuity, the

inauguration carried major geopolitical significance for Ethiopia and the wider Horn of Africa. On the sidelines of the ceremony, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud held informal discussions mediated by Djibouti regarding tensions surrounding Red Sea access and regional security arrangements. From an Ethiopian foreign policy perspective, Djibouti's role during these talks was especially significant because Addis Ababa continues to view Djibouti as its most reliable strategic maritime partner despite Ethiopia's broader search for diversified sea access.

The relationship between Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and president Guelleh increasingly reflects a mutually dependent political understanding: Ethiopia relies on Djibouti for the majority of its trade and maritime connectivity, while Djibouti's economy remains structurally tied to Ethiopian transit commerce and railway logistics. This interdependence has transformed the Addis Ababa–Djibouti axis into one of the central pillars of political and economic stability in the Horn of Africa. Consequently, Djibouti's mediation efforts between Ethiopia and Somalia were not merely diplomatic gestures but part of a broader strategy to preserve regional equilibrium while protecting the continuity of trade corridors and Red Sea stability that are vital to both governments.

On the security front, Djibouti continued to present itself as a frontline security actor within regional counterterrorism frameworks and migration governance initiatives. Following the inauguration, IGAD launched a Regional Migration Fund project along the Djibouti-Ethiopia border aimed at stabilizing the Tog-Wajale corridor through improved livestock infrastructure and enhanced security for cross-border traders, reinforcing the growing linkage between economic integration and regional stabilization efforts in the Horn.

Djiboutian officials also reaffirmed their long-standing military commitment to Somalia under the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), particularly after the deployment of the 13th "Hiil-Walaal" Battalion to the Hiraan region earlier in the year. With the UN Security Council having extended the AUSSOM mandate through the end of 2026, Djibouti confirmed that approximately 1,500 to 1,800 troops would remain engaged in supporting the Somali National Army against al-Shabaab. This commitment aligns closely with Ethiopia's own security outlook, as both Addis Ababa and Djibouti continue to view instability in Somalia not as an isolated conflict but as a direct threat to the economic corridors, border systems, and political order of the wider Horn of Africa.

## 6. South Sudan

South Sudan remained under mounting diplomatic, humanitarian, and security pressure throughout the week, as regional actors and international institutions warned that the country was entering an increasingly fragile phase. The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate sharply, with the International Committee of the Red Cross warning that needs across the country are rising amid conflict, displacement, disease outbreaks, and economic hardship. Humanitarian access constraints also persisted across several regions, with aid agencies reporting attacks on humanitarian personnel, logistical disruptions, and restricted access routes that are complicating relief operations. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs noted that insecurity and bureaucratic impediments continue to obstruct assistance delivery in parts of Upper Nile, Jonglei, and Unity states. At the same time, regional truck drivers resumed cargo movement into South Sudan after negotiations with authorities ended a prolonged blockade that had disrupted supply chains and worsened shortages inside the country.

International concern over South Sudan's political trajectory intensified further at the United Nations Security Council. Multiple diplomatic statements from China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and other member states stressed the importance of preserving the 2018 peace agreement and avoiding renewed large-scale conflict. China emphasized stability and dialogue, while France and the United Kingdom warned against political fragmentation and escalating tensions. South Sudan's representative defended Juba's efforts to stabilize the country while calling for continued support to UNISFA operations in Abyei. Discussions at the Security Council also focused heavily on the deteriorating security environment in Abyei and along the Sudan-South Sudan borderlands, where spillover effects from Sudan's civil war are increasingly visible. Chinese Special Envoy Guang Cong warned that instability in Sudan and South Sudan remains deeply interconnected and risks undermining regional security across the Horn of Africa.

European diplomats also warned that South Sudan has reached what the European Union described as a "precarious moment," amid political uncertainty, economic stress, and growing insecurity. International actors increasingly fear that delays in implementing key provisions of the peace agreement, combined with rising regional tensions, could reverse fragile gains made since the 2018 settlement.

Despite these pressures, Juba also moved to project an image of state consolidation and economic normalization. Authorities promoted infrastructure and modernization efforts surrounding Juba International Airport as part of broader attempts to present South Sudan as open for investment and regional connectivity. This reflects an emerging strategic calculation within Juba that long-term stability will increasingly depend on economic

integration with neighboring states rather than prolonged militarization and factional competition.

This logic is also increasingly visible in South Sudan's evolving regional posture, particularly regarding Ethiopia and the wider Nile Basin geopolitical landscape. Reports that South Sudan ordered the closure of an alleged Egyptian-linked military facility near Pagak in Upper Nile State drew significant regional attention during the week. Although the claims remain politically sensitive and not fully verified through official state channels, the broader geopolitical implications are substantial. The Pagak corridor sits at the strategic intersection of South Sudan, Sudan, and Ethiopia, near waterways connected to the Blue Nile system and within proximity of the broader Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam security environment.

Historically, South Sudan attempted to balance relations between Ethiopia and Egypt, two states with fundamentally different strategic visions regarding Nile governance and regional security. Ethiopia has long maintained deep historical, military, and political ties with South Sudan's liberation movements and continues to play a stabilizing role through regional diplomacy and peacekeeping arrangements around Abyei. Egypt, meanwhile, expanded its influence in South Sudan following independence through infrastructure cooperation, diplomatic engagement, and security partnerships, partly shaped by broader Nile Basin competition surrounding the GERD.

The reported closure of the Pagak facility therefore signals more than a localized security adjustment. It suggests that Juba may be recalibrating its strategic orientation toward a more Ethiopia-aligned regional posture. This shift comes at a moment when Ethiopia has consolidated the operational reality of the GERD while simultaneously expanding regional economic integration projects linking Gambella, Pagak, and South Sudan's oil infrastructure. Addis Ababa increasingly views regional stability and connectivity, rather than proxy competition, as the foundation for durable influence in South Sudan.

South Sudan's earlier accession to the Cooperative Framework Agreement further reinforced this trajectory by placing Juba closer to upstream Nile Basin states seeking alternative regional water governance arrangements beyond the older Egypt-centered framework. Within this context, maintaining a foreign military presence near Ethiopia's western approaches would have carried significant geopolitical sensitivities and risked transforming South Sudan into a frontline arena within broader Nile rivalries.

The reported closure also reflects a wider regional trend across the Horn of Africa, where states are increasingly demonstrating greater resistance toward open-ended foreign military entrenchment and externalized security competition. Rather than serving as passive arenas for proxy rivalries, regional governments are showing growing interest in sovereign balancing strategies centered on infrastructure connectivity, regional diplomacy, and localized security arrangements. For South Sudan, limiting potentially

destabilizing foreign military activity near its borders may therefore represent both a sovereignty calculation and a broader effort to avoid deeper entanglement in escalating Nile Basin geopolitical competition.

At the same time, South Sudan continues to face severe vulnerability from developments inside neighboring Sudan. Fighting in Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and Abyei continues to generate refugee inflows, arms movements, and instability along porous border zones. International actors increasingly warn that without coordinated regional security arrangements involving Ethiopia, South Sudan, and eventually a postwar Sudan, the Upper Nile corridor risks becoming one of the Horn of Africa's most strategically volatile spaces.

## **7. Somalia and Somaliland**

### **Somalia**

This period centered on the expiration of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's term on May 15. The opposition Somali Future Council comprising former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and elements aligned with Puntland and Jubaland formally rejected any extension of the government's tenure beyond constitutional limits warning of an impending constitutional crisis. On May 6 the opposition cautiously welcomed President Mohamud's invitation to high level talks scheduled for May 10 while setting strict preconditions including the cessation of unilateral electoral preparations and a commitment to genuine inclusive dialogue.

In a press conference on May 10 opposition leaders reiterated their refusal to recognize any post May 15 leadership continuity and stated they had consulted extensively with traditional elders, civil society and international partners including the United States, United Kingdom, European Union, Turkey, and the United Nations. Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre addressed the nation on May 7 citing credible security threats linked to opposition calls for mass protests and urging all parties to offer solutions at the May 10 dialogue rather than escalate tensions. He emphasized that inflammatory political messaging was undermining public trust and Mogadishu's hard-won stability.

Separately former ruling party secretary Abdirahman Odowa a longtime ally of President Mohamud appeared at an opposition gathering following his resignation signalling further fragmentation within the president's political base. Education Minister Farah Abdulkadir stated on May 5 that the federal government could remain in office for up to two additional years a position the opposition immediately condemned as unconstitutional.

Mogadishu remained on high alert as the opposition called for major anti-government protests on May 10 citing forced evictions, widespread home demolitions and public frustration with the federal administration. On May 8 the federal government pre-

emptively replaced troops and commanders at key security points across the capital particularly in the northern districts of Karan and Heliwa with units deemed more loyal to the current administration amid concerns that some forces might defect to the opposition.

On May 7 heavy fighting erupted in Mogadishu after rival factions within Somali security forces clashed over forced eviction orders scoring growing fragmentation. Meanwhile on May 9 Somali authorities detained and physically assaulted three journalists in Mogadishu before releasing those hours later in what media organizations condemned as a crackdown on press freedom ahead of the protests. On the morning of May 10 as opposition supporters began to gather two Turkish F-16 fighter jets conducted a flyover of Mogadishu, a visible show of support for the federal government by a key international partner.

Opposition leaders reportedly dispersed across multiple districts of the capital to avoid mass arrest and to coordinate protest logistics. The European Union and other international actors called for calm and inclusive political dialogue warning of severe risks of instability following the May 15 mandate deadline.

On May 4 U.S. Africa Command in coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia conducted an airstrike against ISIS-Somalia in the vicinity of the Golis Mountains approximately 75 kilometers southeast of Bossaso in Puntland. The strike was part of ongoing efforts to degrade the group's operational capabilities in the region.

In maritime security developments Somali pirates abandoned a hijacked Emirati dhow, Fahad-4, at sea after failing to use the vessel as a mother ship for further attacks. The vessel carrying a cargo of lemons had been seized in late April by an 11-person pirate gang after departing from Mogadishu. At the time of reporting the fate of the dhow's crew remained unclear according to security sources in Puntland.

Diplomatic activity intensified during the reporting period. On May 6 Somalia's Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Abdisalam Ali met with the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Somalia, H.E. Mohamed Salah Hassan Keshtah in Mogadishu. The discussions reviewed expanding bilateral cooperation in diplomacy, regional security, education and strategic coordination reflecting a deepening partnership between the two nations.

On May 5 the Foreign Minister received H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Ibraahim Yuusuf of Djibouti on a courtesy farewell visit marking the end of his tenure in Somalia. The Minister commended Ambassador Yuusuf's contributions to strengthening Somalia-Djibouti relations and regional cooperation.

Additionally, the Somali opposition publicly acknowledged having consulted with the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Turkey, and the United Nations ahead of the May 10 protests and dialogue. Turkey's visible military demonstration via the F-16 flyover scored Ankara's active role in supporting the federal government.

International partners continued to urge restraint and a negotiated political resolution ahead of the May 15 term expiration.

## **Somaliland**

During the reporting period concerns intensified regarding Somaliland's pattern of electoral mandate extensions. An analysis published on May 4, 2026 criticized the region's repeated delays to polls including a recent 27-month extension approved by the House of Elders (Guurti) in April 2026. The analysis warned that normalizing such unconstitutional extensions risks undermining Somaliland's democratic reputation and could erode public trust ahead of the planned 2026 parliamentary and local elections. No official response from the Somaliland government to these criticisms was recorded during the period.

Reports dated May 6 indicated that the United Arab Emirates is actively encouraging additional countries to recognize Somaliland including Eswatini, Argentina, the Dominican Republic and Zambia. The Federal Government of Somalia has reportedly viewed this diplomatic push as a challenge to its territorial integrity claims.

On May 7 and 8 a high-level business dialogue took place in Addis Ababa between Somaliland and Israeli officials. The Somaliland delegation was led by Minister of Trade and Tourism Abdirahman Hassan Nur and included Central Bank Governor Abdinasiir Ahmed Hirsi, Insurance Agency Director General Abdisalan Mohamed Mahmoud and members of the Somaliland business community chaired by Chamber of Commerce Chairman Jamaal Aydiid Ibrahim. The Israeli side included business representatives, Israel's Deputy Ambassador to Ethiopia and Israel's envoy to Somaliland, Michael Lotem who joined remotely. Discussions focused on long term cooperation in agriculture, energy, technology, infrastructure, financial services and healthcare. Somaliland declared itself ready to welcome any investors from Israel.

In parallel, prominent British politician and businessman Lord Michael Ashcroft formally endorsed a U.S.-led recognition drive spearheaded by Senator Ted Cruz. During an official visit to Hargeisa culminating on May 7–8 Lord Ashcroft praised Somaliland's democratic credentials and strategic importance. This endorsement is viewed as a boost to Somaliland's sovereignty bid in Western policy circles.

Sweden supported upgrades to the Somaliland-Ethiopia trade corridor during the reporting period. Swedish officials participated in a ceremony for the reconstruction of the Tog-Wajaale border bridge, located on the busy Berbera Corridor. The project aims to boost cross border trade and enhance regional connectivity between Somaliland and Ethiopia. No further details on funding amounts or completion timelines were released.

## 8. Yemen

Yemen's Southern Transitional Council (STC) announced on May 6 that it would rebrand itself as the "Arab South Transitional Council," framing the move as an affirmation of the Arab identity of its separatist political project in southern Yemen. The announcement came during a large rally in Aden marking the ninth anniversary of the group's founding, where supporters called for self-determination and independence for southern Yemen. In a speech, STC leader Aidarous al-Zubaidi reiterated the group's commitment to pursuing its objectives through political dialogue while rejecting any settlement that does not reflect what it described as the will of the southern population. The development also comes amid continued internal tensions within the STC following divisions earlier this year, when several senior figures reportedly announced the dissolution of the council before supporters mobilized in its defense.

Rising fuel prices in government-controlled areas of Yemen, including Mukalla and Aden, have driven sharp increases in transport fares and broader cost pressures on households. The Yemen Petroleum Company attributed the hikes—reported at around 24 percent for petrol and diesel—to regional instability, including disruptions linked to Red Sea and Gulf shipping routes, higher insurance costs, and wider energy market volatility. Economists cited in local reporting warn that because Yemen relies heavily on imported refined fuel, the increases are likely to transmit quickly into food and goods prices, further straining an already fragile economy. While authorities have framed the adjustments as temporary and tied to external conditions, residents and transport operators describe worsening affordability, with many commuters cutting back on travel or shifting to informal alternatives such as hitchhiking.

Yemeni government soldiers are reportedly facing repeated delays in salary payments amid broader fiscal strain linked to the ongoing war and currency depreciation. According to figures cited in reporting, monthly wages range from roughly \$38 to \$116, with purchasing power further eroded by instability in the Yemeni rial. The government, which has struggled to maintain regular payrolls across its institutions, attributes the arrears to financial constraints, liquidity shortages, and disruptions in revenue collection caused by the conflict. The delays come as the state continues its military campaign against the Houthis while also managing fragmented security institutions and competing armed formations, some of which are said to receive more consistent and higher pay. Analysts cited in the report suggest that irregular payments risk undermining discipline within the regular army and encouraging defections toward better-funded units, while also reducing local economic circulation in government-held cities where soldiers' salaries remain a key source of household income.

## 9. Kenya

Kenya had a politically important week. Most of the attention was on regional diplomacy, trade, energy, and Kenya's attempt to present itself as one of Africa's key diplomatic centers. The week showed a country trying to expand its influence outside its borders, while still dealing with political pressure at home.

One of the major events was President William Ruto's visit to Tanzania. Kenya and Tanzania signed agreements in areas such as energy, agriculture, rail development, maritime cooperation, legal cooperation, and standards harmonisation. The two countries also agreed to work on removing trade barriers by June 30, 2026. This matters because Kenya and Tanzania are two of the strongest economies in East Africa. When their relationship is stable, trade and regional cooperation become easier. When there is tension, it affects businesses, borders, ports, and transport routes across the region.

Ruto's visit also had a political message. Kenya and Tanzania have often competed for regional influence, especially in trade, logistics, ports, and tourism. By speaking about partnership instead of rivalry, Ruto was trying to show that the two countries can work together rather than weaken each other through competition. Still, the rivalry has not disappeared. It is now being managed through diplomacy.

Energy was another major issue during the week. Ruto supported the idea of an oil refinery in Tanga, Tanzania, but reports also suggested that Mombasa, Kenya, could be considered for a major refinery project linked to Aliko Dangote. This is politically important because East Africa depends heavily on imported fuel. A large refinery in either Kenya or Tanzania would shift the region's energy balance. If Mombasa is chosen, Kenya becomes stronger as an energy and logistics hub. If Tanga is chosen, Tanzania gains more influence.

This issue also matters to the wider region, including Ethiopia. East African countries are connected through trade, electricity, transport corridors, ports, and security interests. Even when Ethiopia is not directly part of a Kenya Tanzania agreement, decisions made in Nairobi, Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, or Tanga can still affect regional movement, pricing, and long-term economic strategy.

Another important development was French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Nairobi. France has been trying to rebuild its influence in Africa after losing ground in parts of West Africa and the Sahel. Kenya gives France a useful partner because it is influential in East Africa, has a strong diplomatic profile, and is not part of France's old colonial sphere. For Kenya, Macron's visit helped strengthen Nairobi's image as a serious diplomatic capital.

Kenya and France signed several agreements in areas such as transport, port logistics, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, nuclear energy, agriculture, wind energy, and climate

services. These agreements are not only economic. They show how foreign powers are competing for influence through infrastructure, technology, energy, and development partnerships. Kenya is trying to benefit from these relationships while avoiding dependence on one side.

During the same week, Nairobi also hosted several African leaders ahead of the Africa Forward Summit. Ruto met leaders from Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the African Development Bank. Kenya also announced plans to open an embassy in Côte d'Ivoire. This shows that Kenya is trying to expand its diplomatic reach beyond East Africa and build stronger ties with West Africa. It also supports Kenya's larger ambition of becoming a bridge between different parts of the continent.

Kenya also gained attention through Monica Juma's move to senior United Nations roles. Her appointment was important because it gave Kenya more visibility in global security and diplomatic institutions. At the same time, her departure raised questions about continuity in Kenya's own national security leadership, especially at a time when the region is dealing with terrorism threats, political instability, and cross border security concerns.

However, the week was not only positive for Kenya. Domestic politics remained a serious challenge. Reports about political tension and fears of political violence before the 2027 elections created a different picture from the one Kenya was presenting internationally. Opposition figures argued that Kenya should not promote itself as a democratic success story while concerns about rights, political freedom, and justice remain unresolved.

This created the main contradiction of the week. Internationally, Kenya looked confident and ambitious. It hosted global leaders, signed major agreements, strengthened ties with Tanzania, and expanded its continental diplomacy. Domestically, however, political pressure and concerns about democratic stability showed that Kenya still has serious internal challenges.

In conclusion, Kenya had a strong geopolitical week. The country improved relations with Tanzania, deepened ties with France, expanded its African diplomacy, and became more visible in regional energy politics. But Kenya's rise as a diplomatic hub will depend on more than foreign visits and signed agreements. It will also depend on whether the country can maintain internal stability, protect democratic credibility, and manage political competition without violence. For the wider East African region, including Ethiopia, Kenya's direction matters because its choices affect trade, energy, security, and regional balance.

## **10. The Gulf Countries**

### **Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia navigated this volatile week through a masterclass in restrained, multi-vector diplomacy, positioning itself as a critical buffer against a wider regional war. In the wake of the UAE attacks and US-Iran clashes, the Kingdom immediately championed de-escalation, backing Pakistani-led mediation and explicitly denying the United States the use of its airspace or bases for operations in the Strait of Hormuz. Saudi officials privately maintained that military intervention would only worsen the crisis, opting instead to double down on a policy of high-level negotiation.

Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan spearheaded this diplomatic offensive, conducting a rare and pivotal call with his Iranian counterpart, Seyed Abbas Araghchi, to stress the necessity of regional coordination. This outreach extended to Moscow, where conversations with Sergey Lavrov focused on the economic stakes of the Hormuz situation, as well as to counterparts in Egypt and Sweden. In Riyadh, the focus shifted to economic resilience as Saudi and Japanese ministers established a joint task force on energy security to ensure stable crude oil supplies amidst the instability.

The week concluded with close coordination between Prince Faisal and Qatar's Prime Minister, aligning their respective ceasefire efforts to form a unified front. Ultimately, the crisis revealed a sophisticated division of labor among the Gulf states: while Qatar provided frontline mediation and the UAE displayed sovereign resilience, Saudi Arabia utilized its diplomatic weight to contain the conflict. By engaging everyone from Tehran to Tokyo, the Kingdom successfully pivoted a potential military flashpoint toward a more inclusive, stable diplomatic framework.

### **United Arab Emirates**

The United Arab Emirates confronted a direct and violent escalation this week, which shaped a dual-focused agenda of national defense and intensive international diplomacy. In the early hours of Monday, the country came under a large-scale attack when it intercepted 15 missiles and four drones launched from Iran, marking the first such strikes since the April 8 ceasefire. The attacks caused a major fire at the crucial Fujairah Oil Industry Zone and injured three Indian nationals after a drone struck a civilian site. The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the strikes as an "unacceptable act of aggression" and a "direct threat to the UAE's security, stability and territorial integrity," asserting its "full and legitimate right" to respond.

President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ) received a wave of solidarity from global and regional leaders. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen extended her "full solidarity," calling the attacks a "clear violation of sovereignty and international law". MBZ received calls of condemnation and support from Qatar's Emir,

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and the King of Bahrain. The Emirati leader then hosted Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Abu Dhabi, who affirmed Egypt's full solidarity with the UAE against the "Iranian terrorist attacks". In a parallel move to shore up relations with a critical non-NATO ally, UAE Vice President Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Istanbul.

The crisis spurred a flurry of strategic engagement on UAE soil. The "Make it in the Emirates 2026" industrial forum in Abu Dhabi became the stage for the signing of two landmark defense agreements. A historic pact was inked between the Tawazun Council and Lockheed Martin to establish an advanced microelectronics design and assembly facility in the UAE, a move to localize critical defense technologies and position the country in the global semiconductor value chain. In a parallel deal, Tawazun signed an MoU with South Korea's LIG D&A to establish a global defense manufacturing hub in the Emirates, strengthening its sovereign capabilities across research, development, and supply chain integration.

Alongside this, Abu Dhabi hosted a high-level India-France-UAE trilateral meeting, chaired by Minister of State for International Cooperation Reem Al Hashimy. The meeting formalized a roadmap for cooperation in AI, space, nuclear energy, and semiconductors. In a separate bilateral, Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met with Al Hashimy to review the comprehensive strategic partnership and discuss the tense regional situation, with India reiterating its support for peaceful dialogue.

## **Qatar**

Qatar's diplomatic engagements over the past week have placed it at the very center of international efforts to resolve the US-Iran crisis. The activity of Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani has been particularly intensive, marked by high-stakes travel and shuttle diplomacy.

The week began with Sheikh Mohammed holding a phone call with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan. The discussion focused on regional developments and the ongoing, deadlocked negotiations between the United States and Iran. In a show of solidarity with a fellow Gulf nation, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, held a phone call with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. During this call, the Emir expressed Qatar's "strong condemnation of the Iranian attacks targeting civilian sites and facilities" and reaffirmed Qatar's full solidarity with the Emirates.

Sheikh Mohammed then reinforced this message through a critical bilateral visit to the UAE. He co-chaired the seventh session of the UAE-Qatar Joint Higher Committee with his counterpart, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in Abu Dhabi. The meeting was a powerful demonstration of Gulf unity against external threats, as Sheikh Abdullah noted the exceptional circumstances caused by "Iran's criminal attacks" and stressed that

strengthening coordination between the two nations is "no longer an option, but an imperative necessity". The session produced several economic and strategic agreements to deepen bilateral ties.

Concurrently, Sheikh Mohammed engaged in vital consultations with fellow mediators. He held a phone call with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, where he reaffirmed Qatar's support for Pakistan's mediation efforts and thanked Islamabad for its role in seeking a peaceful resolution. He also spoke directly with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan to discuss the ceasefire and coordinate efforts to contain tensions and uphold regional security.

The second half of the week saw Qatari diplomacy pivot sharply toward direct engagement with the United States. Sheikh Mohammed traveled to Washington, D.C., for a crucial closed-door meeting with US Vice President JD Vance at the White House. The discussion covered strategic cooperation and the Pakistani-led mediation efforts. In a significant statement, Sheikh Mohammed stressed the necessity for "all parties to respond to the ongoing mediation efforts in a manner that opens the door to addressing the roots of the crisis through peaceful means and dialogue". Signifying cautious optimism, he noted a "high possibility of reaching a diplomatic solution".

In a dramatic last-minute diplomatic maneuver, instead of returning directly to Doha, Sheikh Mohammed altered his itinerary to fly to Florida. There, he joined a pivotal meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and White House Envoy Steve Witkoff, underscoring Qatar's role as an "especially effective" channel with Tehran. The meeting concentrated on finalizing a memorandum of understanding to end the war. During this trip, he also had a separate meeting with Secretary Rubio to discuss "US support for Qatar's defense" and joint coordination on regional stability. A phone call with Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, where they discussed the latest ceasefire developments, rounded off this intense period of diplomacy.

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

### **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

The DRC just navigated one of its most pivotal weeks in recent history, balancing a landmark US-brokered peace deal with Rwanda against sharpening internal political friction.

Under the "Washington Accords," brokered by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Rwanda and the DRC agreed to a framework aimed at ending decades of conflict in the eastern provinces. The deal mandates the withdrawal of Rwandan troops and establishes joint operations against the FDLR rebel group. Beyond security, it launches a Regional

Economic Integration Framework and secures US access to the DRC's critical mineral reserves.

However, the domestic reaction has been polarized. Opposition leader Martin Fayulu slammed the agreement, accusing President Félix Tshisekedi of using diplomacy to entrench his own power. Adding to the tension, Tshisekedi suggested that the 2028 elections might be delayed if the conflict persists, stating his primary mission is to secure peace through diplomacy before his term ends.

As the Senate begins the ratification process for the Washington Agreements, the government is also working a separate diplomatic track with Uganda. High-stakes meetings in Kampala focused on integrating security, trade, and infrastructure. Meanwhile, in Goma, MONUSCO reached the next generation, organizing student visits to explain its peacebuilding role amid the shifting political landscape.

## **Mali**

Mali's diplomatic and security landscape has been defined by the fallout from the April 25–26 coordinated attacks, which the government described as a failed attempt to "decapitate" the country's leadership. The violence, which claimed the life of Defense Minister Sadio Camara, has triggered a hardline response from Bamako.

Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop has officially ruled out any dialogue with the perpetrators, specifically targeting the Al-Qaeda-affiliated JNIM and the Tuareg-led Azawad Liberation Front (FLA). He emphasized that the state's focus is now purely on a military and judicial offensive, with the military tribunal already spearheading an investigation into the security breaches. In the wake of the assaults, security has been visibly tightened nationwide, with a particular focus on the capital and diplomatic corridors.

This crisis has also strained Mali's international partnerships. While Bamako has moved to deepen military ties with Turkey securing new pledges for training and logistics its relationship with Russia is under intense scrutiny. Reports suggest that Russian forces were alerted to the impending April attacks three days in advance but failed to intervene, a revelation that has dented confidence in the reliability of the Africa Corps. As regional analysts point out, the unprecedented coordination between separatist and jihadist forces suggests that a purely military solution is no longer viable, elevating Mali's instability into a global conflict risk

## **Burkina Faso**

Burkina Faso has further intensified its break from Western influence while simultaneously positioning its domestic governance as a new blueprint for regional security.

The military junta recently escalated its diplomatic standoff with France by expelling three French diplomats accused of "subversive activities," a charge Paris has officially denied. This move follows a series of assertive internal policies, including the suspension of political parties and the indefinite postponement of elections, which effectively cement Captain Ibrahim Traoré's leadership for the foreseeable future.

In a notable shift toward regional knowledge-sharing, a high-level Somali security delegation, led by Internal Security Minister General Abdullahi Sheikh Ismail, visited Ouagadougou to study the "Burkinabè Model." The Somali officials explored Burkina Faso's integrated approach to security, governance, and national development, suggesting that these reforms could serve as a viable framework for Somalia's own institutional restructuring. This outreach signals Ouagadougou's ambition to export its revolutionary governance style as a credible alternative to traditional Western-backed models.

Despite these political maneuvers, the country's financial landscape remains precarious. S&P Global Ratings recently affirmed Burkina Faso's 'CCC+/C' credit ratings with a stable outlook. While the rating acknowledges the country's economic resilience, it also underscores significant internal vulnerabilities, particularly following a coup attempt earlier this year.

## **Niger**

Niger's military government has sharply escalated its campaign against press freedom, further signaling its break from Western influence and its strategic pivot away from France.

On May 9, authorities enforced an immediate suspension of nine prominent French media organizations, including AFP, France 24, RFI, TV5 Monde, and Jeune Afrique. The National Communication Observatory (ONC) justified the blackout by claiming these outlets aired content that could "seriously endanger public order" and "undermine the morale" of the security forces. This move expands a growing regional crackdown on independent journalism within the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), where Reporters Without Borders (RSF) report that at least six journalists currently remain in detention on state security charges.

The international response has been one of swift condemnation, with RSF labeling the decision "abusive." Within the region, the media ban is viewed as another symptom of a "major geopolitical fracture." Analysts point to Nigeria's recent foreign policy shifts as a factor that inadvertently pushed Niger and its AES allies Mali and Burkina Faso further from the ECOWAS bloc. Despite the tension, ECOWAS parliamentary leaders met in Abuja on May 9, issuing a call for collective diplomatic action to bring the three Sahelian nations back into the regional fold.

## **Chad**

The week began with a devastating Boko Haram assault on the Barka Tolorom Island military base. The attack claimed the lives of 23 Chadian soldiers, including two generals, and left dozens more wounded. In the immediate aftermath, President Mahamat Idriss Déby launched a massive military counteroffensive designed to dismantle the insurgent group's operational capacity. By May 7, the nation entered three days of official mourning, followed shortly by the imposition of a 20-day state of emergency across Lake Province to stabilize the region.

Amidst the military escalation, Déby also addressed a separate wave of intercommunal violence in eastern Chad, warning against "internal and external manipulation" aimed at destabilizing the country. This prompted a high-level regional response on May 8, as defense ministers from the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) gathered in Chad. During the summit, Nigeria reaffirmed its total commitment to collective security and the restoration of peace across the Lake Chad Basin.

In a surprising diplomatic pivot, the Transitional Military Council transitioned from a hardline "no-negotiation" stance to inviting armed opposition groups into a "frank and sincere dialogue." This signals a new, dual-track approach: using decisive military force against terrorists while pursuing political outreach to domestic rebels to prevent a broader state collapse.

## **Equatorial Guinea**

The US government statement included Equatorial Guinea among the countries engaged in interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding efforts to counter the spread of radical Islamic terrorism. However, internal pressure persisted, with reports highlighting continued military threats, hunger, and persecution on the island of Annobón, drawing fresh alarms from the diaspora.

President Obiang embarked on a key visit to Zimbabwe from May 9–10, reciprocating President Emmerson Mnangagwa's 2023 trip. The two nations were set to sign their inaugural Joint Permanent Commission on Cooperation (JPCC), focusing on investment, transport, agriculture, mining, fisheries, culture, tourism, and energy. Officials from both sides called for deeper cooperation, including Zimbabwe's endorsement of Equatorial Guinea's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Preparations were also underway for President Obiang's state visit to China later this month, underscoring Malabo's strategy of diversifying international partnerships.

## 12. North Africa

### Algeria

Algeria spent the week widening its strategic hedge through Türkiye. Tebboune's May 6–8 visit produced the first Türkiye-Algeria High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council meeting and multiple agreements covering transport, telecoms, industry, agriculture, disaster management, media, and investment promotion. The real aim is leverage: Algiers wants diversified partners, more trade channels, and a less Europe-dependent foreign policy.

The France track was less about reconciliation than damage control. Paris has sent Ambassador Stéphane Romatet back to Algiers after a 13-month absence, framing it as a return to “effective dialogue” and linking the reset to the Setif remembrance ceremonies. Yet the deeper dispute over Western Sahara, migration, and diplomatic reciprocity remains unresolved, so this looks like a tactical thaw rather than a real breakthrough.

Energy remains the most revealing file. Sonatrach signed a contract worth more than \$1 billion to expand the Hassi Bir Rekaiz field, with Petrojet, Arkad, and PTTEP involved; the new unit is meant to lift processing capacity to about 31,500 barrels per day, with broader output targets far higher later. Algeria is pursuing growth but also exposing its dependence on foreign engineering and capital to sustain hydrocarbons.

The Sahrawi Press Service report on SPLA strikes in Smara should be treated carefully because it is a partisan battlefield claim, not independent confirmation. Still, it matters politically: Algeria's long-standing backing of Polisario keeps Western Sahara central to its regional posture and preserves pressure on Morocco. That strategy gives Algiers leverage, but it also helps keep one of North Africa's most destabilizing disputes alive.

### Libya

Tripoli's “Sovereignty Forum” rejected any international mandate, branding externally designed solutions illegitimate and warning against fragile fixes that deepen division. The rhetoric taps real frustration with UN-led processes, but it also serves domestic actors that benefit from stalemate: sovereignty language can mobilize support while dodging compromise on elections, security-sector control, and unified institutions.

EU support for press freedom on World Press Freedom Day sounded principled, but in Libya it also works as low-cost leverage. Brussels can praise independent journalism and “good governance” without committing to harder tools that might shift the balance of power. The message matters because media freedom remains tied to accountability, yet the EU's influence will stay largely symbolic unless it is paired with real protection and enforcement.

The Washington meeting with the USGS shows Tripoli trying to reframe Libya as minerals play, not only an oil state. That is sensible in theory, but the immediate benefit is political as much as economic: the GNU wants technical partnerships, investment talk, and a diversification narrative. The hard question is whether any of these can move beyond survey diplomacy into bankable projects in a fragmented state.

China's new COSCO link to Benghazi is the clearest economic signal in the batch. It shortens routes, reduces intermediaries, and helps eastern Libya market itself as a logistics hub, but it also deepens dependence on outside capital and shipping networks while Libya's institutions remain split. Beijing gains access and influence; Benghazi gains visibility, yet the real test is whether the route supports broad-based reconstruction or only elite commercial interests.

Libya's condemnation of the Chad attack fits a familiar border-security script. By calling for regional coordination against terrorism, Tripoli projects responsibility across the Sahel-Sahara belt and seeks to avoid spillovers from a volatile south. The statement is also self-interested: Libya wants recognition as a security stakeholder, even though its own fragmented institutions still limit how much it can actually deliver.

## **Moroccan**

Qatar's condemnation of the Smara attack is politically more important than it looks. By explicitly backing Morocco's "sovereign rights in the Moroccan Sahara," Doha is signaling alignment with Rabat on Western Sahara, not just opposing violence. That gives Morocco another Arab partner to cite internationally, but it is also a diplomatic instrument: the point is to strengthen Morocco's claim, not resolve the conflict.

The missing U.S. soldiers story shows why Morocco remains so valuable to Washington. Two soldiers disappeared on May 2 near Cap Draa during the African Lion exercise, and the U.S. kept a contingent in Morocco as the search expanded across more than 4,600 square miles with Moroccan, French and other help. Morocco gains prestige as a dependable security hub, but the episode also exposes how tightly its image is tied to foreign military activity.

The citizenship petition to parliament is less transformative than symbolic, but it is strategically revealing. It asks Morocco to grant nationality to descendants of Moroccan Jews and to protect Jewish communities, while critics inside the community say existing rules already allow citizenship and the petition mainly simplifies procedure. The deeper aim appears to be soft power: Morocco is courting diaspora networks and Israel-linked identity ties without paying the cost of a major policy shift.

## 13. Middle East

### Iran-Israel conflict

On May 4, the U.S. and Iran traded fresh blows around the Strait of Hormuz as President Donald Trump launched “Project Freedom” to escort tankers through the chokepoint. Reuters said missile and drone attacks, a blaze at a UAE oil zone, and reports of ships being hit followed, showing how quickly the fragile truce was fraying.

Iran then said it had forced a U.S. warship to turn back from the strait, but U.S. Central Command quickly denied that any missile strike hit a navy ship. The contradictory claims deepened the confusion over what happened at sea, even as both sides kept insisting they controlled the narrative in the Gulf.

The spillover reached the Gulf states on May 4 when the UAE said its air defenses intercepted three missiles and a fourth fell into the sea, while drones and fire at an oil zone disrupted flights. Reuters reported that Abu Dhabi blamed attacks originating from Iran, though Tehran denied targeting the UAE and reserved the right to respond.

Maritime pressure escalated further on May 8, when U.S. Central Command said American forces struck two empty Iranian-flagged oil tankers that were trying to violate the blockade, after disabling a third vessel two days earlier. The action showed Washington still enforcing control over Gulf shipping even as trade routes remained only partially open.

France added a European layer to the crisis by sending the Charles de Gaulle carrier group toward the Red Sea. Reuters said the ship crossed the Suez Canal on May 6 as part of planning for a possible Hormuz mission, suggesting allies were weighing a broader security role rather than leaving the escort effort to Washington alone.

Washington and Gulf Arab partners also took the confrontation to the United Nations. Reuters reported that a draft Security Council resolution condemned Iran’s obstruction of freedom of navigation in Hormuz and demanded it halt attacks and clear mines, but a revised text still looked likely to face Russian and Chinese vetoes.

Pakistan remained the crucial intermediary as U.S. and Iranian channels kept moving in parallel. Reuters said the latest peace effort was aimed at a temporary memorandum of understanding to halt the war and reopen traffic through Hormuz, while broader disputes, including Iran’s nuclear program, were left for later talks.

Iran’s formal reply to the U.S. proposal sharpened the diplomatic contest rather than ending it. Reuters reported that Tehran, through Pakistan, wanted hostilities to stop first and framed the talks around ending the war on all fronts. Donald Trump’s immediate rejection of the response signaled that the negotiation track remained deeply fragile.

Tehran's proposal also linked the Gulf conflict to Lebanon. Reuters said Iran emphasized ending the war "especially" in Lebanon and demanded sanctions relief, an end to the naval blockade, and Iranian control of Hormuz under certain conditions. That showed how Tehran was trying to turn the crisis into a broader regional bargain.

Lebanon remained the most visible non-Gulf front. On May 6, Israel struck Beirut's southern suburbs for the first time since the ceasefire with Hezbollah, saying it had targeted a commander of the group's Radwan force. Reuters said the hit in Dahiyeh marked a serious breach of the truce and raised the risk of wider escalation.

Netanyahu then hardened Israel's message, saying there was "no immunity" for militants after the Beirut strike. Reuters reported that his warning followed the killing of a Hezbollah commander and came as U.S.-hosted Lebanese-Israeli contacts continued in Washington, showing how military pressure and diplomacy were unfolding side by side.

UN reporting underlined how intense the Lebanese front had become. Reuters and U.N. briefings relayed that May 4 saw the highest number of exchanges of fire since the ceasefire, with hundreds of Israeli launches and retaliatory fire from Hezbollah and other armed groups. The data suggested the truce was becoming increasingly difficult to sustain.

Tehran also signaled that it was preparing for a longer confrontation. Reuters reported that Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei briefed the commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya headquarters and issued "new guiding measures," while the commander said Iran would answer any American-Israeli mistake swiftly, severely, and decisively.

Sanctions pressure widened on May 7 when the U.S. blacklisted Iraq's deputy oil minister and Iran-aligned militia leaders. Reuters said Ali Maarij Al-Bahadly was accused of helping divert oil for Iran's benefit, a move that freezes U.S. assets and targets the regional financial networks that help sustain Tehran and its allies.

The economic damage spread to Asia as China's April crude imports fell 20 percent year on year to their lowest level since July 2022. Reuters linked the drop to the Hormuz closure and said refined-fuel exports also hit a decade low, showing how a Gulf shipping crisis was already reshaping faraway energy markets.

Diplomacy widened beyond the conflict zone when Rubio met Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican. Reuters said the two discussed peace and stronger bilateral ties, with the Vatican stressing the need to work tirelessly for peace. The meeting was also politically charged because it came amid President Trump's attacks on the pontiff.

The week closed with a hard domestic-security signal from Tehran. Reuters reported that Iran executed Erfan Shakourzadeh, a 29-year-old aerospace engineering graduate, for allegedly spying for the CIA and Mossad, while rights groups said he had been forced

into a confession. The execution reflected a sharper internal crackdown as the regional war continued.

## Turkey

During the week of 4–11 May 2026, Turkey’s political agenda was dominated by renewed debate over the Kurdish peace process, regional diplomacy, and mounting economic pressure. The most consequential development came when nationalist leader Devlet Bahçeli unexpectedly proposed granting jailed PKK founder Abdullah Öcalan an official role in ongoing reconciliation efforts. Bahçeli argued that formalizing Öcalan’s position could help institutionalize negotiations and support what the government calls a “terror-free Turkey.” The proposal marked a striking departure from the traditionally hardline nationalist stance toward Kurdish movements and immediately triggered debate across the political spectrum.

The Kurdish issue remained central throughout the week as conflicting narratives emerged over whether the peace process was actually progressing. While President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan insisted that talks were continuing in a “positive atmosphere,” senior PKK figure Murat Karayılan claimed the process had stalled because Ankara had failed to implement promised political and legal reforms. Kurdish political actors argued that the PKK had already taken symbolic steps toward disarmament, while Turkish authorities maintained that any reforms must follow verified demobilization. The disagreement highlighted persistent mistrust between the state and Kurdish representatives despite the reduced level of violence since 2025.

The tense domestic political environment was further reinforced by judicial pressure on opposition figures, particularly Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, whose new espionage-related trial was scheduled to begin on 11 May. The proceedings added to broader concerns among opposition parties and international observers about the increasing use of courts against political challengers ahead of future electoral contests. The case also underscored the increasingly polarized atmosphere in Turkish politics, where legal disputes, security concerns, and electoral calculations continue to overlap.

Economic concerns meanwhile remained acute after official figures showed annual inflation climbing to 32.37 percent in April, exceeding market expectations and intensifying public frustration over living costs. Rising food, housing, and energy prices were blamed for the increase, while Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek attributed the surge largely to geopolitical instability and higher commodity prices. Independent economists disputed the official statistics, arguing that actual inflation remained significantly higher. The renewed rise complicated the government’s efforts to present economic stabilization policies as successful and renewed pressure on the central bank to maintain tight monetary policy.

Alongside these political and economic pressures, Turkey was shaken by the aftermath of the deadly school shooting in Kahramanmaraş, where the death toll rose to ten after two injured victims died in hospital. The attack, carried out by a 14-year-old student, became one of the deadliest school shootings in modern Turkish history and triggered nationwide debate over school security, firearm access, and youth mental health. Government officials pledged tighter safety measures while opposition voices demanded accountability regarding how the weapon was obtained and whether warning signs had been overlooked.

Foreign policy developments reflected Turkey's continued effort to position itself as a key regional diplomatic actor. President Erdoğan held a high-level phone call with Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, reaffirming Ankara's "full support" for the sovereignty and security of the UAE amid continuing tensions linked to the Iran–US confrontation in the Gulf. The conversation focused on security cooperation, regional stability, and economic coordination, reinforcing the strategic rapprochement between Ankara and Abu Dhabi that has accelerated since 2021. Turkey also emphasized the need for dialogue and de-escalation across the region rather than direct confrontation.

Turkey's Defense Ministry reinforced that diplomatic positioning by publicly urging both Iran and the United States to transform the existing ceasefire into a permanent arrangement. Ankara framed itself as a supporter of negotiation and regional stabilization while simultaneously criticizing Israeli military actions in Gaza and calling for humanitarian corridors. The statement illustrated Turkey's balancing strategy: maintaining relations with NATO allies while preserving communication channels with regional actors such as Iran and Gulf states.

Turkey also intensified security and defense cooperation with European partners during the week. Belgian Foreign Minister Paul Prevoet described Turkey as "indispensable" to Europe's security architecture, particularly within NATO, emphasizing Ankara's strategic role in defense and counterterrorism cooperation. At the same time, Turkish Defense Minister Yaşar Güler met British defense officials during the SAHA defense expo in Istanbul as both countries advanced a broader UK–Turkey strategic partnership focused on trade, defense cooperation, and regional security. The developments reflected growing European recognition of Turkey's military and geopolitical importance despite ongoing disagreements over democracy and regional policy.

Economic diplomacy with Gulf partners also advanced significantly as UAE officials announced that non-oil trade with Turkey had reached \$45.2 billion in 2025, more than tripling compared with previous years under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement signed in 2023. Officials from both countries described the growth as evidence of a rapidly expanding strategic relationship covering trade, energy, logistics, and investment. The announcement reinforced Turkey's broader strategy of rebuilding

relations with Gulf states to attract investment and strengthen external economic partnerships during a period of domestic financial strain.

At the same time, tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean resurfaced after reports emerged that Ankara was preparing legislation to formalize Turkish maritime jurisdiction claims in disputed areas of the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean. Greek and Cypriot officials reportedly viewed the proposed legislation as a potentially provocative step that could intensify regional disputes over offshore energy resources and maritime boundaries. Turkish nationalist leaders defended the initiative as necessary to protect Turkish and Turkish Cypriot rights, signaling that maritime sovereignty and energy security will remain central pillars of Ankara's geopolitical strategy in the months ahead.

## Syria

Syria's most consequential story this week was diplomatic re-entry. Damascus used the opening of the EU's high-level dialogue to present itself as a partner in stabilization rather than a pariah, while Brussels signaled a cautious shift toward engagement, sanctions review, and support for the transition. The broader message is that Syria is being pulled back into diplomacy, but only on terms tied to security, governance, and reconstruction.

That opening was reinforced by Syria's return to London, where reopening the embassy marked another step in ending the country's long isolation. The move matters beyond symbolism because it reflects a wider pattern: key European capitals are beginning to treat Damascus as a functioning interlocutor again, even while keeping pressure on the new authorities to prove they can manage the transition responsibly.

The regional dimension of Syria's week was shaped by its immediate neighborhood, especially Lebanon. Hostage and prisoner issues, border security, and economic coordination all came to the fore as Damascus hosted Lebanon's prime minister and discussed committees on transport, energy, and missing persons. The relationship is becoming less about slogans and more about hard-state management, with both sides trying to reduce friction along a deeply sensitive frontier.

At the same time, the wider Levant remained volatile, and that directly affects Syria's room for maneuver. Israeli strikes in Lebanon kept regional escalation alive and made any calm arrangement harder to imagine. For Syria, this matter because its own diplomacy is now unfolding inside a tense security environment, where border stability, militia movement, and external pressure remain tightly linked.

Inside Syria, the leadership pushed an image of tighter political control through a cabinet reshuffle and related personnel changes. The message was not just administrative efficiency but a bid to show that the post-Assad order is consolidating authority and cleaning up networks of patronage. Even so, the real test is whether these changes

translate into better governance, especially in provinces where state credibility has long been weak.

Justice and accountability also became more visible, with the public trial of a former Assad-era security official standing out as one of the week's clearest political signals. The case carries weight because it connects the current transition to the original uprising in Daraa, turning a symbolic courtroom event into part of a larger struggle over how the new Syria defines responsibility, memory, and legitimacy.

Security pressures beyond Syria's borders continued to shape the national picture, especially along the Jordanian frontier. Reports of anti-smuggling operations and strikes on suspected trafficking sites showed how drugs, weapons, and local armed actors still blur together in the south. That border problem is not separate from Syrian politics; it is one of the main arenas where state weakness, militia power, and regional security concerns collide.

Finally, the government kept trying to show that it can manage the state in practical terms, not just politically. Currency redenomination and a high rate of old-note exchange were presented as signs of institutional capacity and monetary discipline. It is a technical issue, but in Syria's case even technical reforms carry political meaning, because basic economic management is part of the new leadership's effort to prove that transition can deliver order.

## **14. European Countries**

President Emmanuel Macron undertook a high-profile East Africa tour, beginning in Egypt and arriving in Kenya on May 10. He co-hosted the inaugural Africa Forward Summit ("Africa–France Partnerships for Innovation and Growth") with Kenyan President William Ruto in Nairobi on May 11–12. This marked the first such summit hosted in an English-speaking African country, involving leaders from around 30–32 African nations, business executives, and innovators.

The summit emphasized equal partnerships centered on economic cooperation, innovation, trade, investment, green energy, AI, sustainable agriculture, infrastructure, and climate action. It aimed to shift from past postcolonial dynamics toward balanced, people-focused ties amid France's reduced influence in the Sahel. Bilateral deals with Kenya on trade, investment, and defense cooperation were highlighted, alongside broader peace and security discussions. Macron was scheduled to continue to Ethiopia for African Union-related talks.

On Middle East maritime security, France and the UK continued leading multinational efforts regarding the Strait of Hormuz. On May 11, while in Nairobi, Macron clarified that France never envisaged a naval deployment but supported a strictly defensive, coordinated security mission involving up to 50 countries and organizations to restore

freedom of navigation, ideally in coordination with Iran once conditions allow. A defense ministers' meeting advanced these plans.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer attended the European Political Community (EPC) Summit in Yerevan, Armenia, on May 3–4. He held bilateral meetings with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and participated in discussions with leaders from France, Italy, Poland, Canada, Norway, Finland, NATO, and EU institutions. Key topics included bolstering support for Ukraine, including UK participation in the EU's €78 billion loan scheme for Ukrainian recovery and defense, and calls to strengthen the European pillar within NATO amid uncertainties over US commitments.

Starmer also met French President Emmanuel Macron and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte on the sidelines, reinforcing bilateral and alliance coordination on security issues.

On May 10, amid domestic political pressures following poor local election results, Starmer delivered a speech framing the rebuilding of UK-Europe relations as a core mission of his government. He pledged to place Britain “at the heart of Europe” to enhance economic, trade, and defense cooperation without rejoining the single market or restoring free movement.

Coming to Germany, Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl presented a six-point plan for EU reform on May 7, calling for qualified majority voting in foreign and security policy to overcome unanimity blockages and make the bloc more decisive. He also visited Greece on May 5 to expand naval and defense cooperation, including joint procurement and a stronger European defense industry

Regarding the Middle East, Germany continued pre-positioning for a potential post-ceasefire role in the Strait of Hormuz. The minesweeper Fulda headed to the Mediterranean in early May as a preparatory step, with Berlin signaling readiness to contribute mine-clearing capabilities under a clear international mandate (preferably UN-backed) and Bundestag approval, but only after sustained stability. Germany emphasized a strictly defensive, non-combat approach alongside UK-France efforts

Broader EU activities included Europe Day celebrations (May 9) in Addis Ababa, highlighting long-standing partnerships with Ethiopia and the African Union. EU member states continued routine capacity-building efforts, such as staffing calls for the EUCAP Somalia mission.

## 15. Global Powers

The President Donald Trump criticized Iran for delaying negotiations while indirect talks through Pakistani mediators continued without breakthrough. The U.S. maintained its naval pressure campaign and maritime-security operations around the Strait of Hormuz amid growing energy-market concerns.

Marco Rubio stated that the United States had achieved the objectives of its Iran operation and announced that the focus had shifted toward securing maritime transit through the Strait of Hormuz under “Project Freedom.” Rubio also pushed for a U.N.-backed resolution demanding Iran halt attacks and mine activity in Hormuz, warning that the crisis had become a test of the international system’s ability to protect global trade routes.

The Trump administration officially released the new U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy for 2026, which significantly expanded U.S. security priorities by linking counterterrorism, cartel violence, border security, counternarcotics, and Iranian-linked threats into one integrated framework. The strategy emphasized offensive disruption, sanctions, maritime interdictions, and hemispheric security priorities.

Diplomatic talks between Washington and Tehran remained stalled as Iran continued questioning U.S. intentions under ongoing maritime pressure. Reuters reported that negotiations were increasingly centered around a phased framework involving a ceasefire, stabilization of Hormuz, and broader follow-on negotiations.

The United States Central Command confirmed retaliatory strikes against Iranian military infrastructure after Iranian missiles, drones, and small boats targeted U.S. naval assets near the Strait of Hormuz. Iran accused Washington of violating the ceasefire through attacks on ships and coastal areas. The escalation reinforced concerns that the ceasefire was deteriorating despite ongoing mediation efforts.

Tensions in the Gulf remained high as the U.S. continued enforcing maritime restrictions and awaiting Iran’s response to a proposed framework agreement. Oil markets remained volatile amid fears of prolonged disruption in Hormuz, while diplomatic efforts by Pakistan and other mediators continued behind the scenes.

On May 10, Trump publicly rejected Iran’s response to the U.S. proposal as “unacceptable,” signaling continued deadlock. Iran demanded sanctions relief, reopening of Hormuz, and removal of U.S. naval pressure, while Washington maintained that maritime security and regional stabilization remained central conditions for any broader settlement. The crisis continued affecting global shipping, energy markets, and regional security calculations across the Middle East and beyond

On the other hand, Austria expelled three Russian diplomats over alleged espionage activities connected to suspected satellite-signal interception infrastructure operating from

Russian diplomatic properties in Vienna. The move reflected continuing deterioration in Russia-Europe relations and growing European counterintelligence pressure against Russian networks operating under diplomatic cover.

On May 6 and 7, as preparations intensified for Russia's Victory Day celebrations, Moscow significantly increased security measures amid fears of Ukrainian drone attacks and sabotage operations. Russian authorities warned that any disruption of the May 9 commemorations could trigger severe retaliation against Kyiv, while air-defense systems around Moscow were reinforced.

Russian authorities stated that air defenses intercepted dozens of Ukrainian drones targeting Moscow ahead of Victory Day events. The Kremlin framed the attacks as evidence of an ongoing "terrorist threat" from Ukraine and used the incident to justify heightened domestic security measures and a scaled-back military parade.

Despite Moscow's temporary ceasefire announcement linked to Victory Day commemorations, Russia and Ukraine exchanged accusations of continued attacks across multiple frontlines. Russian officials claimed hundreds of Ukrainian drones had been intercepted, while Ukraine reported ongoing Russian drone strikes and battlefield assaults. The developments reinforced the fragility of ceasefire diplomacy and the persistence of military escalation despite mediation attempts.

On May 9, Russia held its most scaled-back Victory Day parade in years under heavy security conditions, reflecting the growing impact of the Ukraine war on Russia's domestic security environment and military posture.

President Vladimir Putin stated that he believed the Ukraine war was "coming to an end," while also signaling openness to future negotiations on a broader European security arrangement. However, Kremlin officials simultaneously maintained hardline conditions regarding Ukrainian territorial concessions, highlighting the continuing gap between public diplomatic signaling and Russia's operational objectives on the ground.

China and the Philippines exchanged accusations over activities near Sandy Cay in the South China Sea after Beijing accused Philippine personnel of illegally landing on the disputed reef, while Manila said Chinese vessels were conducting unlawful research operations in its waters. The incident reflected continuing maritime tensions between China and a U.S.-aligned regional actor.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio called a proposed U.N. resolution on the Strait of Hormuz a major test for the international system and urged China and Russia not to veto efforts aimed at protecting maritime trade routes and freedom of navigation. The development highlighted growing strategic friction between Washington and Beijing over Gulf security and international maritime governance.

Japan conducted a live anti-ship missile exercise alongside U.S., Australian, and Philippine forces in the northern Philippines facing the South China Sea. China criticized the exercises and accused Tokyo of using regional security cooperation to justify overseas deployment of offensive military systems, underscoring Beijing’s growing concern over Indo-Pacific military alignment against it.

Ahead of the planned Trump-Xi summit, Taiwanese intelligence officials warned that China could attempt diplomatic maneuvering on the Taiwan issue during negotiations with Washington. The issue highlighted Taiwan’s continued concern that broader U.S.-China bargaining could affect regional security balances in the Indo-Pacific.

The U.S. State Department criticized delays in Taiwan’s defense spending and described them as a “concession” to China after Taiwan’s parliament approved only part of a major defense package. The development came amid increasing Chinese military pressure around Taiwan and reflected Washington’s growing concern over deterrence credibility in the Taiwan Strait.

The Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Workneh Gebeyehu, held discussions with U.S. Senior Adviser Massad Boulos focusing on regional security dynamics in the Horn of Africa. The talks covered the evolving security environment, conflict spillovers, and coordination between IGAD and the United States on stability, counterterrorism cooperation, and regional diplomatic engagement. The meeting reflects increased U.S. diplomatic attention to IGAD-managed conflict zones, particularly Somalia and wider Red Sea–Horn of Africa security corridors.

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

### **United Nation**

Humanitarian Crisis in Somalia UN agencies highlighted the worsening drought and hunger crisis in Somalia and the broader Horn. As of early May, drought drove significant displacement, with warnings of millions facing crisis-level hunger. Reports on May 7–8 underscored risks of catastrophe, animal losses, and funding shortfalls amid conflict and climate shocks.

US Decision on Eritrea Sanctions Reported May 5–6. The US planned to lift sanctions on Eritrea, linked to Red Sea strategic interests, alternative trade corridors, and signaling amid Horn tensions. This has implications for regional dynamics, AU/IGAD mediation, and stability involving Eritrea-Ethiopia relations.

Routine UN coordination with AU/IGAD on Somalia (AUSSOM transitions) and humanitarian efforts persisted.

## **Africa Union**

The AU maintained focus on continental partnerships and Horn stability, with indirect relevance through broader engagements. The Africa Forward Summit (May 11–12, 2026, Nairobi), co-hosted by Kenya and France, brought together African Heads of State including from Horn countries, the AU, business leaders, and partners. Discussions centered on innovation, growth, trade, investment, green energy, technology and reformed partnerships key for economic resilience in the Horn of Africa. AU engagement underscored continental priorities like Agenda 2063 in the context of Horn stability and development.

Ongoing AU support for Somalia via AUSSOM and diplomatic efforts on regional tensions (e.g., Ethiopia-Eritrea dynamics) continued without major new public statements.

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

IGAD's activities this week emphasized youth empowerment, climate resilience, and regional partnerships amid ongoing challenges in the Horn of Africa. On May 5, 2026, IGAD launched the Regional Youth Coalition on Climate and Climate-Resilient Agri-food Systems in Nairobi, Kenya. The initiative aims to engage thousands of young climate innovators across IGAD member states to shape climate policy, drive resilient agriculture, and strengthen food systems. It focuses on youth-led solutions in areas such as climate literacy, sustainable energy, food security, and innovation, supported by partners like the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). Applications for the coalition remain open until May 22, 2026.

This builds on IGAD's broader climate agenda, with ongoing calls for applications and capacity-building to foster regional collaboration on adaptation and resilience in the face of recurrent droughts and floods.

Follow-up on Partnerships and Digital Transformation On or around May 7, 2026, IGAD highlighted media's role in Eastern Africa's digital transformation, urging coverage that centers people and supports regional integration. Earlier coordination May 3 with the EU on peace, resilience, migration and Red Sea issues continued to inform activities into the week.

## **European Union (EU)**

€75 million approval noted in late April.. EU-IGAD coordination from early May (May 3 meeting in Djibouti) carried forward, focusing on enhanced collaboration in peace, security, resilience, and the Red Sea region.

The Africa Forward Summit provided a platform for EU/France-Africa economic and innovation ties relevant to Horn countries.



# **HORN** **REVIEW**

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