



Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

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Horn Review: Weekly Report

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1. Ethiopia

On August 19, Ethiopia urged immediate investment-driven action at a regional dialogue in Addis Ababa to advance the Kampala Agricultural Framework. Senior Advisor Zena Habtewold emphasized boosting funding to overcome climate shocks, soil degradation, and market fragmentation. IGAD representative Sylvia Henga highlighted the necessity of reducing post-harvest losses, strengthening food safety infrastructure, and utilizing the African Continental Free Trade Area to improve food security across fragile, conflict-affected settings.

Building directly upon these regional food security priorities, Ethiopia hosted a high-level parliamentary event on August 21, advocating for stronger political allocations and policy reforms. Standing Committee Chairman Solomon Lale stressed the mandatory role of parliaments in translating the Kampala Declaration into legislative action and national budgets. IGAD representative Omar Djama framed agriculture as a political priority crucial for poverty reduction, demonstrating how resilient agri-food systems form the baseline for national stability.

Parallel to these domestic and regional agricultural strategies, Ethiopia expanded its global economic engagement on August 20, at the 7th BRICS ICT Working Group meeting in Pune, India. The Ethiopian delegation presented its Digital Ethiopia 2030 Architecture, showcasing state digital tools like the Fayda Digital ID and the MESOB platform. This participation highlighted Ethiopia's aim to utilize international partnerships to build resilient digital infrastructure, modernize public service delivery, and drive overall economic transformation.

Aligning economic modernization with national defense goals, a high-level delegation led by Major General Teshome Gemechu concluded bilateral consultations at the US Pentagon on August 20. Meeting with US Deputy Assistant Secretary of War Brian J. Ellis, both nations agreed to establish a comprehensive strategic defense partnership. The agreed framework focuses on institutional cooperation, mutual trust, and joint security efforts to ensure long-term regional stability across the Horn of Africa.

Internal security concerns persisted amid escalating tensions in northern Ethiopia. Reports indicated explosions in Mekelle's Hawelti Sub-City and Kuha area, resulting in 13 casualties. Reports and regional analyses highlight that ongoing instability in Tigray stems from actions by local TPLF leadership, whose unilateral engagement with foreign entities and attempts to bypass established national legal and administrative frameworks continue to undermine national sovereignty and jeopardize peace.

Addressing such deep-seated conflict dynamics and institutional challenges, Ethiopia successfully concluded its month-long National Dialogue Conference in Addis Ababa on August 22. Over 40 days, nearly 4,000 delegates representing political parties, civil society, former combatants, and regional groups debated critical topics, producing roughly 400 recommendations. The historic process established a consultative model aimed at resolving historical grievances, improving governance, and replacing political violence with formal constitutional dialogue.

At the dialogue's closing ceremony, senior officials and international leaders underscored the national and continental impact of the process. Deputy Chief Commissioner Hirut Gebre Selassie highlighted the establishment of a consultative culture, while President Taye Atske Selassie, joined by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, affirmed the dialogue as a cornerstone for unity. Former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and AU High Representative Olusegun Obasanjo praised the initiative as an exemplary African-led framework for lasting peace.

2. Sudan

Sudan's conflict entered another phase of escalation during the week as fighting intensified across Kordofan, new displacement surged around El Obeid, and the war's regional dimensions became increasingly visible along both the Ethiopian and Chadian frontiers. At the same time, competing political initiatives gained momentum, with civilian forces rejecting Abdel Fattah al-Burhan's proposed national dialogue and advancing an alternative framework centered on a ceasefire, humanitarian access, and civilian-led negotiations. The week therefore reflected the widening gap between military developments on the ground and efforts to establish a credible political pathway out of the war.

Military developments remained concentrated in Kordofan and the country's border regions. Fighting around North Kordofan generated a major new displacement wave, with the United Nations reporting that more than 200,000 people had been newly displaced across the Kordofan region since late 2025. RSF attacks on villages southwest of El Obeid reportedly killed at least six people and forced more than 1,000 residents, including 215 families, to flee on foot toward the state capital. The pressure on El Obeid is particularly significant because the city remains one of the principal government-held centers in Kordofan and an important military and logistical hub.

Elsewhere, army-aligned forces reported gains against the RSF along Sudan's northern desert frontier. The Joint Force said it had destroyed 49 RSF vehicles, captured another 30 and detained 70 fighters during clashes near the Libyan border, while also seizing equipment used to operate drones. The operation was presented as an effort to disrupt supply routes linking Libya with RSF-held areas in Darfur. Although the claims could not be independently verified and the RSF did not immediately comment, the reported

fighting highlights the growing importance of Sudan's northern desert corridors to the wider war.

The regional dimension of the conflict also became more pronounced. Sudan's Defense Ministry said it had shot down a "hostile" drone over Blue Nile near Kurmuk and accused Ethiopia of being the source of the aircraft, claiming that it entered Sudanese airspace from across the southeastern border. Ethiopia had not immediately responded to the accusation. The incident is particularly sensitive given the continuing fighting around Blue Nile and previous Sudanese allegations of cross-border support for armed groups. While the latest allegation remains unverified, the episode demonstrates how military developments along the Sudan-Ethiopia frontier continue to carry implications for bilateral relations and the wider security environment.

The war also showed signs of spilling more directly across Sudan's western frontier. Chad accused the Sudanese military of carrying out drone strikes against a convoy inside Chadian territory in the Ennedi Est region, more than 100 kilometers from the Sudanese border. N'Djamena placed its military on high alert and warned the Sudanese belligerents against extending the conflict across the frontier. The accusation followed reported Sudanese air raids targeting suspected RSF supply routes near the border. If confirmed, the incident would represent a significant escalation in the regionalization of Sudan's war, particularly given the longstanding accusations between Khartoum and N'Djamena over support for opposing sides.

Humanitarian conditions continued to deteriorate alongside the military escalation. The displacement of more than 200,000 people in Kordofan, combined with continued arrivals in El Obeid, has placed additional pressure on already overstretched urban centers. Beyond displacement itself, millions of Sudanese remain outside formal camps and depend on relatives, rented accommodation, or community support. Recent estimates cited by Sudan Tribune indicate that 33.7 million people require humanitarian assistance in 2026, while 37 percent of health facilities remain out of service. The humanitarian burden is further complicated by attacks on aid workers and shrinking operational space. Sudan recorded 71 humanitarian workers killed in 2025, while local emergency committees and volunteer networks continue to provide food, water and healthcare despite growing security risks.

Environmental and economic pressures added another layer to the crisis. Reports of agricultural land lying barren as low water levels along the Nile disrupt farming point to growing risks for Sudan's already fragile food system. Flooding also displaced families and damaged homes in parts of the country, demonstrating the convergence of conflict, climate pressures, and humanitarian vulnerability. The disruption of agricultural production is particularly concerning as millions already face acute food insecurity and the war continues to undermine traditional sources of livelihoods.

Politically, the week's most consequential development was the growing contest over the proposed national dialogue. After Burhan offered legal, political, and security guarantees for an inclusive dialogue inside Sudan, a broad coalition of anti-war political forces met in Addis Ababa on August 22–23 to formulate a response. The coalition, which included Somoud, civil society organizations, women's and youth networks, and several political parties, rejected Burhan's initiative and argued that a dialogue conducted while fighting continues and under the security structures of one belligerent would risk legitimizing the existing wartime order.

The civilian coalition instead proposed a three-track process consisting of an urgent humanitarian track, a permanent ceasefire track, and an exclusively civilian political track. It called for negotiations under an agreed international framework while limiting the role of the two military factions primarily to ceasefire and humanitarian discussions. Former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok reinforced the position by arguing that the war has no military solution and that civilian forces must overcome their divisions to create a credible alternative to continued armed confrontation.

Meanwhile, Burhan continued to combine calls for political engagement with a firm military position. He warned that Sudan could face additional sanctions while insisting that the war would continue until the RSF was eliminated. At the same time, the army announced the integration of RSF defectors, including commanders and hundreds of personnel, into its structures. The developments suggest that Khartoum's dialogue initiative is being pursued alongside continued military consolidation rather than as a substitute for it.

External diplomacy also remained active. Saudi Arabia appeared poised to assume a more prominent role in Khartoum, with a new ambassador expected to take a more active approach as Riyadh increases its support for Burhan. This comes as regional actors continue to position themselves around competing visions of Sudan's future and as the diplomatic search for a settlement remains fragmented.

Taken together, developments during the week underscored the increasingly interconnected nature of Sudan's military, political, humanitarian, and regional crises. The intensification of fighting in Kordofan is generating new displacement while the expansion of military activity toward the Ethiopian, Chadian, and Libyan frontiers risks drawing neighboring states further into the conflict. At the political level, the rejection of Burhan's dialogue proposal by major civilian forces has exposed a fundamental disagreement over whether Sudan's transition should emerge from an internally controlled process or through a broader internationally supported settlement. As military actors continue to consolidate territory and alliances, the central challenge remains whether diplomatic initiatives can produce a ceasefire and political framework before the war becomes even more deeply embedded in Sudan's regional security environment.

3. Egypt

A Hamas delegation led by Khalil al-Hayya met Egyptian Intelligence Chief Hassan Rashad to discuss advancing Trump's post-war Gaza plan, including disarmament and roadmap implementation. Related high-level contacts with US envoy Jared Kushner also took place in Egypt on the same issues.

Egypt's Foreign Ministry strongly condemned Israeli airstrikes on Syria's Abu al-Duhur military airport in Idlib as a flagrant violation of Syrian sovereignty, international law and the UN Charter, and a dangerous regional escalation. Cairo reaffirmed support for Syria's unity and territorial integrity while urging the international community to deter further Israeli actions.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held a phone call with Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidi discussing regional developments, bilateral ties and efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz while ensuring freedom of navigation.

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi held talks with Libyan National Army commander Khalifa Haftar, reaffirming Egypt's support for Libya's unity, security and stability.

President El-Sisi received Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in El-Alamein. They discussed containing regional escalation, Egypt's support for Qatar's security and sovereignty, and the need for all parties to fulfill commitments under Trump's Gaza plan on ceasefire, aid and recovery. The seventh session of the Egypt-Qatar Joint Higher Committee convened the same day, covering bilateral cooperation, regional de-escalation, Gaza developments, rejection of Palestinian displacement, Hormuz navigation and the Sudanese crisis.

At a press conference with the Qatari prime minister, Abdelatty stated that the ball is in Israel's court to fulfill Gaza peace plan commitments on humanitarian access, withdrawal and weapons restrictions. Egypt, Qatar and Turkey as mediators were coordinating closely. They also addressed West Bank and Jerusalem tensions, called for the US and Iran to return to the June negotiating framework, and stressed safeguarding freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

Reporting highlighted Egypt's absence from the recent Turkey-Pakistan-Saudi Mecca Agreement defence pact, framing Cairo's strategy of diversified security partnerships while preserving flexibility and focusing on diplomacy and mediation.

Abdelatty spoke by phone with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa on Gaza and West Bank developments, the need to advance the second phase of the ceasefire roadmap, humanitarian access, Israeli withdrawal, reconstruction and countering settlement expansion including E1 plans. Egypt reaffirmed support for the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian territorial unity.

Egyptian Intelligence Chief Hassan Rashad met a Palestinian Authority Fatah-linked delegation to unify national efforts, with emphasis on preserving territorial unity in Gaza and the West Bank.

Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly held talks with Libyan Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah in New Alamein on economic, energy and reconstruction cooperation, the joint high committee, oil and gas interconnection, and Egyptian companies' role in Libyan projects.

4. Eritrea

The resurgence of Somali piracy gained renewed attention after the Eritrean-flagged product tanker Sibu 1 was hijacked off the Yemeni coast on August 20 and reportedly diverted toward Somalia. According to The New York Times, the vessel is suspected of belonging to Iran's shadow fleet and had repeatedly transported fuel to the Houthi-controlled Ras Isa terminal in Yemen, while Reuters reported that the vessel had been sanctioned by the United States in December 2025 for allegedly transporting Iranian petroleum products. UK Maritime Trade Operations reported that six armed men boarded the tanker approximately 136 nautical miles east of Al Mukalla, after which the vessel was redirected toward Somalia. The Eritrean flag itself, however, does not establish an Iranian connection: reporting cited by the three accounts raises questions over the authenticity of the vessel's registration, ownership, and operating identity, with the ship also appearing under the name Seamull.

The seizure is significant less as evidence of an Eritrean role in the hijacking than because it places an Eritrean-flagged vessel within the increasingly blurred security environment linking the Gulf of Aden, Yemen and Somalia. The New York Times highlighted the possibility that the wider Iran conflict, disruption of maritime security and the diversion of naval assets toward the Red Sea and Strait of Hormuz are creating conditions conducive to a revival of Somali piracy. Other assessments are more cautious about alleged Houthi-pirate cooperation: while some analysts have pointed to established links between Yemeni and Somali criminal networks, including arms trafficking, the capture of an Iran-linked tanker has led some observers to question whether the recent attacks represent a coordinated Houthi-pirate relationship. For Eritrea, the episode is nevertheless noteworthy because Asmara has maintained a generally sympathetic relationship with Tehran and has reportedly provided a transit route for Iranian military shipments destined for the Sudanese Armed Forces, making Iran-Eritrea relations relevant to the broader maritime picture even though the Sibu 1's Eritrean flag provides no concrete evidence of state involvement or an operational Eritrean-Iranian link in this particular case.

After the TPLF cancelled the main Ashenda celebration in Mekelle over reported fears of drone attacks, celebrations continued in several parts of Tigray, including areas along the Eritrean border. According to the report, residents of Gulomakeda and Zalambessa joined

Eritreans from neighbouring parts of Senafe for festivities, with participants emphasizing their shared history and cultural heritage and calling for greater cross-border cooperation. The cancellation in Mekelle reportedly followed a series of drone strikes in Tigray, including an incident that the TPLF said injured civilians.

The prominence given to the border celebrations is politically significant because it contributes to a broader narrative of Tigrayan-Eritrean unity that can help manufacture popular legitimacy for the TPLF-Eritrea rapprochement. The juxtaposition is particularly useful to this narrative: Mekelle is presented as vulnerable to alleged Ethiopian federal attacks, while communities along the Eritrean frontier are depicted as peacefully celebrating alongside their counterparts across the border. This framing can serve the TPLF's effort to rebuild popular support following the political and military costs of the Tigray conflict and the Pretoria Agreement, while giving Eritrea an opportunity to cultivate a more positive image among Tigrayans despite the extensive abuses attributed to Eritrean forces during the conflict. With Tigray likely to be the principal theatre of any renewed Ethiopia-Eritrea confrontation, the cultivation of perceptions of shared identity and solidarity across the border has significance beyond the cultural celebrations themselves.

The Eritrean regime published two unusually expansive pieces last week as part of an intensifying battle over the narrative surrounding Ethiopia-Eritrea tensions. One, issued by the regime's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on August 18, accused Ethiopia's Prosperity Party of pursuing an "expansionist" agenda, including through its demands for sovereign access to the Red Sea, while portraying Eritrea as the restrained party. The other, published by the regime's Embassy in Washington on August 17, similarly argued that Eritrea's sovereignty and territorial integrity are protected by international law and the postcolonial African order, while rejecting characterizations of its foreign relations as primarily directed against Ethiopia. Both pieces sought to establish Ethiopia as the principal destabilizing actor while presenting Eritrea's diplomatic activity and regional alignments as defensive and legitimate.

The messaging is notable for the way it combines a contemporary diplomatic argument with longstanding EPLF historical revisionism. By emphasizing colonial borders, the 1993 referendum and the finality of the EEBC ruling, Asmara is invoking a powerful African diplomatic norm of territorial integrity and the sanctity of inherited borders, while simultaneously presenting Eritrea's incorporation into Ethiopia through the 1952 federation and its subsequent dissolution as essentially another episode of colonial domination. This framing deliberately decouples Eritrea's historical development from the wider Ethiopian historical experience and provides a historical foundation for the regime's present-day claim that any Ethiopian interest in Red Sea access represents an attempt to overturn the postcolonial settlement. The narrative is particularly striking given the current reality on the ground, where Eritrean forces have reportedly operated in

coordination with the TPLF and have crossed into Ethiopian territory, developments that sit uneasily with Asmara's portrayal of itself as an uncompromising defender of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Both statements also largely dismiss criticism of Eritrea's domestic record, treating references to authoritarianism and human-rights abuses as politically motivated attempts to delegitimize the regime rather than substantive concerns. Their likely primary audience is international rather than domestic: foreign governments, diplomats and international organizations with which Asmara has been seeking greater engagement as Eritrea gradually re-enters diplomatic forums. This is particularly relevant given the expanding international engagement with Eritrea in recent months, including its interactions with multilateral institutions and foreign governments. By grounding its messaging in internationally resonant concepts such as sovereignty, decolonization and African territorial integrity, the regime is seeking to make criticism of Eritrea appear inseparable from an attack on the principles governing the African state system, while encouraging international actors to interpret its conduct primarily through the lens of Ethiopian “expansionism”. The growing willingness of international actors to engage with Asmara risks giving this narrative greater diplomatic traction even where the regime's domestic practices and conduct toward its neighbours remain fundamentally at odds with the image of a restrained defender of international norms that it is attempting to project.

5. Djibouti

Djibouti has publicly called for greater international burden sharing to protect the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, warning that the existing security arrangements may be insufficient amid renewed threats to commercial shipping, piracy risks, undersea infrastructure vulnerabilities, and wider Red Sea tensions. In remarks to the UN Security Council, Djibouti's representative framed the strait as a global strategic asset whose security cannot be managed by the littoral states alone, drawing comparisons with the international attention devoted to the Strait of Hormuz. The appeal reflects Djibouti's recognition that its position as a major maritime hub and host to multiple foreign military installations does not eliminate its vulnerability to disruptions originating beyond its territorial waters. It also provides Djibouti with a basis for seeking greater external contributions while retaining control over the security architecture surrounding its territory.

The development has particular significance for Ethiopia, whose trade remains heavily dependent on Djibouti and therefore leaves Addis Ababa highly exposed to any sustained disruption of the Red Sea corridor. At the same time, Ethiopia's dependence has historically given Djibouti considerable bargaining power, while Djibouti has remained cautious about granting Ethiopia a sovereign maritime or military role. The current emphasis on shared responsibility could nevertheless create political space for Ethiopia to seek a greater institutional role in maritime security without directly challenging

Djibouti's sovereignty. Rather than pursuing an immediate demand for exclusive access or a naval presence, Addis Ababa could use the burden-sharing framework to press for participation in intelligence coordination, threat assessment, maritime surveillance, and other mechanisms commensurate with its exposure to disruption. The appeal therefore presents Ethiopia with an opportunity to convert its dependence on Djibouti from a structural vulnerability into greater influence over the security arrangements protecting its principal trade corridor.

Djibouti's Foreign Minister Abdoukader Houssein Omar held a telephone call with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, with the two sides discussing bilateral relations, regional developments, and Red Sea security. According to the Djiboutian Foreign Ministry, the ministers emphasized continued consultation and coordination, particularly over maritime navigation and the security of commercial shipping in the Red Sea. Although the statement presents the exchange as routine bilateral diplomacy, its timing is significant given Egypt's increasingly active engagement with states across the Horn of Africa. Abdelatty has in recent months held consultations with the foreign ministers of Somalia and Eritrea, alongside engagement with Mogadishu, placing Djibouti within a widening Egyptian diplomatic effort around the Horn and Red Sea.

For Ethiopia, the emerging pattern is potentially concerning because Djibouti remains the principal maritime outlet for Ethiopian trade, giving the country an unusually consequential position in Ethiopia's external economic lifeline. Egypt's expanding diplomatic engagement with Djibouti, Somalia, and Eritrea can therefore be viewed as part of the broader strategic competition with Ethiopia over the Red Sea, particularly as Cairo seeks to constrain Addis Ababa's growing maritime ambitions. The Djibouti–Egypt consultation does not by itself indicate alignment against Ethiopia, and Djibouti has strong economic incentives to preserve its relationship with Addis Ababa, but the accumulation of Egyptian diplomatic activity around Ethiopia's immediate strategic environment is more significant than any individual meeting. If Cairo succeeds in developing a more coordinated network of relationships among Ethiopia's neighbouring states and Red Sea littorals, Djibouti could become an increasingly important node in Egypt's effort to exert pressure on Addis Ababa, particularly over maritime access and the wider regional balance of power.

Djibouti's Foreign Minister Abdoukader Houssein Omar met with Qatar's ambassador to Djibouti, Rashid bin Shafeea Al Marri, on August 19 to discuss bilateral cooperation. The Qatari Foreign Ministry provided no further details on the substance of the meeting, and there is no indication of a new agreement or specific initiative emerging from the talks. The meeting nevertheless comes amid growing Qatari and broader Gulf engagement across the Horn of Africa and Red Sea, where Djibouti's strategic position continues to attract external diplomatic attention. For Ethiopia, the development is worth monitoring given Djibouti's importance as its principal maritime gateway, although the meeting itself

appears to represent routine diplomatic engagement rather than a significant shift in Djibouti's regional alignment.

Djibouti's Foreign Minister Abdoulkader Houssein Omar held a telephone conversation with Yemen's Foreign Minister Afrah Al-Zouba on August 20, with discussions focused on bilateral cooperation and the security of the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb. According to Yemen's Foreign Ministry, the two sides emphasized greater coordination among Red Sea littoral states to address threats to maritime navigation, including Houthi attacks and other forms of insecurity. The talks come amid renewed Houthi attacks around Yemen's western coast and Bab el-Mandeb, including strikes on commercial shipping and the port of Mocha. Djibouti's engagement with the internationally recognized Yemeni government reflects its growing concern over instability in the maritime corridor immediately opposite its territory.

Signatories to the Djibouti Code of Conduct/Jeddah Amendment have agreed to establish a Combined DCoC Task Force in response to the resurgence of piracy and armed robbery in the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden. The proposal was endorsed by national focal points on August 5, following an extraordinary Steering Committee meeting on July 29, and will provide a framework for willing signatories to coordinate maritime operations alongside existing international efforts, including EU NAVFOR and Combined Task Force 151. The precise composition, assets and geographical scope of the task force have yet to be determined, with a September workshop in Mombasa expected to advance its operational framework. The initiative comes amid a renewed series of piracy incidents, including the reported boarding of a cargo vessel off Somalia on August 17 and the hijacking of several vessels since April.

The development is significant for Djibouti because the proposed mechanism strengthens regional responsibility for securing the maritime corridor connecting the Gulf of Aden with the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb, where piracy now compounds existing threats to commercial shipping from the Yemen conflict. Ethiopia is among the 19 states backing the proposal, despite being landlocked, reflecting the direct strategic and economic exposure of its trade to security conditions in the Gulf of Aden. The initiative could therefore provide Addis Ababa with a formal channel for participating in maritime-security coordination without requiring an immediate sovereign naval presence, while giving Djibouti and other coastal states greater regional capacity alongside foreign naval deployments. The inclusion of Ethiopia is particularly relevant as Addis Ababa seeks a greater role in Red Sea affairs and greater resilience against disruptions to its principal maritime trade corridor.

6. South Sudan

South Sudan's political transition came under renewed pressure during the week as the December elections faced growing criticism over security and political conditions, violence continued across several parts of the country, and humanitarian operations came under increasing strain. President Salva Kiir's visit to South Africa also placed regional diplomacy and preparations for the elections back at the centre of attention. Taken together, the week's developments highlighted a widening gap between the government's determination to proceed with the electoral timetable and growing concerns that the political and security conditions required for a credible transition remain insufficient.

The most significant development was the increasingly contentious debate over the December elections. A UN-backed Commission on Human Rights warned that South Sudan could face renewed armed conflict and atrocity crimes if elections are conducted without essential political, security, and human-rights safeguards. The Commission pointed to renewed fighting in Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity states, shrinking political space, weak institutions, and the incomplete implementation of the 2018 peace agreement. It argued that an election held under such conditions could become another arena for political violence rather than a pathway toward democratic consolidation. The Commission specifically called for a monitored ceasefire, the unification of security forces under a non-partisan command, stronger electoral and judicial institutions, and genuine political dialogue involving opposition groups, civil society, women and youth.

The warning intensified an already growing domestic debate over whether South Sudan should prioritize peacebuilding and political dialogue before proceeding to the ballot box. Critics have argued that the electoral process risks becoming dominated by a narrow political elite while significant opposition groups remain excluded or constrained. At the same time, the government continued to insist that there would be no further extension of the transitional period and that preparations for the December vote would proceed. The disagreement therefore increasingly concerns not simply whether elections should take place, but whether the existing political and security environment can produce a legitimate and peaceful outcome.

Against this backdrop, President Salva Kiir travelled to South Africa for high-level discussions with President Cyril Ramaphosa. The talks focused on the electoral process, regional support for peaceful and credible elections, national dialogue, and the strengthening of democratic institutions. Pretoria has previously emphasized that South Sudan's elections should be inclusive, transparent and fair and that the security environment must allow citizens to participate freely. Kiir's visit consequently provided an important diplomatic opportunity to secure regional backing while also addressing concerns over the country's fragile transition.

Security conditions, however, continued to deteriorate in several parts of the country. The UN reported renewed armed violence in Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity, alongside civilian deaths and displacement in other regions. The persistence of localized and political violence illustrates the unresolved weaknesses of the 2018 peace framework, particularly the failure to fully unify security forces and establish a stable security environment across the country. The approaching elections could further intensify these tensions if political competition becomes connected to existing ethnic, communal and armed divisions.

Humanitarian conditions also remain deeply concerning. At least 36 humanitarian workers and contractors have been killed in South Sudan since January, already exceeding the 31 deaths recorded during the whole of 2025. More than 450 incidents involving violence against aid personnel and humanitarian assets were recorded between January and July, more than twice the number during the same period last year. The escalating insecurity has forced aid organizations to withdraw from some volatile areas, limiting access to populations already affected by conflict, displacement and food insecurity. Around 10 million people are expected to require humanitarian assistance in 2026, including approximately 7.5 million facing acute food insecurity.

The humanitarian crisis is being compounded by severe financial pressures. South Sudan's persistent cash shortages and fiscal difficulties continue to undermine government institutions and the delivery of public services, while funding shortfalls are also threatening assistance for refugees and vulnerable communities. The country's economic fragility remains closely connected to its political instability, as limited state revenues constrain the government's ability to implement the peace agreement, finance public institutions, and create the conditions necessary for a credible transition.

International and regional engagement remained active during the week. Religious and civil society leaders continued to advocate for voter education, peaceful participation, and dialogue ahead of the elections, while regional actors emphasized the importance of preventing the electoral process from becoming a new source of instability. The debate increasingly reflects a broader concern that South Sudan's transition cannot be reduced to meeting an electoral deadline. Without sufficient security guarantees, political inclusion, institutional capacity and public confidence, holding elections on schedule could deepen rather than resolve existing political divisions.

Taken together, developments during the week underscored the central dilemma facing South Sudan: the government is determined to move toward elections and end the prolonged transitional period, while the country's security environment, political institutions and peace agreement remain insufficiently consolidated. Kiir's engagement with South Africa demonstrates continued efforts to secure regional support for the electoral process, but the UN's warnings and growing domestic criticism suggest that international legitimacy will depend increasingly on the conditions surrounding the vote

rather than simply its timing. With only months remaining before the scheduled elections, South Sudan's immediate challenge is therefore to reconcile the demand for political transition with the equally urgent need to prevent that transition from becoming a catalyst for renewed conflict.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

The domestic security development of the week occurred in Baidoa the interim capital of Southwest State where fierce fighting erupted between Somali National Army federal forces and elements aligned with former Southwest President Abdiiaziz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen. The clashes began before dawn on August 17 when federal positions came under attack involving vehicle borne explosives. The Federal Ministry of Defence stated that the attackers included Al Shabaab militants mixed with militias loyal to Laftagareen. Federal forces reported that they repelled the assault after hours of heavy fighting, killing nearly thirty attackers, capturing several others and seizing weapons and vehicles. Clearance operations continued in the aftermath.

Laftagareen's side claimed temporary control of parts of the city center though this assertion was later disputed. Residents and hospital sources reported civilian casualties with at least two to five civilians killed by stray fire in early accounts. Later reports indicated more wounded including dozens at Bay Regional Hospital. The fighting was described as the fiercest since federal forces took the city in March 2026. Baidoa hosts large numbers of displaced people facing malnutrition, exacerbating the humanitarian impact of the clashes.

Late Wednesday more than ten suspected mortar explosions were heard across the city reportedly targeting the South West State presidential compound and surrounding areas. No confirmed deaths, injuries, or property damage were reported at the time. Heavily armed forces believed aligned with Laftagareen were seen near the Manyafuulka and Barwaaqo neighbourhoods and some residents began fleeing amid fears of renewed fighting. Baidoa remained under heavy federal security presence following the August 17 clashes. No group immediately claimed the mortars and no confirmed link to Al-Shabaab was established.

Following that, Forces aligned with Laftagareen vowed via spokesman Ugaas Hassan Mohamed to continue operations until federal troops are driven from Baidoa and the city is liberated. They accused President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of imposing a political agenda and warned Turkey against involvement claiming Turkish support for a massacre without providing evidence. No independent confirmation of Turkish aircraft in the August 17 fighting was available. Residents in multiple neighbourhoods including Towfiiq/Warshada Hasey/Bakiin, Al-Faras, Hanano-Idow Dhagaal, Boonkay, and

Barwaaqo, fled amid reports of heavily armed fighters on the outskirts citing fears of renewed clashes after the August 17 fighting and subsequent mortar reports. No new large-scale combat or official casualty figures were confirmed for August 20.

On another front, Former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed placed sole responsibility for the deadly fighting in Baidoa on the federal government blaming it for the bloodshed that left thirty dead. Former Foreign Affairs Minister Abdisaied Muse Ali accused Turkey of carrying out a massacre of Somali nationals in connection with the Baidoa events though these allegations remained unsubstantiated.

On another development, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud continued his Galmudug tour arriving in and operating from the southern, Galmudug administered half of the divided city of Galkayo on August 18. He was welcomed at Abdullahi Issa Football Stadium and called for unity, reconciliation, and support for state institutions. The President visited the Prof. Addow Technical School praising vocational training for youth employment in fields such as electrical work, construction, computers, and mechanics. The tour also included stops such as Bandiiradley. The visit occurred despite prior public warnings from Puntland authorities, who viewed it as a potential security threat. Puntland President Saeed Abdullahi Deni remained in the northern half of the city. Security was reinforced on both sides with the crossing reportedly closed.

Puntland security forces seized the Barda Dheere camp in the Mudug region on Friday after a brief exchange of gunfire with local opponents who resisted the deployment. No casualties were reported. The facility had previously been occupied by personnel described as federal government aligned. The takeover continued a pattern of Puntland consolidating control over security sites previously linked to federal or federal aligned units following earlier actions in Galkayo and elsewhere. Neither side issued a detailed official statement immediately and the incident highlighted ongoing federal–Puntland tensions.

Heavy fighting erupted between two local clan militias in Galkayo's Bulabacley neighbourhood also reported in connection with Horumar. Residents reported sustained gunfire and use of heavy weapons in a populated area. Initial accounts cited at least five people killed and many more injured. Exact figures were not independently confirmed at the time, and no immediate ceasefire was announced.

On another view, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud declared on August 17 that Somalia no longer needs foreign peacekeepers to guarantee its own security telling African partners that Somalia was prepared to assume full responsibility for its security. This statement came after growing concerns over sustainable funding for AUSSOM and the transition of security responsibilities to Somali forces.

Two young pastoralists killed senior Al Shabaab commander Hassan Alasow Rage also known as Hassan Husuley or Khusuley approximately fifty years old who oversaw transport operations and previously handled zakat collection in Ruunirgood district. They seized his AK-47 and ammunition. The Federal Ministry of Defence praised community action against the group and accused the commander of livestock confiscation and restricting movement.

A drone strike near Garmaal on Puntland's Nugaal coast killed four suspected Somali pirates on August 18 a day after eight-armed men hijacked the Cameroon flagged cargo vessel MV Lutuf on August 17 about four nautical miles south of Mareeyo/Marraya. The men had reportedly left the ship in a small boat to gather supplies ashore when struck. Attribution was unclear at the time of initial reports with no immediate claim by any government, coalition, or contractor. Later accounts linked it to Turkish assets. The status of the vessel remaining hijackers and crew was not fully confirmed in early reporting.

Suspected Somali pirates seized the Eritrean flagged oil products tanker M.T. Sibul 1 also known as Seamull in the Gulf of Aden on or around August 20 approximately 136 nautical miles east of Al Mukalla, Yemen. Six-armed men boarded after the vessel reported an unauthorized approach and it was diverted toward Somalia's Puntland coast.

The tanker carried approximately twenty crew, including sixteen Indian nationals plus Syrian, Sudanese, Iraqi and one unconfirmed nationality. UKMTO confirmed the boarding and course change. India stated that the Indian crew members were safe and that it had engaged Somali authorities. This was the second major hijacking in days following the August 17 seizure of the Cameroon-flagged M/V Lutuf which was carrying Turkish weapons and equipment bound for a Mogadishu training facility and had a crew including six Indians. Somali pirate groups were reported holding roughly six vessels and more than one hundred crew overall.

Puntland's Ministry of Security issued a statement strongly condemning the airstrike near Garmaal that killed four people and wounded two others. It identified the victims as civilian fishermen, opposed strikes against civilians and property in coastal areas where hijacked vessels are held, and demanded an immediate explanation from the responsible government regarding operations reported around August 18–20. The statement did not name a specific country. Puntland warned that such incidents could undermine cooperation with international anti-piracy partners.

State Minister of Defence Omar Ali Abdi publicly addressed the August 18 incident near Garmaal for the first time on August 23. He said the federal government had prior knowledge of the operation, defended it in the context of anti-piracy efforts linked to the MV Lutuf hijacking and questioned whether Puntland had evidence that the four killed and two wounded were civilian fishermen rather than pirates. Early reports had described the victims as suspected pirates from a small boat associated with the Lutuf, while

Puntland and some local accounts later identified them as civilians and condemned the strikes. Turkey had not publicly claimed or commented on the operation. Abdi indicated a comprehensive report would follow.

At Villa Somalia, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud formally received Letters of Credence from ambassadors of Algeria, Brazil, India, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, and Pakistan. Foreign Minister Abdisalam Abdi Ali presented the envoys. Discussions focused on strengthening bilateral ties in politics, trade, investment, development, security and social affairs. The Foreign Minister had received copies of credentials from four of them the previous day. The presentation of credentials from Pakistan's first woman ambassador to Somalia was noted as a diplomatic milestone.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and Somali counterpart Abdisalam Abdi Ali held discussions in a phone call referenced as Tuesday and widely covered Wednesday. Egypt rejected any unilateral measures threatening Somali territorial integrity or sovereignty, reaffirmed support for Somali state institutions especially counterterrorism capacity and stressed the need for sustainable funding for AUSSOM in which Egypt participates and the UN Support Office in Somalia to maintain security and unity. Somalia expressed appreciation for Egypt's stance.

Somalia moved to block any precedent for Somaliland recognition after the newly elected parliament speaker posted a statement of gratitude to an official of a government Somalia does not recognize. The government clarified its Cyprus stance and emphasized its commitment to territorial integrity, reaffirming that it would not accept any actions that could be interpreted as recognition of separatist entities.

On another front, Reports highlighted growing frustration attributed to Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni over Somalia's political divisions and uncertain sustainable funding for AUSSOM. Uganda contributes approximately four thousand five hundred troops plus additional bilateral forces. The United States decision to end funding for UN logistical support, UNSOS, from the following year raised risks to the mission. Uganda stated its forces would remain even if the AU arrangement changed but questions persisted over financing, troop allowances and logistics. AU leaders had previously called for predictable funding at a Kampala summit.

Somaliland

During this period the official Republic of Somaliland account issued a statement expressing solidarity with the Republic of Cyprus and Greece against what it described as aggression from Somalia and Turkey. The statement referenced Somali Parliament Speaker Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur's engagement subsequently deleted with the speaker of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) characterizing it as raising questions.

Following that, Somaliland called on Greece and Cyprus to take a fresh look at the Republic of Somaliland arguing that recognition would create new opportunities for diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation while strengthening a shared position against Somali and Turkish influence. The statement frames Somaliland's recognition campaign within the wider geopolitical competition involving the Horn of Africa, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, and Eastern Mediterranean.

On another development, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation through its Maritime Security Coordination Office launched a two-day high-level consultation in Hargeisa on the evolving security in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The consultation assessed emerging threats, regional developments, and their implications for Somaliland's maritime interests, trade, economic infrastructure, and national assets. Opening remarks were delivered by Ministry Director General Mohamed Abdirahman Hassan who emphasized analysis of emerging threats and infrastructure resilience and Maritime Security Coordination Office Director Mohamed Aden Sheikh (Tukaale), who called for practical recommendations on preparedness. A EUCAP representative also addressed the participants.

The consultation brought together government maritime bodies, private sector operators, naval and security experts, academics, university representatives, and DP World officials. Discussions focused on strengthening coordination between state institutions and private stakeholders, assessing existing infrastructure and institutional capacity, and identifying measures to protect Somaliland's strategic and economic interests from regional maritime disruptions.

On August 17, 2026, Somaliland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation issued a statement criticizing the visit by a senior United Nations delegation led by George Conway, UN Deputy Special Representative for Somalia and Humanitarian Coordinator to Las Anod, the capital of Somalia's newly established Northeast State. While reiterating its commitment to facilitating humanitarian assistance for communities in need including for drought, displacement, and local needs, Somaliland insisted that visits by senior UN officials to politically and security sensitive areas must follow established diplomatic channels including prior notification, consultation, coordination, and authorization with authorities in Hargeisa. The statement expressed that Somaliland values ongoing cooperation with the United Nations but expects established procedures and communication channels to be respected.

The UN delegation was expected to meet Northeast State officials and local communities to discuss humanitarian needs and assess conditions, including prisoners held by Somaliland forces following the 2023 fighting in Sool. The visit highlighted the unresolved territorial dispute over Sool and Sanaag, areas claimed by both Somaliland and Somalia's federal government, with Las Anod having been under forces aligned with

the federal government and Northeast State administration since Somaliland forces withdrew in 2023.

8. Yemen

The International Crisis Group (ICG), in an analysis by its Senior Analyst for Yemen, Ahmed Nagi, argues that Yemen is rapidly moving away from the de facto truce that has largely contained large-scale fighting since 2022. The report traces the escalation to the July dispute over Houthi flights between Sanaa and Tehran, followed by Saudi strikes on Sanaa airport, Houthi attacks against Saudi territory and shipping, and renewed fighting along several Yemeni fronts. ICG assesses that the current conflict differs from the 2015–22 war, with long-range missiles, drones and maritime attacks playing a more prominent role than large-scale territorial offensives. It warns, however, that a broader war could emerge through cumulative retaliatory actions even if none of the parties initially intends to return to full-scale conflict.

ICG's analysis suggests that the Houthis are currently using controlled escalation to increase the political and economic costs of the status quo, particularly by linking their domestic demands to their ability to disrupt Saudi interests and maritime traffic around Bab al-Mandab. Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, appears to be pursuing a more restrained strategy than during its previous intervention, strengthening Yemeni forces and expanding regional security partnerships while seeking to avoid direct re-entry into an open-ended war. The report's broader implication is that Yemen's internal conflict can no longer be separated from the strategic contest around the Red Sea and the wider U.S.–Iran confrontation. For the Horn and Red Sea, sustained Houthi pressure on Bab al-Mandab therefore presents a risk of maritime disruption even without a comprehensive Yemeni war, particularly if Saudi or Iranian calculations change and further narrow the space for restraint.

Al Jazeera published an analysis on 17 August examining the growing use of drones by both Houthi and government-aligned forces in Yemen, arguing that their increasing deployment marks an important tactical shift in the conflict. The report notes that while the Houthis retain a considerably more sophisticated drone and missile arsenal, government forces have begun using remotely operated and reusable drones for reconnaissance and precision strikes across several fronts. Experts cited by Al Jazeera suggest that some government systems may have been adapted from commercial platforms, while the Houthis appear to be incorporating increasingly advanced systems, including technologies associated with the evolution of drone warfare in Ukraine. The development is significant because it suggests that drone warfare is becoming more widely distributed across Yemen's front lines rather than remaining primarily a Houthi asymmetric capability.

The more important implication is that the government's emerging drone capability could gradually alter the tactical balance without providing it with anything approaching military parity with the Houthis. As Al Jazeera's analysts emphasize, relatively inexpensive reusable drones can improve battlefield surveillance, expose troop movements and impose greater costs on Houthi forces along relatively static front lines, potentially making a renewed ground offensive more viable. At the same time, the proliferation of such capabilities could make Yemen's renewed conflict more persistent and technologically intensive, particularly as both sides adapt tactics and increasingly integrate drones into routine operations. For the wider Red Sea security environment, the development matters because the Houthis' more advanced long-range unmanned systems remain distinct from this tactical battlefield trend, meaning that improvements in government drone warfare should not be interpreted as eliminating the Houthis' broader capacity to conduct strategic strikes against Saudi Arabia or maritime targets.

Between 17 and 24 August, Yemen experienced a sustained escalation in fighting between the Houthis and Saudi-backed, internationally recognised government forces, following the breakdown of the de facto truce that had largely contained large-scale hostilities since 2022. The escalation is occurring against the backdrop of the wider U.S.–Iran conflict and disruption around the Strait of Hormuz, which has increased the strategic importance of Saudi Arabia's Red Sea infrastructure and maritime routes. The immediate trajectory began with the dispute over Iranian flights to Sanaa and subsequent Saudi strikes on Sanaa airport, followed by the Houthi declaration of a naval and energy blockade against Saudi Arabia. Since early August, the confrontation has expanded from Saudi-linked maritime and energy targets into sustained fighting across several Yemeni fronts.

On 17–18 August, the Houthis claimed missile and drone attacks against Saudi-linked naval assets near Al-Makha, while government-aligned forces reported extensive retaliatory operations against Houthi positions. The internationally recognised government subsequently announced more than 133 operations within 24 hours across Marib, Al-Jawf, Taiz, Hodeidah, Al-Dhale and Lahj. The government-aligned factions, including the Joint Forces, Southern Giants Brigades, Nation's Shield and Emergency Forces, have increasingly coordinated their operations through a joint command structure, indicating a shift from largely defensive deployments toward more coordinated pressure across multiple fronts. This represents an important development given the longstanding fragmentation of the anti-Houthi camp and its dependence on separate regional and external patrons.

The Houthis have responded by formalising what they describe as three operational principles: continued pressure on Saudi energy exports through maritime attacks, strikes against concentrations of government and Saudi-backed forces, and retaliation against perceived violations of Houthi-controlled airspace. On 20 August, Houthi forces claimed

drone attacks against a sensitive target at Najran airport and an Aramco facility in southwestern Saudi Arabia, while government forces reported further strikes against Houthi positions and commanders. Maritime activity has simultaneously remained volatile, with British maritime authorities reporting the boarding and diversion of a commercial tanker off Yemen, while Houthi and government-aligned forces continued to deploy explosive boats and other unmanned systems around Bab al-Mandab and Al-Makha. These developments reinforce the growing overlap between Yemen's internal conflict and the wider contest over Red Sea maritime security.

By 21–22 August, both sides were demonstrating increasingly sophisticated use of unmanned systems alongside conventional ground combat. Houthi media released footage purportedly showing hexacopter drones dropping mortar rounds against government positions and claimed the destruction of an M1 Abrams tank and other military equipment near Mocha, while government forces reported intercepting Houthi drones near the Al-Wadiah border crossing and destroying an explosive-laden unmanned boat in Bab al-Mandab. Government forces also confirmed the death of a military commander during ground fighting. The available reporting indicates that neither side has achieved a decisive operational breakthrough, but the growing integration of drones, artillery, missiles and maritime systems is raising the intensity and reach of the fighting.

By 23–24 August, the conflict had settled into high-intensity attritional fighting across several operational zones, including Marib, Al-Jawf, Taiz and Mocha, the southern Hodeidah coast, Al-Dhale and northern Lahj, alongside continued Houthi activity against Saudi targets around Najran. The pattern suggests that the renewed conflict remains geographically dispersed but has yet to develop into a single comprehensive offensive capable of fundamentally altering territorial control. The principal strategic change is the increasing coordination of government-aligned forces and the expansion of Houthi pressure from domestic front lines into Saudi territory and Red Sea maritime routes. This creates a more interconnected conflict environment in which developments along Yemen's western coast, the Saudi border and Bab al-Mandab can increasingly influence one another, while the absence of a clear military breakthrough leaves the conflict vulnerable to further escalation.

9. Kenya

Kenya moved further into the 2027 election cycle this week as political competition became more organised and more confrontational. The most important developments were the violence surrounding the Linda Mwananchi rally in Homa Bay, Ndindi Nyoro's departure from UDA, and the publication of the 2027 election timetable by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

The Homa Bay violence became the week's most serious political issue after clashes left two people dead, including a police officer, while journalists and other participants were

also attacked. Police later arrested dozens of suspects and said investigations were continuing. Opposition leaders accused state linked actors and security agencies of contributing to the violence, while police rejected those allegations. The incident is likely to strengthen concerns over political space and the neutrality of security institutions as election mobilisation increases.

Ndindi Nyoro's decision to leave UDA and join the People's Party of Kenya also reshaped the opposition landscape. His move gives Mt Kenya another political vehicle alongside Rigathi Gachagua's Democracy for Citizens Party and could expand opposition support in the region. At the same time, it makes opposition unity more difficult because several senior figures are competing for influence and potentially for the presidential ticket. Nyoro has already called for the opposition to eventually settle on one candidate.

IEBC also gave the political contest a clearer institutional timetable by confirming that the general election will be held on 10 August 2027. Political parties now face deadlines for submitting officials, preparing nominations and organising candidates. The election will use the existing 290 constituencies and 1,450 wards because a full boundary review cannot be completed before voting. This pushes parties away from informal mobilisation and toward formal election organisation.

Economic pressure remained an important part of the political environment. Parliament heard warnings that increased government borrowing is drawing bank financing toward government securities and away from private businesses. At the same time, nine suspects were arraigned over the alleged fraudulent transfer of around KSh1.57 billion from a Treasury administered programme. These developments strengthen opposition arguments linking public debt, corruption and weak private sector growth.

Food security also returned to the national agenda after the government announced plans to allow imports of up to 25 million bags of maize following drought and weak harvests. Because maize prices directly affect household spending, any significant increase in food costs could become politically sensitive as the election approaches.

Kenya's foreign relations were relatively stable during the week. Nairobi focused on strengthening ties with Türkiye in areas including trade, aviation, manufacturing, defence and security, while also expanding cooperation with Thailand. There were fewer major developments involving Ethiopia or Somalia, although declining informal trade across Kenya's regional borders reflected continuing economic pressure in border communities.

Overall, Kenya is entering a more competitive phase of the 2027 election cycle. Opposition parties are reorganising, IEBC has established the election timetable, and political violence is becoming a greater concern. At the same time, debt, corruption, food supply and private sector weakness are giving the opposition economic issues that could increasingly shape the campaign against President William Ruto.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Between August 17 and August 24, 2026, Saudi Arabia's political, diplomatic, and security landscape was shaped by the continuing fallout from the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement, persistent Houthi threats affecting Red Sea shipping and oil logistics, and intensified diplomatic engagement with France, Japan, Sudan, and South Sudan. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's meetings with French President Emmanuel Macron on August 23–24 represented an important effort to deepen bilateral cooperation in security, energy, and regional diplomacy, while Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan held the Third Japan-Saudi Arabia Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, focusing on regional stability and broader bilateral cooperation. Riyadh also strengthened its diplomatic engagement with Sudan as Zaid bin Mukhlid Al Harbi formally assumed his active post in Khartoum, reflecting a more direct Saudi approach toward the Sudanese conflict and its relationship with the Sudanese Armed Forces. Meanwhile, South Sudan's parliament ratified a broad general cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia on August 19, establishing a framework for expanding bilateral investment and cooperation.

Security concerns remained closely connected to the regional consequences of the Houthi threat and the broader restructuring of Saudi Arabia's defense posture. Continued attacks and threats from Yemen forced Riyadh to adapt its crude oil transportation and logistics arrangements by reducing reliance on vulnerable southern maritime routes and shifting additional traffic toward overland and alternative northern routes. These adjustments underline the growing strategic importance of securing Saudi energy exports against disruption around the Red Sea and its surrounding maritime chokepoints. At the same time, the regional diplomatic effects of the August 7 Mecca Joint Defense Agreement with Turkey and Pakistan continued to unfold. The pact remained an important reference point in discussions over collective regional deterrence, while Iraq's August 24 proposal for a joint security council between Iran and Saudi Arabia indicated that neighboring states were simultaneously seeking mechanisms to reduce the regional trust deficit and prevent the emerging security architecture from further deepening confrontation.

United Arab Emirates

This past week, the United Arab Emirates experienced a significant deterioration in its relationship with Iran, as escalating regional tensions resulted in the suspension of economic ties and intensified security and diplomatic consultations. On August 18–19, the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced an indefinite suspension of trade, commercial exchanges, and financial transactions with Iran, citing developments that threatened international peace and security. The decision followed claims by Emirati defense authorities that air defenses had detected two ballistic missiles launched from Iran

toward maritime navigation, with the missiles reportedly landing in and around UAE territorial waters. Tehran rejected the accusation and described it as baseless, while suggesting that the claims could constitute a false-flag operation. The economic measures were accompanied by urgent high-level consultations, including a phone call between U.S. President Donald Trump and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on August 18, alongside discussions between their national security teams, highlighting the growing strategic importance of U.S.-UAE coordination amid the escalation.

Alongside the deterioration in relations with Iran, Emirati officials sought to maintain diplomatic control over the broader regional narrative. Dr. Anwar Gargash, Diplomatic Adviser to the UAE President, publicly rejected online reports claiming that the UAE was cancelling worker residency visas or providing financial facilities to Iran, describing the claims as part of a media campaign. Abu Dhabi also remained engaged in regional diplomacy over Gaza, joining Qatar, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other partners in statements condemning Israel's rejection of international peace initiatives and the U.S. comprehensive plan for the Gaza Strip. At the bilateral level, the UAE continued its wider diplomatic outreach, including the formal presentation of credentials by Ambassador Omar Al Neyadi in Costa Rica on August 22, demonstrating that despite the sharp deterioration in its immediate regional security environment, Abu Dhabi continued to pursue broader international diplomatic and economic relationships.

Qatar

Between August 17 and August 24, 2026, Qatar concentrated its diplomatic efforts on regional de-escalation, particularly concerning the U.S.-Iran crisis, while simultaneously strengthening bilateral relations with Egypt and supporting international mediation efforts. On August 19, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani met Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud in Riyadh to coordinate responses to regional security challenges and support ongoing Qatari-Pakistani mediation. The expiration of the 60-day implementation period under the U.S.-Iran memorandum on August 17 also placed additional pressure on Doha's diplomatic efforts, with Qatar continuing to advocate for arrangements that would preserve freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. Qatar and Saudi Arabia further coordinated their positions on Gaza and regional stability, jointly opposing positions that undermine Palestinian statehood and emphasizing diplomatic mechanisms for maintaining regional ceasefires.

Qatar simultaneously deepened its bilateral relationship with Egypt through the seventh session of the Qatar-Egypt Joint Higher Committee, held on August 20 in El Alamein and co-chaired by Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani and Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty. The meeting produced four cooperation agreements covering customs, regulatory matters, development, and healthcare, including plans for the

establishment of the HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani Hospital in Sohag. Discussions also addressed major economic initiatives, including progress on the Alam El Roum development project on Egypt's Mediterranean coast, demonstrating that Doha's diplomatic agenda during the week extended beyond immediate regional security concerns toward broader economic and institutional cooperation with Cairo.

Qatar also remained involved in international peace efforts concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Between August 17 and August 21, Switzerland hosted strategic discussions supported by Qatar, the United States, Togo, and the African Union Commission. The talks produced a joint statement finalizing a new implementation roadmap under the Doha Framework for a Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the DRC government and the Alliance Fleuve Congo/March 23 Movement (AFC/M23). Qatar's participation therefore reflected its continued use of mediation and diplomatic engagement beyond the Gulf, while the week's broader activities demonstrated Doha's simultaneous focus on regional de-escalation, bilateral economic diplomacy, and international peace processes.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Mali

Between August 17 and August 24, 2026, Mali experienced developments across the diplomatic, security, and domestic political spheres, with President Assimi Goïta strengthening security cooperation with Russia while the Alliance of Sahel States continued developing its joint military structure. On August 19, Goïta held a telephone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin focused on counter-terrorism cooperation and broader bilateral relations in security, trade, and humanitarian affairs. At the same time, Mali continued preparations for deeper cooperation with Algeria following the restoration of diplomatic relations and the reopening of airspace connections between the two countries. These developments reflected Bamako's continuing effort to diversify its external partnerships while maintaining a strong emphasis on security cooperation.

Regional military integration also advanced through the Alliance of Sahel States, as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger moved forward with the operationalization of their joint 5,000-strong military force based in Niamey. The initiative represents an effort by the three AES members to develop a collective security structure capable of coordinating responses to insurgent threats across their shared borders. For Mali, the development is particularly important given the continued pressure from armed groups operating across northern and central areas, where national borders have often provided limited barriers to militant mobility. Alongside the AES initiative, local authorities continued administrative adjustments in southern resource-producing areas, including the management of foreign mining permits and efforts to reinforce state oversight of the sector.

Mali's security environment remained heavily affected by insurgency and allegations of abuses by state and allied forces. Human Rights Watch reported the summary execution of nine civilians during a joint operation involving Russian Africa Corps personnel and Malian forces in central Mali, adding to existing concerns over military conduct in counter-insurgency operations. Meanwhile, localized fighting involving rebel groups such as the Azawad Liberation Front resulted in tactical prisoner exchanges and the release of captured security personnel. Humanitarian access also remained constrained by JNIM and separatist blockades, particularly across northern and central regions, complicating food distribution and security logistics. Domestically, the government continued its restrictive approach toward political criticism, including the imprisonment of a prominent critic for allegedly "discrediting the state," reinforcing concerns over the shrinking space for dissent during the military transition.

Niger

Between August 17 and August 24, 2026, Niger focused heavily on strengthening its domestic security capacity through additional budgetary resources while continuing to manage difficult relations with neighboring Nigeria and the wider regional security environment. On August 21, the Council of Ministers approved a 2 percent upward revision of the 2026 state budget, bringing the total to approximately CFAF 2.981 trillion, or about \$5.3 billion. A significant part of the additional resources was directed toward the Defense and Security Forces, reflecting the centrality of security concerns to the military administration's domestic priorities. The revised financial framework also included measures to simplify taxation and encourage activity in the domestic gold sector, linking resource mobilization and extractive-sector development to the government's broader objective of economic resilience.

Niger's diplomatic environment remained affected by the difficult relationship between Niamey and Nigeria, particularly over approaches to cross-border militant threats. The political divide between Nigeria and the Alliance of Sahel States, which includes Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, continued despite the shared security challenges confronting the region. At the same time, the confirmed release of American missionary pilot Kevin Rideout after more than nine months in captivity shifted diplomatic attention toward his departure from Niger and his reunion with U.S. authorities. The episode provided a rare area of engagement between Niamey and Washington amid the broader restructuring of Niger's external relations.

Security conditions nevertheless remained highly challenging across Niger's western and southeastern regions. The Liptako-Gourma area continued to face pressure from JNIM and Islamic State factions, while porous borders enabled militant and criminal groups to exploit gaps between national security systems. Clashes and cattle-rustling operations along frontier areas also contributed to movements of criminal elements across the Niger-

Nigeria border, prompting Nigerian and Sokoto authorities to intensify tracking operations. Meanwhile, humanitarian conditions in Tillabéri and Diffa remained severe, with localized violence and insecurity restricting humanitarian access and worsening food insecurity. Niger's security strategy during the week therefore combined increased state spending, institutional restructuring, and continued efforts to manage threats extending beyond its borders.

Central African Republic

Between August 17 and August 24, 2026, the Central African Republic (CAR) faced a combination of a major mining disaster, persistent insecurity along its peripheral borders, and growing fiscal pressures on the government. The most serious incident occurred on August 18, when an artisanal gold mine at Zamboye, near the Cameroon border, collapsed and killed more than 100 people. Following the disaster, Minister of Mines and Geology Ruffin Benam Beloungou ordered the closure of the mining site on August 23, citing safety concerns and regulatory non-compliance. The incident highlighted the risks surrounding informal and artisanal mining activities, particularly where weak regulatory enforcement and unsafe working conditions can produce severe human and economic consequences.

Security conditions in the country's peripheral areas also remained difficult as regional instability continued to generate population movements. Military operations and insecurity around border areas such as Zémio and Vakaga contributed to localized cross-border displacement into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, adding further pressure to communities already affected by food insecurity. Nationwide, more than two million people continued to face acute food-security challenges, demonstrating the broader humanitarian consequences of persistent insecurity and regional spillovers. These pressures have also increased the demands placed on national security institutions as the government continues assuming responsibilities previously supported by international peacekeeping structures.

At the political and economic level, the government remained focused on managing fiscal pressures while consolidating the post-election administration of President Faustin-Archange Touadéra. On August 24, authorities prepared a targeted budget amendment intended to address persistent cash-flow limitations and absorb budget overruns, despite the government having recorded a nominal cash surplus at the end of June. At the same time, national security forces continued taking over static security responsibilities from MINUSCA as part of the broader 2026 reduction of the peacekeeping mission's footprint. The week therefore reflected the continuing challenge for Bangui of balancing fiscal constraints and institutional consolidation with growing security and humanitarian demands.

DRC

This week, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) placed renewed emphasis on the diplomatic track surrounding the eastern conflict, with closed-door negotiations in Switzerland producing a new roadmap under the Doha Framework. From August 17 to 21, representatives of the Congolese government and the Rwanda-backed AFC/M23 alliance held negotiations in Switzerland after the talks were relocated from Doha because of instability in the Middle East. The process received support from the United States, Qatar, Switzerland, the African Union Commission, and Togo, which acted as the African Union mediator. The negotiations resulted in agreement on a framework for implementing the peace process and establishing standardized procedures for reporting and monitoring ceasefire violations, an important step intended to reduce the mistrust that has repeatedly undermined previous ceasefire arrangements.

The diplomatic agreement was followed by plans for a more concrete mechanism to assess compliance on the ground. A joint ceasefire verification mission was scheduled to deploy to Minembwe in South Kivu on August 24, marking the first tangible monitoring effort associated with the new truce arrangements. The planned mechanism is significant because previous diplomatic understandings have repeatedly faced difficulties translating into sustained restraint among the parties. By creating a standardized process for identifying and reporting violations, the parties and their international partners sought to establish a more structured basis for responding to breaches and maintaining the credibility of the peace process.

Despite the diplomatic progress, the security situation remained fragile across the eastern DRC. Localized fighting, drone activity, and competing accusations of ceasefire violations continued along the Kivu conflict axes, demonstrating the gap between negotiations and conditions on the ground. Government forces and rebel factions remained engaged in a tense security environment even as the political track advanced. The week therefore represented a combination of diplomatic progress and continued military uncertainty, with the effectiveness of the new ceasefire verification mechanism likely to be central to determining whether the Swiss negotiations can translate into a more durable reduction in violence.

Chad

Chad experienced a significant deterioration in its security environment along the Sudanese border, while the government continued efforts to manage domestic political tensions following recent presidential pardons. The most serious development occurred on August 20, when foreign aircraft and drones, identified by Chadian military intelligence as belonging to Sudanese forces or allied groups, crossed more than 100 kilometers into Chadian territory and bombed a convoy in Ennedi-Est Province. In response, the Chadian General Staff placed military units on high alert and warned the parties involved in

Sudan's conflict against allowing the war to spill across the border. N'Djamena also reaffirmed its right to defend its territorial integrity, reflecting growing concern that the Sudanese conflict could increasingly generate direct security pressures inside Chad.

The escalation on the Sudanese border was accompanied by continued efforts to strengthen Chad's military capabilities and logistical capacity. French defense company Arquus secured a contract worth more than €50 million to renew the Chadian army's logistics vehicle fleet, reinforcing the country's longstanding defense relationship with France at a time of heightened regional insecurity. The agreement is particularly significant as Chad faces growing pressure to secure its extensive borders and maintain military mobility amid instability in Sudan and surrounding areas. At the same time, the government continued pursuing economic and institutional partnerships, with approximately \$58.3 million in financial cooperation agreements finalized with China and the African Development Bank to support public projects and economic stability.

Domestically, the political environment remained shaped by the consequences of the government's recent pardons of prominent opposition figures, including former Prime Minister Succès Masra. Although the pardons allowed several political opponents to regain their freedom, Human Rights Watch and domestic groups continued pressing the authorities to go further by formally vacating the convictions against those released. The issue has become important for the credibility of Chad's political opening, as formal legal exoneration would provide former opposition figures with greater space to participate in political life. The combination of continued political reconciliation, new economic partnerships, and renewed security cooperation with France therefore unfolded against the backdrop of an increasingly volatile regional environment.

12. North Africa

Libya

Reporting highlighted intensified efforts by the United States and Middle Eastern countries, including Turkey and Egypt, to reunify Libya's rival governments fifteen years after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi. The focus of these efforts centered on achieving institutional unity, establishing a unified national budget, and advancing security integration, all set against the backdrop of succession dynamics within the Haftar family.

UN envoy Hanna Tetteh met senior officials from the United States, Türkiye, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom on the sidelines of activity related to the UN General Assembly. The participants stressed the importance of unifying Libyan institutions, achieving greater east-west security integration, supporting the UN political roadmap, and advancing the country toward elections.

Eastern and western Libyan authorities initialed a draft agreement in Tunis in connection with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya process. UNSMIL later issued a denial regarding the full accuracy of details that had been leaked from the related 4+4 Committee draft document.

The United Nations and Algeria reaffirmed that Libya's political process must remain Libyan-led and Libyan-owned, with elections identified as the essential path out of the transitional period. Algeria specifically rejected any form of foreign interference in the country's internal political affairs.

Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah met Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in Rome. The two leaders signed memoranda of understanding covering oil and gas cooperation, Mediterranean joint investment, electrical interconnection, immigration and border protection, water and sewage systems, and a submarine cable link. Their discussions also addressed the lifting of airspace restrictions and the establishment of a higher-level bilateral committee.

Egypt stepped up its contacts with the Haftar camp concerning a political settlement. Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah affirmed his commitment to a unified agreement. A Libyan military delegation visited a United States base in Germany and was welcomed by US adviser Massad Boulos. Reports also noted executions carried out by forces aligned with Haftar.

International mediation efforts continued throughout the period, involving the US Boulos initiative, earlier contacts by Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, and ongoing Egyptian engagement. These efforts are aimed at institutional reunification and security integration against a backdrop of drone attacks, assassinations and competition among militias.

Algeria

The head of Libya's High Council of State, Khalid Al-Mishri, met the head of Algeria's Council of the Nation, Salah Goudjil, in Algeria. They discussed the regional ramifications of the Libyan conflict and welcomed President Abdelmadjid Tebboune's initiative for a Libyan-led solution that excludes negative foreign interference in the country's internal affairs.

As rotating Chair of the African Union Peace and Security Council for the month of August, Algeria advanced continental priorities focused on peace and security, the governance-democracy-human rights nexus, developments in the Sahel covering terrorism, organized crime and humanitarian issues, and the "One AU Approach" for conflict prevention. Related meetings included consultations with the Permanent Representatives Committee Sub-Committee and the AGA-APSA Platform.

UN Special Representative for Libya Hanna Tetteh met Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf in Algiers. Both sides reaffirmed that the political process in Libya must remain Libyan-led, identified elections as the only viable route forward, and rejected foreign interference. Attaf provided a briefing on the outcomes of Algeria's Tripartite Mechanism for neighboring states.

Algeria continued its leadership of the African Union Peace and Security Council with a focus on African integration that links human rights, peace and security. The Algerian Prime Minister attended the opening of the Mediterranean Games in Italy as part of broader diplomatic activity during the period.

Algeria maintained firm positions on Western Sahara in support of self-determination and negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front. It expressed solidarity with Arab states amid regional escalation and upheld the principle of non-interference. Algeria welcomed broader de-escalation efforts in the Gulf and Middle East while emphasizing the importance of Lebanon's security.

Emphasis remained on border security, counter-terrorism and regional stability, particularly in the Sahel and the Libyan neighborhood, under President Tebboune's foreign policy. Algeria sustained ongoing African and bilateral engagements, including references to partnership with Tunisia.

Morocco

Moroccan Justice Minister Abdellatif Ouahbi publicly defended Morocco's "historical and geographical" rights over the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. He proposed a bilateral dialogue mechanism with Spain aimed at achieving a "definitive solution" that would lead to the integration of the enclaves into Morocco. The remarks reignited territorial claims in the context of the recent Ceuta migration crisis.

Spain's Foreign Ministry categorically rejected Morocco's claims and the associated dialogue proposal. It reaffirmed that Ceuta and Melilla form an integral part of Spanish and European Union sovereignty and territorial integrity. The exchange heightened bilateral tensions linked to migration and border security issues.

Reporting covered Morocco-US military cooperation, including the Africa Multidomain Training and Experimentation Center in Tan-Tan and live-fire as well as cruise-missile testing conducted under a 2026–2036 defense roadmap. Spanish officials, particularly voices from the Canary Islands, expressed concern over the militarization and its implications for regional dynamics, including Western Sahara and the enclaves.

The European Union reaffirmed its partnership with Morocco and refused demands for a Western Sahara probe. The EU position aligned with Rabat's autonomy plan rather than

Polisario positions. Related commentary attributed stagnation in the Maghreb Union to Algeria's policy on the Sahara.

Continued focus remained on Western Sahara, where Morocco's autonomy plan was gaining international traction alongside the continuity of the MINURSO mission. Border management with Spain intensified following the July Ceuta migrant influx through reinforced forces and barriers. Deepening defense ties with the United States proceeded, while migration and territorial claims remained intertwined flashpoints.

13. Middle East

Iran-Israel Conflict

The 60-day US-Iran Memorandum of Understanding, which had been signed on 17 June, covered negotiations aimed at reaching a final deal on ending the war, addressing nuclear issues, and reopening the Strait of Hormuz. This negotiation window expired without any lasting agreement being reached and without any confirmed extension of the original timeframe that had been set for the talks between the two sides.

President Trump stated that Iran should “put up the white flag of surrender.” He added that he has “no time schedule” for the ongoing conflict and explicitly ruled out any extension of the expired Memorandum of Understanding that had governed the previous 60-day negotiation period between the United States and Iran.

President Trump threatened to “bomb the s--- out of” Oman, which has served as a key mediator in regional efforts. The threat was issued specifically if Oman “gets in the way” regarding matters connected to the Strait of Hormuz and related navigation or diplomatic developments in the area.

Reports indicated that Iran used the 60-day period covered by the US-Iran Memorandum of Understanding to ramp up its missile and drone production capacity. During the same window Iran also expanded IRGC control and sent advisers to its proxies operating in Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon in order to prepare for the possibility of a wider conflict.

Iranian officials stated that national policy had shifted to a “fully offensive” approach because of stalled diplomacy. A senior source indicated that plans existed for a “timely and precise” attack intended to break the US naval blockade if the diplomatic talks ultimately failed to produce results.

President Trump posted that “there are no talks or conversations going on, or scheduled, with the Islamic Republic of Iran.” The statement confirmed the absence of any active or planned diplomatic exchanges between the United States and Iran at that time.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi accused Israel of being “the biggest opponent and obstacle” to the implementation of the US-Iran Memorandum of Understanding and

the related ceasefire understanding. He claimed that Israel had actively sabotaged the diplomatic process that had been under way.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi claimed that Iran had “won both the war and diplomacy.” The statement was made in the context of the expired negotiation window and the overall state of the conflict with the United States and related parties.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged the United States and Iran to resume negotiations following the expiry of the deadline. He specifically warned against relying on military solutions as a means of addressing the outstanding issues between the two sides.

A vessel transiting the Strait of Hormuz was struck by an unknown projectile, resulting in a casualty among the crew. The incident was reported by the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations organization, and the Omani coastguard aided those involved.

Yemen’s Houthis claimed responsibility for a missile attack directed at a Saudi military ship and its accompanying escorts in the Red Sea. The action formed part of continuing proxy operations that remained linked to the broader regional conflict.

No confirmed United States or Israeli strikes took place inside Iranian territory for multiple consecutive nights, extending an existing pause. Attention during this period shifted toward the application of economic and diplomatic forms of pressure instead.

President Trump announced via Truth Social the launch of what he described as “THE MOST CRUSHING ECONOMIC OPERATION EVER TAKEN AGAINST ANY COUNTRY.” The measure was directed specifically against Iran as part of the continuing pressure campaign.

Israeli intelligence, reported through Channel 12 and a senior source, stated that Iran was rapidly rebuilding its missile production system. The same reporting indicated that Iran retained thousands of ballistic missiles, including more than 1,000 medium-range systems capable of reaching Israeli territory.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent described plans for a “one-two punch” that would combine the existing naval blockade with “the toughest sanctions in history.” The stated aim of the combined measures was to bring about the collapse of the Iranian regime.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian stated that it would be better to end the war “now, as we are in a position of power and dignity.” The remark reflected his assessment of Iran’s current standing in the conflict.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf observed that military power by itself is insufficient. He emphasized that economic strength and the development of domestic production capacity are also required for national resilience.

The US Treasury predesignated Hezbollah as a terrorist group. The designation specifically emphasized the organization's ties to Tehran and formed part of the wider focus on the proxy dimension of the conflict.

Israel conducted airstrikes in southern Lebanon, including operations in the Baraashit buffer zone area. The strikes were linked to Hezbollah activity and formed part of the broader proxy conflict connected to the main Iran-related theatre.

Iran vowed to deliver a “devastating” or “crushing” response to United States threats of imposing the toughest economic measures ever applied. The army chief and other Iranian officials issued accompanying strong warnings on the matter.

Iran described the sanctions measures floated by President Trump as “economic terrorism.” Iranian officials further warned that any country choosing to cooperate with the new United States sanctions would be “considered an enemy.”

Reports indicated that the United States was pressing China, a major trading partner of Iran, to support the “most crushing economic operation” directed against Iran. At the same time oil traffic through the Strait of Hormuz remained near a complete standstill.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian defended the expired US Memorandum of Understanding as the best available path out of the prevailing “neither war nor peace” situation. He presented it as a means of escaping economic, military and security problems while insisting that the arrangement involved no form of capitulation.

The newly appointed Iranian security chief Mohsen Rezaei, serving as secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, adopted a defiant public stance. He warned of “seismic” retaliation, including the possible targeting of alternative Gulf oil routes, if neighboring countries supported United States sanctions threats.

Pakistan's army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir planned or was in the process of travelling to Tehran for high-level meetings. The visit formed part of ongoing mediation efforts intended to de-escalate tensions between the United States and Iran and to help revive diplomatic talks.

Iran issued warnings to vessels that fines or detention could be imposed for violations of rules in the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian statements further declared that “not a single drop of oil” would be exported if the United States continued its economic war measures.

Egypt, Qatar and other countries called for a return to the June US-Iran negotiating framework. Oman continued technical discussions with Iran concerning a shipping map and routes for the Strait of Hormuz, although these efforts faced partial opposition from the White House.

Diplomatic shuttle efforts continued through channels involving Pakistan, Qatar, Oman and other parties, yet no breakthrough was achieved. President Trump instructed officials not to pursue talks indefinitely in the absence of clear Iranian signals of willingness to accept his preferred form of deal.

Brent crude oil prices fluctuated within a range of approximately 89 to 94 US dollars per barrel. The movements occurred against a background of ongoing disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz and persistent uncertainty, with global energy and supply-chain concerns remaining elevated.

Israeli strikes on Syria's Abu al-Duhur airbase, which were connected to broader regional tensions involving Iran-aligned dynamics and Turkish presence, produced related regional reactions. Egypt issued a formal condemnation of the strikes as part of the wider response.

The United States naval blockade of Iranian ports continued in force as a central instrument of pressure, operating alongside the planned additional sanctions. Iran meanwhile maintained its claims of effective control over the Strait of Hormuz even as traffic through the waterway stayed heavily reduced.

Multiple reports described the conflict as having entered a "bargaining phase" characterized by fighting while talking, or in some cases not talking. Inside Iran, hardline and more pragmatic factions continued to debate the appropriate path forward, with President Pezeshkian appearing more open to the Memorandum of Understanding while security hardliners remained more defiant.

The US Treasury continued preparations for the announcement of major new sanctions measures, with Secretary Scott Bessent expected to play a prominent role. Iranian statements framed the forthcoming measures as failing and as "desperate" steps by the other side.

Hezbollah-Israel clashes in Lebanon, Houthi operations in the Red Sea, and Iranian support networks continued to function as active flashpoints. These proxy activities intersected directly with the main theatre of the United States and Israel confrontation with Iran.

The expiry of the Memorandum of Understanding left the conflict in a condition of economic attrition and asymmetric pressure. This featured the United States reliance on blockade and sanctions measures set against Iranian leverage over the Strait of Hormuz and readiness among its proxies. Mediators including Pakistan, Oman, Qatar and Egypt remained actively engaged in efforts to revive diplomacy while risks of renewed kinetic escalation persisted.

Turkey

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan spoke by phone with US President Donald Trump. Erdoğan called for maximum use of diplomacy regarding US-Iran tensions. The leaders also discussed the Gaza process, with Erdoğan criticizing Israeli actions during the second phase of Trump's plan, bilateral relations, and the recent Mecca Joint Defense Agreement between Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan as a strong stance supporting regional stability.

In interview remarks reported on 17 August, President Erdoğan said he planned a visit to Syria that had previously been postponed. He reaffirmed Turkey's full support for Syrian stability, stating "Syria will not be alone." He also discussed the roles of Kurds in peace efforts and progress on military integration.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan held talks with his Iranian counterpart focused on the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and the continuity of the ceasefire. The discussions included related coordination aimed at regional de-escalation.

Israel carried out airstrikes on Syria's Abu al-Duhur airbase, located near the Turkish border. Turkey condemned the strikes as reckless violations of Syrian sovereignty that undermine stability in the country.

Turkey's presidency and officials rejected as "untenable" Israeli claims, originating from Netanyahu's office, that Syria was about to allow Turkish troop deployment at the airbase. Ankara accused Israel of using the allegations to legitimize unlawful strikes and pursue expansionist policies ahead of Israeli elections. Turkey affirmed its continued legitimate cooperation with the Syrian government for peace and stability.

Reporting emerged of a prior phone call on 14 August between Mossad chief Roman Gofman and Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani. The call focused on Turkish military presence and support in Syria, including weapons and drones, and took place days before the Israeli strikes.

The Turkish Defense Ministry and Communications Directorate denied Israeli allegations of planned troop deployments or the presence of a Turkish military delegation at Abu al-Duhur before or during the strike. Officials called on Israel to cease reckless attacks and comply with international law.

The Turkish Defense Ministry reiterated its call for Israel to stop attacks on Syria in the interest of Syrian and regional peace and stability.

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan held phone calls with Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, discussing the Hormuz crisis and Gaza, and with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani on regional developments.

Joint statements involving Turkey, acting as mediator with Egypt and Qatar and in broader groupings that included Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and others, condemned Israeli actions in Gaza. The statements urged implementation of the ceasefire and roadmap and addressed related regional issues.

Israeli officials, including Defense Minister Katz, warned Turkey against “dangerous adventures” in Syria. Turkish responses framed the Israeli rhetoric as election-driven provocation and isolation.

Turkey sought Interpol red notices related to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and others over earlier flotilla and genocide-related charges amid rising bilateral tensions.

Reports emerged of secret or deconfliction talks and US efforts, involving envoy Tom Barrack, to establish a mechanism involving Turkey, Israel and Syria to prevent friction after the Syria base strike. Turkish officials stressed they had no desire for war but were ready if necessary.

High-level Turkish messaging continued to reject Israeli claims regarding Syria deployments. Officials emphasized support for Syrian reconstruction and sovereignty and viewed the Israeli strikes as a challenge to Turkey’s regional role and the Mecca Pact.

Reporting focused on growing fears of Israel-Turkey conflict, with secret talks underway and Syria as a flashpoint. Israeli positions included limits on Turkish entrenchment involving air defense, drones and missiles, while Turkish statements denied any aggressive intent.

14. Global Powers

U.S.-Canada negotiations collapsed after Washington imposed 50% tariffs on approximately \$20 billion worth of Canadian goods. The measures affect a relatively limited share of Canadian exports to the United States but hit politically and commercially sensitive sectors.

Prime Minister Mark Carney suspended the negotiations, rejected Washington's final demands as unfair, and announced dollar-for-dollar retaliatory tariffs, due to begin on September 8, targeting American steel, dairy products, appliances, agricultural equipment, pulp and paper, electronics and other goods. By August 23–24, markets were already treating the dispute as the beginning of a potentially wider North American trade war.

The U.S. signaled a significant escalation against Iran as the previous diplomatic framework and ceasefire arrangements remained unresolved. By August 24, global markets were awaiting details of a broader U.S. sanctions package, with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent expected to clarify the measures.

The Iran issue was larger than the anticipated sanctions announcement. On August 20, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the United States would impose what he called “the toughest sanctions in history” against Iran. President Trump also warned of economic consequences for countries supporting Tehran, raising the possibility of secondary pressure on Iran's commercial partners, particularly those involved in its energy trade.

By August 23–24, Iran had rejected the U.S. campaign as ineffective and described Washington's sanctions threats as a sign of desperation. The confrontation remained closely connected to the disruption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, which has significantly affected oil flows and kept global energy markets volatile. The critical strategic question for Washington is whether it is prepared to extend meaningful secondary sanctions to major economies that maintain economic relations with Tehran

The prospect of further sanctions is particularly important because the confrontation remains connected to the Strait of Hormuz, where Iranian leverage over a critical global energy chokepoint continues to affect oil markets. Oil prices, global equities, gold and currency markets all reacted to uncertainty surrounding Washington's next move. Iran has also warned of potential responses affecting Gulf energy interests.

On August 20, the U.S. Treasury took action reinforcing Washington's position that Hezbollah operates not simply as an independent Lebanese armed movement but as an organization serving the Iranian regime and operating under the direction of the IRGC-Quds Force.

The action also targeted individuals allegedly involved in a transnational cash-smuggling network moving large sums through commercial flights and financial routes involving Lebanon, Turkey, the UAE and Iran. The objective was not merely to freeze assets. Washington was trying to expose and disrupt the financial architecture linking Iran, Hezbollah and regional illicit-finance networks. Treasury's official August 20 sanctions action covered Iran-related and counterterrorism designations.

The United States imposed sanctions on the president of the International Criminal Court and a senior ICC trial lawyer during the week, escalating Washington's confrontation with international judicial institutions. Reuters reported the measures on August 18.

On August 17, President Trump said that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had responded to his diplomatic overtures, although he provided no details. The statement followed Trump's efforts to reduce the scale of some U.S.-South Korean military activities and reopen the possibility of direct leader-to-leader diplomacy.

On August 18, when Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui that Russia and North Korea were jointly fighting for what he described as a “new, righteous world order.” Lavrov praised the relationship between the two countries as a historic and “militant friendship.”

The most consequential issue for Beijing this week was the disruption of Iranian oil supplies. Reuters reported on August 21 that offers of Iranian crude to Chinese buyers had fallen sharply and prices had risen as the U.S. blockade affecting Iran's oil exports intensified. China is Iran's most important oil customer, making Beijing particularly exposed to any sustained disruption.

China has responded by looking increasingly toward Russian crude. Reuters reported that Chinese imports of Russian seaborne oil were expected to reach around 1.25 million barrels per day in August, with Chinese buyers competing more aggressively for supplies that had traditionally gone to India.

15. Europe

On August 24, Prime Minister Andy Burnham travelled to Kyiv for his first overseas trip since taking office. The choice was highly symbolic. Rather than visiting Washington, Brussels or a major Commonwealth partner, Burnham went directly to a war zone to demonstrate continuity in Britain's strategic commitment to Ukraine.

During the visit, he was expected to meet President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and participate in Ukraine's Independence Day events. He also co-chaired a meeting of the Coalition of the Willing, alongside other international leaders supporting Ukraine.

Russia has withdrawn its own ambassador to the United Kingdom, Andrei Kelin, rather than expelling the British ambassador. Kelin left his post after more than seven years, and Moscow has not yet named a successor. Russia has indicated that it does not formally intend to downgrade diplomatic relations, but leaving the ambassadorial post vacant sends a clear political signal at a time when relations are at an exceptionally low point.

One of France's most important diplomatic actions came on August 18, when Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot announced that Paris would expel two Iranian diplomats. The move was in response to the detention and alleged intimidation of two French embassy staff members in Tehran in July.

France said the Iranian action was unacceptable and summoned Iran's chargé d'affaires in Paris. Tehran accused the French diplomats of activities incompatible with diplomatic norms, while Paris rejected those allegations as baseless.

France is also set to co-chair, alongside Britain and Germany, a meeting of the Coalition of the Willing focused on Ukraine. Macron, UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz are expected to lead the meeting, with Zelenskyy participating from Kyiv.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

During the reporting week, UN agencies reported mounting displacement and humanitarian pressures across Sudan as intensifying conflict and seasonal flooding compounded an already dire situation. According to the International Organization for Migration's latest displacement snapshot, an estimated 8.6 million internally displaced persons were recorded across 185 localities in all 18 states, while approximately 4.9 million individuals had returned to their areas of origin. Since late 2025, intensified fighting has newly displaced more than 200,000 people across the wider Kordofan region, with displacement surging by 25 percent in Sheikan locality over the past eight months. In North Kordofan, repeated drone strikes targeted critical civilian infrastructure, including the main electricity transformer in El Obeid, triggering prolonged power outages that disrupted water pumping, health facilities, and telecommunications. Meanwhile, in North Darfur, heavy rains in the Tawila area destroyed or damaged nearly 1,350 homes, displacing over 1,000 families. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reiterated calls on all parties to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure and ensure safe, unimpeded humanitarian access, noting that this year's humanitarian appeal for Sudan remains only 41 percent funded, with \$1.2 billion received out of the \$2.9 billion required. The UN Security Council is scheduled to hold an open briefing on Sudan on August 24, requested by Denmark as Council president, to discuss the protection of civilians and the humanitarian consequences of the ongoing conflict, with briefings expected from Under Secretary General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher.

During the week the Quintet comprising the African Union, IGAD, the League of Arab States the European Union and the United Nations invited Sudanese factions to Addis Ababa in late August to build consensus on a unified political vision and form a preparatory committee for wider talks. The invitation builds on exploratory consultations held in Addis Ababa in June where the Quintet engaged Sudanese civilian political leaders to discuss proposals and perspectives on advancing the political process, including through confidence building measures. The August 22-23 consultations brought together anti-war forces, including the Sudanese Declaration of Principles forces, the People's Congress Party, the Umma Party led by Mubarak al-Fadil, women's organizations, youth movements and civil society groups. Participants agreed on a joint position document outlining a three-track peace process encompassing humanitarian, ceasefire and political tracks, while firmly rejecting the national dialogue initiative proposed by army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, which they described as misleading and aimed at legitimizing military rule. The Democratic Bloc a group aligned with the Sudanese Armed Forces participated, while the Sudan Founding Alliance (Tasees), considered close to the Rapid Support Forces and the Civil Democratic Alliance of Revolutionary Forces

(Sumud) boycotted the initiative, citing concerns over the process design and urging a comprehensive review of the Quintet's mediation approach . The consultations came amid General al-Burhan's August 15 announcement supporting a national dialogue with security guarantees and logistical support for participants.

On August 24, the UN Security Council convened an open briefing on Sudan requested by Denmark as Council president for August to address the protection of civilians and the humanitarian consequences of the escalating conflict. Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen chaired the meeting with briefings from Under Secretary General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher, alongside a civil society representative focusing on attacks on healthcare and the gendered impact of the war. DiCarlo highlighted the deteriorating security situation, particularly in North Kordofan where El Obeid faces mounting pressure from Rapid Support Forces and allied fighters with repeated drone strikes targeting critical civilian infrastructure, forcing medical facilities and water stations to shut down. According to IOM, more than 200,000 people have been displaced across the wider Kordofan region since late 2025. In Blue Nile fighting intensified around Kurmuk and Geisan, raising concerns about further regionalization of the conflict amid allegations that Ethiopian territory has been used as a supply conduit for RSF operations. OCHA reported that armed drones accounted for 80 percent of civilian deaths in the first half of 2026, hitting markets, health facilities, and other civilian sites. Briefers reiterated calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities, protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and urged member states to refrain from external interference. The humanitarian response plan for Sudan, requiring \$2.87 billion, remains only 41 percent funded.

Africa Union

During the reporting week AUSSOM maintained operational activities amid intensifying debates over the future of international forces in Somalia. On August 18, Sector 4 troops conducted a security patrol along the Beletweyne Ceelgal supply route in Hiiraan, clearing mines and IEDs to secure safe passage for civilians and security forces. The following day Deputy Special Representative Amb. Mouktar Osman Karie and Force Commander Lt. Gen. Sam Kavuma met with a Danish delegation in Mogadishu led by Deputy Head of Mission Bjørn Rønhof Qvortrup, with discussions focusing on AUSSOM's mandate, sustainable funding, shared priorities and ways to strengthen partnership. These engagements came against the backdrop of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's August 17 declaration that Somalia has reached a point where we can now take full charge of our security, following the graduation of approximately 3,000 newly trained Somali National Army soldiers the largest single graduating class since 1991 under a Saudi backed defense cooperation agreement. Meanwhile troop-contributing countries continue pressing the UN Security Council for extended logistical support as

AUSSOM faces mounting funding pressures with concerns that hasty withdrawal risks creating a security vacuum that Al-Shabaab could exploit.

AfCFTA Secretary General Wamkele Mene concluded a three-day official visit to Somalia from August 16 to 18, as the country prepares to deposit its instrument of ratification with the African Union Commission in September 2026, which would make Somalia the 50th State Party to the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. During the visit, Mene met with Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre, Minister of Commerce and Industry Ambassador Gamal Mohamed Hassan, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdisalam Abdi Ali, reaffirming the Secretariat's commitment to supporting Somalia through technical preparations for effective implementation. Discussions with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry focused on practical steps from ratification to implementation tariff schedules, rules of origin and customs procedures required for Somali shipments to be recognized as originating in Somalia when entering other African markets. The Secretariat presented available support instruments, including the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS), the AfCFTA electronic tariff book and the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund. A private sector dialogue on August 18 brought together the Somali Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Somali Manufacturers Association and invited businesses, with the Chamber identifying five priority areas for technical assistance, including support for priority export sectors and access to services sectors such as telecommunications, logistics, finance and digital trade. The Secretariat committed to working with Somalia toward the country's first shipment under the AfCFTA regime, demonstrating the end-to-end process. Somalia as an East African Community Partner State, can build on the Community's consolidated schedule of tariff concessions for the 90% category, while the remaining 10% is being finalized within the Community. The visit also included engagement with the Federation of Somali Trade Unions, emphasizing the role of workers and social dialogue in ensuring inclusive economic growth.

On August 20, AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf received the Bureau of the Pan-African Parliament led by its newly elected President Dr. Fateh Boutbig, at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa. The meeting marked the first engagement between the Commission and the seventh legislature's Bureau since its election in April 2026, during which Boutbig was elected with 118 votes as the sole candidate for the North African region. The Chairperson reaffirmed the Commission's readiness to work closely with the Parliament in advancing continental priorities describing the Pan-African Parliament as a cornerstone for ensuring direct participation of African peoples in decision making and advancing economic integration. Both sides agreed on the need for closer cooperation to support the effective implementation of Agenda 2063 and advance Africa's integration and development objectives. The discussions come amid broader efforts to institutionalize collaboration between AU

organs with the Peace and Security Council having convened its 1362nd session for consultations with the Pan-African Parliament on peace and security matters just days prior, reflecting growing momentum toward a more structured, measurable and action-oriented partnership across AU institutions.

On August 21, the AU Peace and Security Council and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights held their annual joint consultative meeting in Addis Ababa, focused on strengthening cooperation and operationalizing human rights as an active lever for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. PSC Chairperson Ambassador Mohamed Khaled highlighted the pivotal role of civil society organizations in early warning and mediation. ACHPR Chairperson Idrissa Sow stressed the importance of developing an early warning mechanism in the field of human rights and called for intensified joint missions to conflict areas. AU Commissioner Bankole Adeoye underscored the need for stronger institutional synergy across early warning systems, peace support operations and joint fact-finding missions, reaffirming the AU's commitment to operationalizing the governance peace development nexus.

On August 17, the AU Peace and Security Council delegation concluded its two-day field mission to Sudan with an engagement with representatives of Sudanese political parties and civil society organizations in Khartoum. The consultations underscored the AU's commitment to an inclusive, Sudanese owned and Sudanese led peace process as the foundation for sustainable peace with discussions focusing on national priorities for addressing governance and security challenges, as well as pathways toward an inclusive national dialogue. The delegation had previously met with Transitional Sovereignty Council President General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Prime Minister Kamil Idris, who briefed the Council on the government's December 2025 peace initiative and confirmed that a Sudanese owned national dialogue would begin soon. During the civil society engagement, participants reaffirmed the need for dialogue and national reconciliation while rejecting external interference and any parallel entities undermining Sudan's unity. The mission the first such visit since Sudan's suspension from the AU following the 2021 military takeover was led by Algeria's Permanent Representative Ambassador Mohamed Khaled who emphasized that the engagement reflected AU solidarity with the Sudanese people and the Union's commitment to supporting all efforts toward a lasting peaceful solution.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

On August 21, a high-level learning event on agri food systems opened in Addis Ababa, bringing together the IGAD Committee of Ambassadors, the IGAD Parliamentary Forum on Agri food Systems, national CAADP focal points and technical experts to advance implementation of the Kampala Declaration and its 2026–2035 Strategy and Action Plan. Ethiopia's Solomon Lale, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Agriculture Standing

Committee, called for stronger regional cooperation, political commitment and increased investment to accelerate Agri food systems transformation across the IGAD region, emphasizing that effective parliamentary engagement and sound policy measures are essential to translating commitments into concrete action. Opening the event, IGAD Foreign Service Institute Director Mohammed Omar Djama stressed that Agri food transformation should not be treated as an agricultural agenda alone, noting its implications for economies, societies, political stability and regional integration, while highlighting the complementary roles of parliaments and diplomatic institutions in turning commitments into action.

On August 20, IGAD, with support from the African Development Bank, continued a training program in Torit, South Sudan, equipping approximately 30 representatives from government institutions, traditional leadership and women's organizations with practical skills to integrate gender perspectives into peacebuilding, land governance and decision making . The training forms part of the broader Building Women's Economic Resilience for Sustainable Peace (BWERSP) Project which has been advancing women's empowerment and inclusive land governance across Eastern Equatoria State . In July IGAD convened similar inter ministerial consultations in Torit, bringing together national and state government institutions, civil society organizations, women-led groups and traditional leaders to strengthen collaboration and lay the groundwork for coordinated implementation . The initiative responds to longstanding challenges facing South Sudanese women, who remain underrepresented in formal peace processes and face insecure land rights despite constitutional guarantees, with the 2018 Revitalized Agreement establishing a 35% quota for women's participation. The training aimed to move beyond symbolic participation toward meaningful engagement, equipping participants to advocate for women's inclusion in land governance and conflict resolution.

On August 21, IGAD Head of Mission to Uganda Joselyn Bigirwa met with Ramathan Ggoobi, Permanent Secretary and Secretary to the Treasury at Uganda's Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, to discuss strengthening regional cooperation and advancing shared priorities between IGAD and the Government of Uganda. The engagement followed IGAD's recent national consultations in Kampala from August 18-22, which brought together representatives from Uganda's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Planning Authority, and other stakeholders to review the IGAD Strategy 2021–2025 and formulate the new IGAD Strategy 2026–2030. During those consultations, officials emphasized aligning regional priorities with Uganda's national development frameworks and the Fourth National Development Plan, with particular focus on peace and security, economic cooperation, health and agriculture

IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu led a regional delegation to the 13th East African Healthcare Federation Conference in Addis Ababa, held from August 21 to

23, bringing together Health Ministers, private sector leaders, investors and health experts from more than 20 countries. Addressing the conference at the Adwa Victory Memorial Museum, Dr. Workneh emphasized that health sovereignty is not a luxury it is the absolute bedrock of national sovereignty, calling for a paradigm shift from viewing healthcare as a social cost to recognizing it as a strategic economic driver that creates jobs, attracts investment and safeguards human capital. Under the theme Resilience Building the East African Health Economy, the conference focused on four pillars excellence in health service delivery, local manufacturing, investment financing and regional integration, with more than 2,000 delegates and 80 exhibitors participating in discussions on transforming health systems from vulnerability to strength. Dr. Workneh outlined IGAD's commitments to investing patient capital into pharmaceutical manufacturing, digital health networks, and cold chain infrastructure dismantling regulatory trade barriers to establish a unified East African health market and investing in the health workforce to retain regional talent.

On August 19, IGAD Head of Mission to Ethiopia Abebaw Bihonegn met with Swedish Ambassador Magnus Lennartsson in Addis Ababa to discuss the long-standing IGAD Sweden partnership, governance and key regional developments. IGAD expressed appreciation for Sweden's unwavering commitment to regional stability and development over more than four decades, which has been instrumental in advancing collective efforts toward peace, security and sustainable development across member states. Sweden remains one of IGAD's most trusted development partners with support spanning critical sectors including peace and security, climate resilience, food security, health systems strengthening and gender mainstreaming. Both sides emphasized the value of sustained dialogue and explored avenues for strengthened cooperation in advancing regional peace, stability and development.

European Union

On August 19, World Humanitarian Day the European Union issued a joint statement from High Representative Kaja Kallas and Crisis Management Commissioner Hadja Lahbib honoring the courage of humanitarian workers who risk their lives daily to deliver aid in the world's most dangerous places while condemning the alarming rate of attacks against aid personnel. The statement noted that so far in 2026, 82 humanitarian workers have been killed, 39 abducted and 97 wounded, emphasizing that attacks on humanitarian staff, hospitals and civilian infrastructure are not accidents but violations of international humanitarian law . The EU reaffirmed its position as one of the world's leading humanitarian donors with the European Commission allocating nearly €2 billion for humanitarian aid in 2026 while stressing the need for safe and unimpeded humanitarian access in crises including Sudan, where systematic obstruction continues to block aid delivery. Through the Protect Aid Workers rapid response initiative, which provided

assistance to 782 aid workers across 25 countries in 2025 the EU supports local humanitarian staff who account for 90 percent of those targeted. The EU also highlighted its ongoing humanitarian support in Somalia, where the bloc has provided over €750 million in assistance since 2017, including emergency aid reaching flood and drought affected communities, while continuing to call for humanitarian access and protection of civilians in Sudan's escalating crisis.

The European Union Delegation attended the launch in Mogadishu of the Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition's (IMCTC) "Journalists for Peace" initiative, a strategic media program aimed at strengthening national media capabilities to counter extremist discourse, hate speech and terrorist propaganda in the digital space. The launch event, held on August 22, brought together representatives from more than 43-member countries, senior Somali government officials including Defense Minister Ahmed Moallim Fiqi, and IMCTC Secretary-General Maj. Gen. Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Moghedi.

The five-day training program brings together 40 journalists, academics and social media influencers from government media, federal member states, private outlets and digital platforms to receive training on digital verification, open-source intelligence, analysis of extremist messaging and counter narrative development. Speaking at the launch, Defense Minister Fiqi emphasized that countering terrorism cannot rely solely on military and security operations but requires building responsible media discourse to immunize communities against disinformation, radicalization and extremist propaganda.

The initiative presents the first phase of a broader IMCTC program scheduled through 2027, covering training and equipping Somali armed forces, rehabilitation initiatives, economic security and strengthening judicial handling of terrorism cases, with projects extending to more than ten Somali government institutions including ministries of Defense, Internal Security, Information, Finance and Endowments. The launch reflects Somalia's growing emphasis on using communication and community engagement alongside security operations to counter Al-Shabaab and other extremist groups.



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