HORN REVIEW

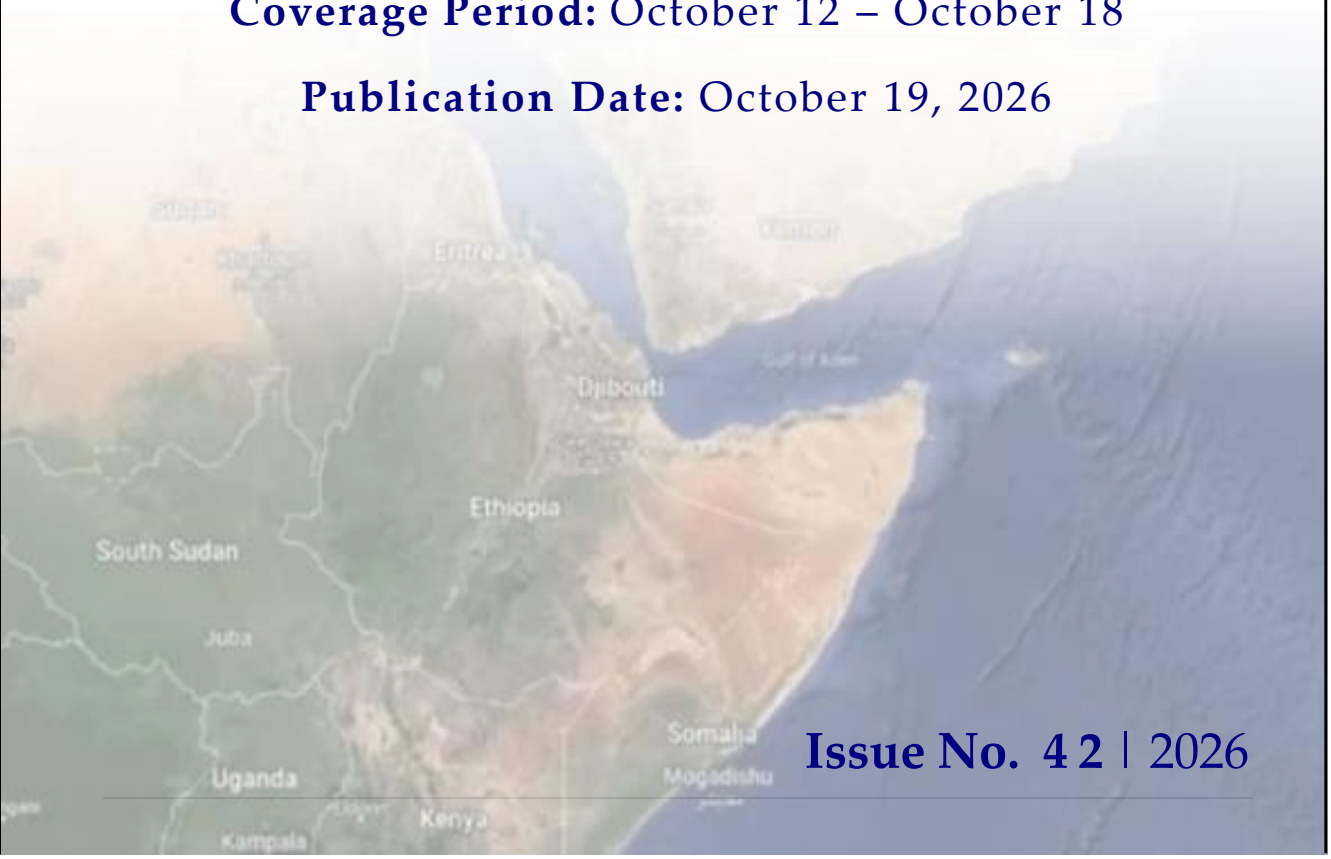
IDEAS CONNECTIONS SYNERGY

Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

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Horn Review: Weekly Report

October 12 – October 18, 2026

1. Ethiopia

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed conducted two significant telephone discussions this week that advanced Ethiopia's diplomatic engagements. On 12 October he held a fruitful and constructive call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, focusing on bilateral relations and key regional developments while reaffirming mutual commitment to stronger cooperation. Two days later, on 14 October, PM Abiy spoke with United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio about bilateral, regional and multilateral matters. The Ethiopian leader welcomed Washington's assurance of continued support and described the exchange as evidence of a more strategic partnership between the two countries.

These high-level contacts unfolded against a backdrop of growing international concern over rising military tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea. On 15 October the United Kingdom issued a formal statement expressing deep concern at the worsening security situation in the Horn of Africa, calling on all parties to respect sovereignty and territorial integrity, avoid escalatory actions, and return to dialogue under African Union facilitation while ensuring humanitarian access and civilian protection. United States Secretary Rubio, speaking later in the week, similarly urged restraint, noting troop movements on both sides of the border and warning that the situation risked a broader regional conflict. He confirmed his earlier conversation with the PM and acknowledged Ethiopia's security concerns while stressing the need for a measured response.

On 12 October Ethiopian government forces entered the town of Adigrat in northern Tigray after rebel fighters withdrew, an advance that brought federal troops closer to the Eritrean border and further elevated regional tensions after the two neighbors had already cut diplomatic ties. Federal forces subsequently pushed farther north, reaching the border town of Zalambessa, amid reports of earlier Eritrean troop movements inside Ethiopian territory, Ethiopian drone strikes, and subsequent withdrawals.

Parallel developments inside Ethiopia reflected efforts to stabilize the north after renewed fighting. On 16 October the federal government established a six-month caretaker administration for the Tigray Region, following a House of Federation resolution and a Council of Ministers decision. The body is mandated to restore peace and public services, rebuild infrastructure, facilitate the return of displaced people, and prepare conditions for free and transparent elections within six months. Officials appointed include Assefa Abreha Hagos for administration and public services, Dr. Tewodros Aregawe for economy and reconstruction, Brigadier General Gebre-Egziabher Beyene Hailu for peace and security, Redae Halefom for political mobilization, and Dr. Shishay Amare as mayor of Mekelle. The government attributed the measure to repeated obstruction of the Pretoria

Agreement by TPLF leadership and the group's initiation of another round of conflict that ended in its defeat.

The Tigray People's Liberation Front promptly rejected the new arrangement as illegitimate. In statements issued on 17 October the party described the caretaker administration as a "Prosperity structure" imposed by the ruling party, declared that its decisions would have no legality or enforceability, and warned regional institutions against cooperation, saying those that did so would be held accountable. The rejection came as federal-aligned forces consolidated control in areas including Adigrat near the Eritrean border and as hundreds of former combatants began registering for programs aimed at returning them to civilian life.

Ethiopia also briefed foreign military attachés at Bishoftu Air Force Base on recent security operations, displaying captured weapons and emphasizing the defense of national sovereignty and territorial integrity in an effort to clarify the situation and counter circulating narratives. Amid these security challenges, Ethiopia recorded constructive diplomatic and developmental advances. On 13 October Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman sent a congratulatory message to PM Abiy following his re-election for a new five-year term, wishing him success and expressing hopes for further progress and prosperity for the Ethiopian people. The same day the House of People's Representatives unanimously approved a 145.8 million US dollar concessional loan from the International Development Association for the first phase of a power-sector reform, investment and modernization project. The funds will expand transmission infrastructure, build and upgrade substations, and install underground lines in Addis Ababa, also supporting reliable electricity for the COP32 climate conference Ethiopia will host in 2027.

Also on 13 October, National Bank of Ethiopia Governor Eyob Tekalign held talks with the Central Bank of the UAE governor on the sidelines of the IMF–World Bank meetings, exploring deeper financial and banking cooperation, institutional ties and expertise exchange. The same period saw IMF Deputy Managing Director Nigel Clarke commend Ethiopia's reform momentum and resilience during a bilateral meeting, reaffirming the Fund's commitment to continued partnership and support for macroeconomic transformation. Meanwhile the Ethiopian delegation in Bangkok advanced discussions with the World Bank on a new Country Partnership Framework, prioritizing macroeconomic stability, private-sector growth, climate-smart agriculture, sustainable infrastructure, regional energy integration and technical support for COP32 preparations, while officials highlighted finalized bilateral creditor agreements, progress with Eurobond holders, and a deliberate shift from debt relief toward attracting fresh investment capital. Ethiopia's international standing received further recognition on 16 October when the country was elected to chair the 78th session of the UNHCR Executive Committee. The election acknowledges Ethiopia's longstanding role as a host to more than 1.2 million refugees and asylum-seekers.

2. Sudan

Sudan's war intensified during the week of 12–19 October, with expanding drone operations, deadly attacks on civilian areas and mounting pressure on the country's already devastated economy. Fighting continued across Darfur and Kordofan, while attacks on military installations in eastern Sudan demonstrated the conflict's widening geographical reach. Diplomatic efforts also gained renewed attention after army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan wrote to US President Donald Trump expressing his commitment to ending the war. However, the gap between diplomatic declarations and battlefield developments remained pronounced, as both sides continued military operations and civilians faced escalating displacement, hunger and insecurity. The United Nations warned that the conflict showed no sign of easing and cautioned that continued external support for the warring parties was helping sustain their pursuit of military victory.

The use of drones and airstrikes remained a central feature of the conflict. In Nyala, the capital of South Darfur and the administrative center of the Rapid Support Forces' parallel authorities, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) said airstrikes on 16 October had destroyed RSF command-and-control facilities. The RSF-aligned Tasees coalition, however, reported that a strike hit a crowded livestock market, killing 30 civilians, including 17 women and five children. Emergency Lawyers also reported that the market had been struck. Competing accounts illustrate the difficulty of independently establishing the military significance of individual attacks and the extent of civilian harm. Nevertheless, the reported deaths reinforce concerns over the use of aerial weapons in populated areas as the army seeks to weaken the RSF's control over Darfur.

Civilian casualties were also reported elsewhere. In West Darfur, regional authorities accused the RSF of attacking a displacement settlement in the Hajar Sanakeet area of Sirba locality on 17 October, killing at least 11 people and injuring five. Most of the victims were reportedly women and children who had previously fled violence and the destruction of their homes near the Sudan–Chad border. In West Kordofan, a drone strike attributed to the SAF reportedly killed four civilians travelling in a vehicle toward North Kordofan, including people seeking medical treatment and others travelling to purchase essential goods. Local monitors also reported additional civilian deaths in attacks in the region. These incidents highlight the vulnerability of displaced populations and the risks posed by military operations along the transport routes connecting communities to markets and healthcare facilities.

Eastern Sudan, previously less exposed to the intensity of fighting seen in Darfur and Kordofan, also faced renewed aerial threats. On 18 October, military sources said air defenses intercepted RSF drones targeting army positions, military facilities and infrastructure in Gedaref and Kassala states. The reported targets included the Upper Atbara and Setit dam complex, the Khashm el-Girba dam and the army's Second Infantry

Division headquarters in Gedaref. No casualties or major damage were reported. Although the attack was reportedly repelled, the targeting of military and infrastructure sites in the east points to the growing operational reach of drone warfare. Repeated attacks on infrastructure could threaten essential services and further disrupt economic activity, even where direct damage remains limited.

The reported killing of 72 gold miners in an airstrike near the Egyptian border brought the war's economic and regional dimensions into sharper focus. Survivors described an aircraft circling a mining site in the Jabal al-Uqaydat area before striking workers, while rights groups attributed the attack to the Egyptian air force. The allegations have not been independently established. Egypt's military subsequently announced operations against illegal gold mining near the Sudanese border, stating that the campaign was intended to enforce Egyptian sovereignty and protect state resources, while al-Burhan ordered an investigation into the incident. The mining area lies in a border region claimed by both countries, adding sensitivity to the case. The tragedy also exposes the economic pressures driving civilians into hazardous informal mining: as agriculture and other livelihoods collapse, gold extraction has become an important source of income and one of the few economic activities sustaining households in wartime Sudan.

Diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire remained active but uncertain. Al-Burhan said he had written to Trump to reaffirm his commitment to ending the conflict. The correspondence followed contacts between US adviser Massad Boulos and the Sudanese army chief earlier in October, with Egypt facilitating the meeting. Washington has promoted a 90-day humanitarian truce through the Quad mechanism, which includes the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. However, the Sudanese army had previously opposed the proposal, complicating efforts to translate diplomatic engagement into a ceasefire. At a 16 October Security Council meeting, US representatives called for an immediate humanitarian truce and an end to weapons flows into Sudan, while UN officials warned that continued external support was encouraging the parties to pursue their objectives through force. The challenge remains to convert diplomatic pressure into commitments that both sides will observe on the ground.

The economic consequences of the war are becoming increasingly difficult to separate from its humanitarian effects. Sudanese authorities announced plans to establish 22,000 micro- and small-scale projects across 11 states to support household incomes and reduce war-driven poverty. Official figures cited by the social welfare minister indicated that poverty had risen sharply since the conflict began, as displacement, lost employment and the collapse of commercial activity pushed more households into dependence on aid.

Sudan's trajectory remains defined by the interaction of military escalation, civilian vulnerability and an unresolved political crisis. The attacks across Darfur, Kordofan and eastern Sudan show that neither side has abandoned the pursuit of battlefield advantage,

while the reported deaths of civilians and displaced people demonstrate the continuing costs of that strategy. Al-Burhan's renewed engagement with Washington offers a possible opening for diplomacy, but it has yet to produce a verified cessation of hostilities. A sustainable path forward will require a humanitarian truce, credible pressure to restrict weapons supplies, accountability for attacks on civilians and sustained access for aid agencies. Without such measures, displacement, food insecurity and economic collapse will continue to deepen, while the expanding use of drones risk extending the conflict's reach even further.

3. Egypt

On 12 October, Egypt and Malaysia issued a joint statement following President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's state visit of 9–10 October, announcing that bilateral relations had been elevated to a strategic partnership. The government agreed to expand cooperation in defense, security, trade, digital transformation, renewable energy and manufacturing, and to convene their joint commission and bilateral consultation mechanisms.

The joint statement called for freedom of navigation in the Gulf and Strait of Hormuz, a Gaza ceasefire and unrestricted humanitarian aid, and reaffirmed support for a sovereign Palestinian state on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. Egypt and Malaysia also addressed Lebanon, Syria, Sudan, the Horn of Africa, Red Sea coastal-state sovereignty, and Nile Basin disputes.

On 13 October, Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty told Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi by phone that attacks on Saudi Arabia must stop immediately. Abdelatty described the attacks as unjustified and unacceptable, called for de-escalation, and urged renewed United States–Iran negotiations and dialogue, which he said were necessary to resolve disputes and prevent further regional instability.

On 15 October, Abdelatty and Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani discussed regional developments by phone. They condemned attacks on Saudi Arabia, expressed solidarity with the kingdom, and called for hostile acts to stop. They also reviewed bilateral relations and agreed to coordinate diplomatic efforts to contain tensions and prevent the conflict from spreading.

On 17 October, Abdelatty met Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on the sidelines of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation foreign ministers' meeting in Baghdad. They discussed the Iran file and called for the United States and Iran to return to dialogue and negotiations. They also supported coordination through a regional quadrilateral mechanism to reduce tensions and strengthen regional security.

On 18 October, Abdelatty held separate phone calls with Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi. The discussions addressed efforts to contain regional military escalation, restore calm and

support political solutions. Abdelatty urged continued coordination through the Egypt–Saudi Arabia–Turkey–Pakistan quadrilateral mechanism to reduce tensions and encourage US–Iran diplomacy.

On 18 October, Abdelatty spoke by phone with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan about regional developments and the need to de-escalate. The call followed President el-Sisi's announcement that Egypt could provide defensive support to Saudi Arabia if requested. Egyptian officials continued to frame the diplomatic effort around regional coordination and a halt to attacks against the kingdom.

On 18 October, Al-Azhar Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb called for an urgent mediation committee composed of respected Arab and Islamic figures to help end regional wars. He urged governments and other parties to stop fighting, settle disputes through dialogue, protect national sovereignty and prevent further civilian deaths and destruction. Al-Azhar said el-Tayeb was ready to support the committee's work.

Presidential Speeches and Official Security Developments

At the Armed Forces' 44th Cultural Symposium on 14 October, marking the 53rd anniversary of the 1973 war, el-Sisi responded to Israeli remarks about Sinai. He asked who had said Egypt wanted war, said Egypt had recovered its territory, and denied hidden agendas or ambitions against other states, describing border protection and stability within peace as Egypt's priorities.

El-Sisi said the 1979 peace treaty remained the governing framework for Egyptian-Israeli relations. He reiterated support for a two-state solution, with an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, and called for de-escalation across the region, a resolution to the Gulf crisis and safe maritime navigation. He described Gulf security as an integral part of Egyptian national security.

At the same symposium, el-Sisi compared the challenges of 1973 with those of 2013, saying the latter period required restoring the state and safeguarding national identity. He warned that disinformation and social media could distort historical memory and undermine public awareness. He also said protecting the state and its continuity was a shared national responsibility extending beyond state institutions.

El-Sisi revisited Egypt's economic reform history, saying Anwar Sadat began a reform program in 1976 but protests against price increases in 1977 prompted the state to retreat from some measures. He also said an adviser had urged Sadat to release members of religious groups from prison to counter a rival political current, a decision he linked to Sadat's later assassination.

El-Sisi said Egypt's 14-year campaign against terrorism had cost more than US$120 billion and involved significant casualties among security personnel. He recalled that

extended protests had depleted foreign-currency reserves, damaged tourism and weakened investment. He said his discussions with political and religious movements had focused on whether they could manage the state and preserve its institutions.

At the Police Academy graduation in New Cairo on 15 October, el-Sisi described the police and Armed Forces as the two pillars of Egyptian national security, responsible for internal stability and external defense. He warned of continued efforts to discredit both institutions and said Egyptians shared responsibility for protecting state bodies, preserving national memory and countering rumors and misinformation.

In remarks following the Police Academy ceremony, el-Sisi said threats to Saudi Arabia's security or borders affect Egyptian and Arab national security and rejected threats to Red Sea security and shipping lanes. He cited risks on Egypt's southern and western borders, saying stability in Sudan, Libya and Gaza was essential, and repeated that a Palestinian state would support lasting peace.

El-Sisi said the scale of work undertaken in Egypt since 2014 would otherwise have required at least 30 years and pledged to continue working until his final day in office. He also called for better education and the selection of qualified professionals without favoritism, saying state officials needed a comprehensive understanding of government, institutions and the challenges confronting Egypt.

At the Military Academy graduation on 17 October, el-Sisi said Egypt was prepared to take necessary measures to defend Saudi Arabia if Riyadh formally requested assistance. He said action would follow guidance from King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and framed any support as defensive rather than an attack on another state.

He called on Parliament to hold an emergency session to authorize assistance if requested, and said Egypt sought no political or regional role beyond defending its interests and allies when necessary. He called for regional fighting to stop and rejected threats to Red Sea security and international maritime corridors for all countries.

During the same address, el-Sisi thanked Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait for helping Egypt during its economic difficulties in 2013. He recalled that ships had delivered oil, gas, butane and wheat without payment, and said this support had helped the Egyptian state during a period of severe pressure. He requested a military salute to the three countries.

El-Sisi said his presidential term would end in 2030 and declared that the constitution would not be amended to extend his tenure. He described the matter as settled and introduced a proposed 30-month leadership-preparation program at the Military Academy for potential future presidents and senior officials, including ministers, governors and members of Parliament.

The proposed program would target candidates approximately 40–50 years old with doctorates from recognized Egyptian or foreign universities, with the Armed Forces covering participation costs. El-Sisi called for a committee led by the Speaker of Parliament and including intellectuals, politicians and relevant ministries to draft eligibility criteria and a legislative framework for the program.

On 18 October, the National Defense Council, chaired by el-Sisi, expressed full solidarity with Saudi Arabia and pledged all necessary and possible support to protect its security, stability, resources, territorial integrity and Islamic holy sites. The Council also called for intensified political and diplomatic coordination with regional and international partners to de-escalate tensions and pursue peaceful solutions.

Egypt's House of Representatives opened an extraordinary session on 18 October to consider el-Sisi's request for authorization to provide defensive military assistance to Saudi Arabia if Riyadh asked for it. Lawmakers postponed a final vote to allow members to speak, with reports indicating that deliberations would continue on 19 and 20 October. No deployment details were announced.

4. Eritrea

The UK Home Office has suspended fast-track visa access for Eritrean officials and restricted Eritrean diplomats' travel, while threatening a wider visa ban unless Asmara accepts more returns of Eritrean nationals. In response, the Eritrean regime rejected the claim that it abruptly withdrew cooperation, insisting that it opposes forced returns and accusing Britain of refusing meaningful talks and misrepresenting returnees' circumstances. Its embassy dismissed the UK measures as a "political gimmick," while maintaining that no Eritrean official had received a UK visa since 2023—a claim the Home Office disputes, citing an exemption granted in August 2026. The exchange exposes a direct dispute over deportations and a breakdown in consular cooperation.

The episode risks further damaging Eritrea's efforts to rebuild ties with European capitals, particularly with the UK, an influential diplomatic actor. London is using visa access to press for cooperation on returns; Asmara's response rejects that pressure while offering little prospect of resolving the practical dispute. The confrontation also highlights the reputational burden facing an authoritarian regime already criticized internationally over its domestic record. Even if the restrictions have limited effect on returns, public recriminations may narrow the space for the broader engagement Eritrea has sought.

On 13 October, the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) presented weapons and equipment captured during operations in Tigray to foreign military attachés in Addis Ababa. Major General Teshome Gemechu briefed the visitors, identifying Eritrea and Sudan as sources of materiel, with some accounts also naming Egypt. At a follow-up display at Bishoftu Air Force Base on 15 October, officials presented drones, munitions

and other equipment, including Turkish-made loitering munitions and Iranian UAV and precision-guided bomb components. The displays followed federal advances in Tigray, including the entry of Ethiopian forces into Mekelle.

The exhibitions gave Ethiopia's case of external backing for the TPLF-led alliance a public diplomatic platform, presenting material evidence of weapons and equipment linked to Eritrea and other regional actors. Fana Media reported that foreign attachés expressed solidarity with Ethiopia's sovereignty after the Bishoftu briefing. The displays reinforced Addis Ababa's account of the conflict and helped rally diplomatic support as the fighting continued. For Eritrea, the evidence presented at the briefings adds to the pressure surrounding its deteriorating relationship with Ethiopia.

On 13 October, the UN Security Council held closed consultations on the escalating situation in northern Ethiopia, at the request of the United States. Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Martin Kimani briefed members; it was the Council's second closed discussion of the crisis in roughly two weeks, following France's request for consultations on 30 September. No public statement or detailed readout followed.

The repeated consultations indicate growing concern among Council members about the conflict's interstate dimension, but the absence of a public outcome leaves no visible sign of a common response. The Council's limited public role contrasts with the rapid deterioration in relations on the ground.

In a 9 October letter to the Security Council, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos said Eritrean mechanised and infantry units had entered Ethiopian territory and accused Asmara of arming, financing and directing insurgent groups. He invoked Ethiopia's right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter. Eritrea's 10 October reply rejected that justification, cast Ethiopia's Red Sea access policy as evidence of aggressive intent and asked the Council to condemn what it called a "declaration of war" and adopt deterrent measures under Chapter VII.

The competing letters place Ethiopia's stated maritime ambitions alongside Eritrea's military role in the conflict. Asmara has framed Ethiopia's pursuit of Red Sea access as a threat to Eritrean sovereignty, yet Eritrean forces' entry into Ethiopian territory and support for armed groups sharpen the contradiction in its own appeal to territorial integrity. The exchange also reflects the wider breakdown after the 2022 Pretoria agreement and the erosion of the 2018 rapprochement, as TPLF–Asmara alignment and Ethiopia's sea-access agenda have become central to regional tensions.

In a letter to the African Union Commission and UNECA on 15 October, Eritrea said Ethiopia's expulsion of ten diplomats—including its AU/UNECA Permanent Representative and staff assigned to the organisations—had denied the country its membership rights and prevented its representation. Asmara asked the AU's policy organs

to take “corrective measures” to restore its representation and participation, invoking the 1965 OAU Convention on Privileges and Immunities.

The appeal presents Ethiopia’s action against individual diplomats as a denial of Eritrea’s institutional standing, but the two issues are distinct: expelling named representatives does not, by itself, amount to abolishing a member state’s right to maintain an AU mission. Ethiopia, as host state, retains authority to declare diplomats persona non grata, while the AU’s principles also require members to respect one another’s sovereignty and refrain from interference. Eritrea’s subsequent withdrawal of its remaining mission personnel and closure of its embassy further complicate its claim that Ethiopia alone ended its representation; the dispute now turns on how the AU balances member-state representation with the host country’s security prerogatives.

Ethiopia-based Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO), an armed opposition group challenging Eritrea’s ruling PFDJ, concluded a conference on 12 October. Its resolution called for President Isaias Afwerki and his government to face accountability for alleged abuses against the Red Sea Afar, urged action over arbitrary arrests and forced conscription, and endorsed the community’s right to self-determination. RSADO also called for continued political and armed struggle and said it had submitted a human rights complaint to the African Union.

The conference gives Eritrean opposition forces a platform in Ethiopia’s Afar region as Eritrean support for armed groups inside Ethiopia has become a central security concern for Addis Ababa. RSADO had already backed Ethiopia’s expulsion of Eritrean diplomats, citing their involvement in destabilizing activity. (RSADO statement) With Afar communities spanning Eritrea, Ethiopia and Djibouti, the group’s demands carry cross-border significance; its call to continue armed activity adds another dimension to the conflict between the two states.

5. Djibouti

China’s Foreign Ministry announced that Djibouti’s Foreign Minister Abdoulkader Houssein Omar and the Republic of Congo’s Foreign Minister Constant-Serge Bounda would make official visits from 19 to 25 October, at the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The announcement names these two visitors but does not describe the trips as anniversary events or establish that they were the only African ministers invited. 2026 marks 70 years since China and African states began diplomatic relations, providing broader context for the visits.

For Djibouti, the visit maintains high-level engagement with a major external partner as the country occupies a strategically important position on the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb. The timing places the bilateral meetings within a year of heightened China–Africa diplomacy, though the public announcement gives no specific agenda or indication

of new agreements. The visit is therefore best read as a continuation of bilateral engagement, with its practical significance dependent on what the two sides discuss and announce.

Egypt and Djibouti signed a memorandum on tourism promotion, investment and hospitality training on 14 October. It provides for liaison officers and cooperation on hotel management, museums and heritage sites; the ministers also discussed twinning Sharm El-Sheikh with Djibouti City. The agreement is a modest addition to a much broader Egyptian effort to build influence in Djibouti through commercial, diplomatic and infrastructure ties.

The strategic value lies in Djibouti's position over the Bab el-Mandeb and as the principal maritime gateway for Ethiopian trade. Egypt's port, logistics and energy projects around Doraleh give Cairo a stake in infrastructure on which Ethiopia depends, creating leverage over Addis Ababa as the GERD dispute persists and Ethiopia seeks more independent Red Sea access. This is pressure through strategic positioning: Egypt can deepen its presence along Ethiopia's critical trade route while expanding its own access to Red Sea facilities.

On 17 October, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty met Djiboutian Foreign Minister Abdoulkader Houssein Omar in Baghdad and called for stronger cooperation among Red Sea littoral states. Their discussion covered ports, logistics and energy as well as regional security and freedom of navigation. Cairo's emphasis on littoral-state coordination advances its effort to constrain Ethiopia's ability to reshape Red Sea arrangements through unilateral access deals, while strengthening Egypt's own role in setting the region's security agenda.

These developments extend a campaign of diplomatic and economic courtship that gained momentum after the GERD's first filling and intensified as Ethiopia made its sea-access ambitions explicit. Egypt's outreach to Djibouti complements its broader effort to build regional pressure around Ethiopia, including closer ties with Somalia and Eritrea. Djibouti has kept room to manoeuvre and has not surrendered sovereign control of its ports, but its importance to Ethiopia makes Egyptian access and influence there strategically valuable to Cairo.

Africa Intelligence reports that Djibouti recently received the Russia-linked tankers *Kamelot* and *Astra*, placing it alongside Morocco and Tunisia in the growth of African port activity associated with Russian oil flows under Western sanctions. The calls come as Djibouti develops its liquid-bulk capacity: the Damerjog facility is designed to handle petroleum products and support regional energy distribution. These developments are consistent with Djibouti's ambition to become a larger energy and transshipment hub on the Red Sea–Gulf of Aden route.

The reported calls strengthen Djibouti's importance in the logistics of Russian oil as sanctions redirect shipping toward less scrutinized routes and flags. Its position near Bab el-Mandeb makes it commercially valuable for fuel storage and onward movement, while increasing the scrutiny it may face from sanctions regulators, insurers and trading partners. Port calls alone do not establish that cargo was transferred or that Djibouti's government facilitated sanctions evasion, but they point to the growing overlap between the country's energy-hub ambitions and opaque oil-trading networks.

6. South Sudan

South Sudan's political transition remained under pressure this week as deadly intercommunal violence exposed persistent security weaknesses ahead of the December elections. Meanwhile, the government pursued electoral assistance from South Africa, strengthened economic engagement with Uganda and joined a regional maritime organization in an effort to improve trade connectivity. These developments highlight the contrast between Juba's ambitions for political normalization and economic integration and the domestic challenges threatening both.

The most serious security incident occurred in Rumbek, Lakes State, where clashes between armed youth groups reportedly killed around 71 people, including four soldiers. More than 50 wounded people were taken to Rumbek State Hospital, while residents fled as violence spread. The immediate trigger remained unclear, but longstanding disputes over cattle, land and retaliatory killings have repeatedly fueled communal clashes. UN peacekeepers deployed personnel to help protect the hospital and humanitarian facilities, while government forces subsequently regained control of the town. The incident nevertheless exposed the limits of security interventions that address immediate outbreaks without resolving their underlying causes. With elections scheduled for 22 December, the violence has renewed questions about the government's ability to ensure a secure environment for political participation.

Electoral preparations continued despite these concerns. South Sudan's National Elections Commission Chairperson, Gabriel Bol, returned from South Africa following discussions on electoral materials, technical assistance and logistical support. The engagement followed President Salva Kiir's meetings with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, as Juba seeks external assistance for the planned vote. The commission has called for a peaceful and credible electoral process, but the provision of ballots and technical expertise alone cannot resolve concerns over political inclusion, security and public confidence. Continued violence and uncertainty surrounding the transitional arrangements leave significant questions about whether the necessary conditions for credible elections can be established before polling day.

The political landscape also saw the Revive South Sudan Party appoint musician and political aspirant Meen Mabor Meen as interim chairman. He indicated that he intended to

contest a parliamentary seat representing Rumbek East rather than challenge Kiir for the presidency. His appointment illustrates the emergence of new political actors as parties prepare for the elections. However, meaningful political competition will depend on whether parties can organize, campaign openly and operate within a credible electoral framework.

Economic diplomacy provided a more constructive development. During talks with a South Sudanese delegation led by Trade and Industry Minister Labanya Margaret Mathya, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni discussed expanding bilateral trade and improving transport infrastructure. Museveni estimated that Uganda's annual exports to South Sudan had increased from approximately US$500 million to US$700 million. Proposed measures included improving the Juba–Nimule road, strengthening electricity connections and establishing a one-stop border center to reduce delays. However, traders continue to report lengthy clearance procedures, repeated cargo inspections and additional charges. Addressing these barriers will be essential if the two countries are to translate their strong commercial relationship into more efficient and affordable trade.

South Sudan also joined the Maritime Organization for Eastern, Southern and Northern Africa (MOESNA) following its ministerial assembly in Dar es Salaam on 15 October. The government presented membership as an opportunity to strengthen regional cooperation and improve access to international markets. For a landlocked country dependent on neighboring states' ports and transport corridors, the move offers a platform to pursue better shipping and transit arrangements. Its practical benefits, however, will depend on whether membership leads to concrete improvements in logistics and regional connectivity.

The economic outlook attracted further attention after the International Monetary Fund projected South Sudan's real GDP to grow by 10.5 per cent in 2026, the fastest rate in sub-Saharan Africa. Although encouraging, the forecast does not necessarily indicate a comparable improvement in household welfare. The economy remains vulnerable to oil-sector disruptions, insecurity and fiscal pressures. Sustained recovery will depend on whether growth translates into employment, more reliable public finances and improved living conditions.

Overall, South Sudan's week was marked by a widening contrast between political and economic ambitions and persistent domestic fragility. Communal violence continues to expose weaknesses in local security, while electoral preparations remain constrained by concerns over inclusion and credibility. Regional partnerships offer opportunities to improve trade and support the transition, and the growth forecast provides a potentially positive economic signal. Yet these gains will remain limited unless the government strengthens local security, builds confidence in the electoral process and translates regional cooperation into tangible economic benefits.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

Former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed who served from 2009 to 2012 denied NISA claims that armed men under his command attacked NISA Public Protection Forces in Mogadishu's Wadajir district including allegations of an officer's abduction in June and earlier obstructions. His side described roadblocks, restricted access to supplies and deployments near his residence near the airport, warning against using security forces for political pressure and calling for an independent investigation. Opposition aligned groups, including the Somali Future Council linked to Puntland, Jubaland, and others, warned that troop deployments near opposition compounds risked clashes and held President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud responsible. Local reports mentioned government force buildups in the capital.

In a separate but related development, Defense Minister Ahmed Moalim Fiqi said authorities had removed 260-armed men from residences of opposition leaders in Mogadishu accusing them of threatening security. He stated the men were in custody and would be presented to the media, while alleging others remained. Fiqi accused the United Arab Emirates of arming opposition figures and said recent UAE hosted talks aimed to destabilize Somalia. He also alleged involvement of forces linked to Puntland and Jubaland administrations. He rejected reports of a planned government military operation to disarm or arrest opposition leaders, instead accusing the opposition of provoking security agencies.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud led a ceremony at the presidential palace, Villa Somalia marking the 72nd anniversary of the Somali flag, first raised on October 12, 1954. Units from the Somali National Army, including land, air, and naval forces, participated in military displays emphasizing sovereignty and unity. Senior officials attended, including parliamentary leaders, the prime minister, the chief justice, and armed forces commanders.

The Independent National Elections and Boundaries Commission announced on state media that parliamentary elections for both houses would be held on April 15, 2027, followed by a presidential election on May 15, 2027. The commission cited constitutional and electoral law provisions including a five-year presidential term starting from the swearing in date. Additional deadlines were set including voter and political organization registration reopening from November 1 to 22, 2026 and candidate lists by November 22, provisional voter list by January 21, 2027, campaign start on February 27 and final voter list by March 15. The federal government issued a statement dated October 15 welcoming with the timetable as an important step toward strengthening democracy while saying consultations with stakeholders would continue and that the two approaches were complementary or. Opposition leaders strongly condemned the unilateral announcement.

The National financing Anti Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism Financing Committee issued of a decision dated October 13 adding Abdiaziz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen, former Southwest State president and nine associates including Mahad Abdirahman Adan, known as Shub, former Custodial Corps commander to the national targeted financial sanctions list over suspected links to, cooperation Al-Shabaab. Banks and other reporting entities were ordered to freeze assets and report transactions to the Financial Reporting Centre, and dealings were prohibited.

Former US Ambassador to Somalia Larry André Jr., in comments reported October 13 from a Sky News interview described President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's government as illegitimate and overstaying its mandate accused it of using forces primarily as a political militia and called on the international community to intensify pressure to halt fighting and displacement in Southwest State, particularly around Baidoa. He highlighted humanitarian risks, including potential famine conditions, and raised concerns about reported Turkish F-16 airstrikes.

Deputy Foreign Minister Hassan Mohamed Ali Nadaara stated that Mogadishu's position is one of peace and neutrality amid Ethiopia-Eritrea tensions, rejecting suggestions that Somalia's participation in an October 4 Egypt summit with Egypt, Eritrea, and Sudan's leadership aligned it against Ethiopia. He emphasized monitoring developments, protecting Somali interests, and maintaining ties across the region, including with Ethiopia, which continues contributing to the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia.

Turkish defence outlet reported earlier in the period, that Somalia had agreed to buy JF-17 multirole fighters from Pakistan as part of air force modernization. Neither the Somali nor Pakistani government publicly confirmed a finalized contract, aircraft numbers, price, or delivery timeline. Prior diplomatic groundwork included a Pakistani Air Force delegation visit to Mogadishu in September and Somali Defence Minister talks in Islamabad. Earlier unconfirmed figures had suggested up to 24 Block III variants.

Jubaland forces assumed control of key government offices including the Immigration and Citizenship Agency, in Beled-Hawo in the Gedo region after reported defections of federal intelligence officers to the Jubaland administration.

On another front, forces loyal to former Southwest State President Laftagareen seized Burhakabo in the Bay region on Thursday, October 15 after fighting that began early in the day. The town lies on the main road linking Mogadishu and Baidoa, roughly 64 kilometers from Baidoa. A brief gunfight was reported and Laftagareen's side later displayed captured federal troops. Ministers from the former administration visited the town. Federal and current Southwest authorities had not immediately commented in available reports.

On Friday, October 16, fighters loyal to former Southwest State President Laftagareen took control of Bardaale district in the Bay region, roughly 55 to 60 kilometers northwest of Baidoa. Government aligned security personnel largely withdrew without major fighting, abandoning positions including the district police station. The district commissioner reportedly sought refuge at an Ethiopian base.

Monitoring organizations reported claimed Al-Shabaab actions on or around October 15 including an improvised explosive device detonation at a Somali militia barracks in Mogadishu's Karan district, noted as part of a series of attacks in the area and armed assaults on militia bases in Janale and Mubaarak in Lower Shabelle. These fit the pattern of sustained militant activity in and around the capital and southern regions.

Following that, Somalia's Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre opened a National Conference on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Mogadishu, marking the ninth anniversary of the deadly 2017 Zoobe bombing. He called for national unity against Al-Shabaab, stressing that military operations alone are insufficient. Barre outlined a strategy combining security efforts, religious scholars' rulings against extremist ideology, and community awareness to prevent recruitment.

Somaliland

President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi convened a consultative and operational session with newly appointed ambassadors and diplomatic representatives. He stressed their national duty, strategic representation of Somaliland's interests abroad, strengthening international partnerships, and mobilizing diaspora communities.

US President Donald Trump referred to Somaliland as "a totally different country" during a political rally in Youngstown, Ohio, on October 12. Trump distinguished Somaliland from Somalia, calling it "a totally different country" and suggesting it should change its name, for example to "Somalia Land." The remarks, made in the context of US domestic politics and immigration, did not constitute a formal policy change or recognition announcement. Somaliland authorities later welcomed them as underscoring the territory's distinct identity and separate political reality, renewing hopes for deeper US engagement and eventual recognition. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation issued a statement on October 13 welcoming President Trump's acknowledgement from his October 12 Ohio rally of Somaliland as a "totally different country" and distinct country from Somalia.

On another front, Somaliland's Foreign Minister stated that the territory was ready for Ethiopia to utilize the port of Berbera. This aligned with ongoing discussions on maritime access, bilateral relations, and regional security cooperation.

Following that, The Somaliland National Army Commander held a meeting with Ethiopian Ambassador Teshome Shunde. Separately, Foreign Minister Abdirahman Dahir

Adan received the Ethiopian Ambassador at the ministry to discuss strengthening bilateral relations, shared interests, regional security developments and cooperation to support peace and stability.

President Irro described Ethiopia as an important neighboring country and reaffirmed confidence in bilateral cooperation. He stated that Somaliland "strongly opposes interference and any act that could endanger Ethiopia's stability and security" or threaten its statehood.

8. Yemen

Fighting continued across several fronts in Yemen as Houthi forces and government-aligned forces remained engaged in a conflict marked by persistent military pressure and deteriorating humanitarian conditions. Developments around Taiz and other frontlines underscored the continuation of hostilities, while a reported strike on the presidential palace in Aden highlighted threats to government institutions. Meanwhile, Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia intensified regional security concerns and prompted stronger diplomatic coordination, reinforcing the connection between Yemen's internal conflict and wider regional instability.

Around Taiz, Houthi pressure continued to disrupt supply routes and worsen humanitarian conditions. Reports indicated shortages of food and other essential commodities, rising prices and difficulties accessing basic services. Fighting also persisted around Lahij, Marib, al-Jawf and Hajjah, demonstrating that hostilities remained dispersed across multiple fronts rather than confined to a single area.

In Aden, a reported Houthi missile strike on Al-Maashiq presidential palace on 16 October killed five security personnel and injured 16 others. The attack highlighted the vulnerability of the internationally recognised government's principal operating centre and raised concerns about the security of senior officials and state institutions. Government officials maintained that the administration would continue operating from Aden despite the attack.

The continuation of fighting and disruption to supply routes further aggravated an already fragile humanitarian situation. Shortages and rising prices threatened household purchasing power, particularly among communities affected by prolonged conflict and displacement. The International Organization for Migration reported approximately 228,739 people displaced since the escalation along Yemen's western coast began in June. Further hostilities risked increasing humanitarian needs by restricting access to essential goods and services and placing additional pressure on host communities.

Beyond these domestic security and humanitarian pressures, developments involving Saudi Arabia highlighted the conflict's wider regional implications. On 18 October, Saudi Arabia intercepted drones near Riyadh and in the Eastern Province. Earlier attacks had

also raised concerns about threats to civilian aviation and critical infrastructure. The interceptions underscored the continuing threat posed by cross-border attacks and the possibility that further incidents could widen the confrontation involving Iran and its partners.

These security concerns were reflected in stronger regional diplomatic coordination. On 18 October, Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers meeting in Manama condemned Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia, reaffirmed support for the kingdom's security and called for stronger enforcement of the UN arms embargo against the Houthis. They also urged countries to designate the movement a terrorist organisation. The statement demonstrated greater regional alignment against Houthi attacks, although it did not confirm plans for a joint military campaign. Egypt separately announced its readiness to provide Saudi Arabia with necessary support to protect its security and stability. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi sought parliamentary authorisation for possible military assistance, while Egyptian and Saudi officials discussed regional developments and de-escalation.

Despite these diplomatic efforts, the prospects for resolving Yemen's internal conflict remained uncertain. On 9 October, UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg warned the Security Council that Yemen had returned to full-scale war, with hostilities spreading across multiple frontlines. Continued fighting, combined with heightened regional tensions, complicated efforts to revive the political process and increased the risk that further confrontation would undermine prospects for a settlement.

The conflict also carried implications for maritime security. Yemen's position near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait makes instability along its western coast relevant to the wider Red Sea shipping corridor. Houthi positions along the coast and continuing threats to commercial shipping sustained international concern. Available reporting did not establish a confirmed new attack on commercial vessels in the Red Sea or Gulf of Aden during the reporting period. Nevertheless, continued instability kept maritime security under scrutiny and threatened confidence in the safety of regional shipping routes.

Overall, continued fighting across Yemen, mounting humanitarian pressures and Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia underscored the difficulty of containing the conflict within Yemen's borders. Stronger regional diplomatic coordination reflected growing concern about further escalation but did not in itself resolve the underlying hostilities. Without renewed progress towards a political settlement, civilians are likely to face further hardship, while instability in Yemen will continue to pose risks to the wider Red Sea region.

9. Kenya

Kenya's foreign engagements during the week of October 12 to 18 focused on expanding bilateral economic relations, strengthening cooperation with international development institutions, and securing external financing. Nairobi pursued diplomatic consultations with Bangladesh and Georgia, engaged Tanzania on educational cooperation, and advanced discussions with the International Fund for Agricultural Development. The government also sought additional financial support from the World Bank and African Development Bank, while a judicial decision cleared the way for implementing an existing health cooperation agreement with the United States. These developments reflected Kenya's continuing emphasis on economic diplomacy, international partnerships and access to external resources.

On October 14, Kenya and Bangladesh held their third Foreign Office Consultations in Dhaka, cochaired by Kenya's Director General for Political and Diplomatic Affairs, Ambassador Josphat Maikara, and Bangladesh's Secretary for Bilateral Affairs, Nazrul Islam. The two governments reviewed political and commercial relations and agreed to accelerate work on pending agreements covering investment protection, double taxation, the blue economy and contract farming. Kenya also announced plans to establish a resident diplomatic mission in Dhaka, expanding its prospective diplomatic presence in South Asia. Discussions further explored pharmaceutical trade, agricultural products and broader commercial exchanges. The consultations demonstrated Nairobi's efforts to diversify its Asian partnerships, attract investment and strengthen commercial relations beyond its traditional trading partners.

Kenya extended this diplomatic outreach on October 16 when it held its first formal political consultations with Georgia in Nairobi. The meeting, led by Principal Secretary for Foreign Affairs Korir Sing'Oei and Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandre Khvtisiashvili, focused on trade, investment, manufacturing, agricultural cooperation and transport connectivity. Nairobi presented Kenya's access to the East African Community, COMESA and African Continental Free Trade Area markets as an opportunity for Georgian investors, while both sides explored Georgian Black Sea ports and the Trans Caspian Middle Corridor as potential routes connecting East Africa with European and Central Asian markets. Discussions also addressed investment opportunities in Kenyan special economic zones and cooperation between private sector institutions. Building on a political consultations agreement signed in September 2025, the engagement marked another step in Kenya's efforts to broaden its economic and diplomatic relationships with Eurasian partners.

Agricultural development also featured prominently in Kenya's international engagements. On October 16, Prime Cabinet Secretary and Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi received the credentials of Matteo Marchisio, the incoming

Kenya Country Director of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, during a meeting in Nairobi. Discussions centred on expanding agricultural financing, technical assistance and institutional capacity building, particularly for smallholder farmers, women and young people. The two sides also addressed dairy sector transformation, rural livelihoods and agribusiness development. Kenya indicated that its contribution to IFAD's next replenishment could increase from $1 million to $3 million, signalling its intention to strengthen cooperation with the institution. The engagement reinforced Nairobi's position as a regional centre for development cooperation while linking its international partnerships to domestic agricultural priorities.

Kenya's engagement with international financial institutions intensified during the same period. On October 16, Central Bank Governor Kamau Thugge disclosed ongoing discussions with the World Bank and African Development Bank over additional financing for the current financial year. The negotiations included a potential World Bank Development Policy Operation, a debt for food swap and approximately $400 million in emergency financing for health and climate related needs. Thugge also indicated that Kenya was not immediately pursuing a new International Monetary Fund programme, although future cooperation remained possible. These discussions reflected Nairobi's efforts to secure external resources, manage its debt obligations and limit pressure on domestic borrowing. They also highlighted the importance of multilateral lenders in Kenya's economic strategy as the government sought to maintain fiscal stability while financing development priorities.

Bilateral cooperation with the United States experienced a significant legal development on October 13 when Kenya's Court of Appeal lifted orders that had suspended implementation of a $1.6 billion health cooperation agreement signed in December 2025. The ruling allowed the five year programme to proceed while the substantive legal challenge continued. The programme represents a substantial component of bilateral health cooperation and helps sustain American engagement in Kenya's public health sector amid changes in international development financing. The court's intervention also demonstrated how domestic legal processes can influence the implementation of Kenya's international commitments.

Domestically, Kenya's political environment remained increasingly focused on emerging alliances ahead of the August 2027 general elections. The October 15 commemoration of the first anniversary of Raila Odinga's death renewed disagreements within the Orange Democratic Movement over its political direction and relationship with President William Ruto's administration. Divisions within the wider opposition continued to shape discussions about political alliances, while economic concerns, particularly rising fuel prices and household living costs, remained central to public debate. On October 12, Tharaka Nithi Governor Muthomi Njuki was elected chairperson of the Council of Governors, succeeding Ahmed Abdullahi. The transition introduced new leadership to the

institution representing Kenya's 47 county governments as political actors at both national and county levels positioned themselves ahead of the next electoral cycle.

Kenya's engagements during the week reflected its focus on expanding economic partnerships, attracting investment and securing development financing. Diplomatic outreach to Asian and Eurasian partners, alongside continued cooperation with international financial institutions, demonstrated Nairobi's efforts to diversify its foreign relations while addressing domestic economic pressures.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia faced a serious security crisis as Houthi missile and drone attacks exposed weaknesses in the Kingdom's air defense systems and disrupted critical infrastructure. The strike on King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, which killed civilians and injured hundreds, prompted an investigation into how the projectiles penetrated Saudi defenses. Initial accounts indicated that the Houthis used successive waves of drones to overwhelm radar and interception systems before launching cruise and ballistic missiles. The attacks also affected Saudi Aramco infrastructure and forced authorities to suspend airport operations, with restrictions remaining in place through October 17. Riyadh responded with retaliatory airstrikes against Houthi targets in Yemen and evacuation warnings for civilians near intended targets. At home, authorities tightened restrictions on filming and sharing images of military operations and impact sites, reflecting concerns that public circulation of such material could expose further vulnerabilities.

The attacks also intensified Saudi Arabia's search for a more reliable regional security framework. With Washington unwilling to participate directly in retaliatory strikes, Riyadh turned to the Mecca Joint Defense Pact with Türkiye and Pakistan, signed in August, and began activating collective deterrence measures, including discussions about deploying additional military assets and personnel to the Kingdom. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif publicly reaffirmed his country's commitment to Saudi sovereignty under the agreement. Reports that Riyadh had blocked Egypt from joining the alliance highlighted the political calculations shaping this new arrangement, particularly Saudi concerns about Cairo's relationship with the UAE. Meanwhile, the United States continued to offer intelligence sharing and target-planning support without committing its forces to direct attacks. European and regional partners, including Italy and Bahrain, expressed support for Saudi Arabia's defensive measures.

The crisis placed additional pressure on Riyadh's broader regional strategy. The conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran, alongside the disruption of the Strait of Hormuz, reinforced Saudi efforts to protect oil exports through alternative routes across the Red Sea. The government continued to present the maintenance of energy supplies as

an international responsibility, while signaling that attacks on Saudi territory and economic infrastructure would carry consequences. The week therefore exposed the limits of relying on existing defense arrangements while accelerating Saudi efforts to diversify its security partnerships and protect strategic export routes.

United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates confronted growing regional insecurity as the wider US-Israel-Iran conflict and Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia disrupted Gulf aviation and raised concerns about the safety of regional airspace. On October 18, the US Mission in the UAE issued a security alert advising American citizens to remain vigilant amid possible airspace closures and travel interruptions. UAE airlines faced substantial disruption following the closure of Saudi airspace. Etihad extended cancellations between Abu Dhabi and Riyadh through October 19, while Emirates and flydubai suspended services to several Saudi destinations, including Riyadh, Dammam and Abha. International carriers also rerouted flights away from the Gulf, reducing traffic through Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Against this backdrop, the UAE's Federal National Council Defense Committee reiterated the country's readiness to use its integrated defense capabilities to protect national territory.

Abu Dhabi condemned the Houthi attacks on Riyadh's airport and expressed solidarity with Saudi Arabia, but the crisis also exposed continuing divisions over regional security arrangements. UAE remained outside the Mecca Joint Defense Pact linking Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan. Reports that Riyadh had also opposed Egypt's participation underscored the possibility that the emerging Saudi-led arrangement could exclude countries closely associated with Abu Dhabi. This division placed the UAE's independent foreign policy under greater pressure as Riyadh pursued a more coordinated regional defense framework. On Iran, Federal National Council member Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi argued that restoring diplomatic trust would require concrete action from Tehran, while maintaining that diplomacy remained the preferred long-term approach.

The conflict also reinforced the UAE's focus on reducing its exposure to maritime insecurity. With the Strait of Hormuz vulnerable to disruption, the government continued to advance infrastructure intended to move energy exports through routes that bypass the strait. These measures reflected concern that prolonged hostilities could threaten the country's role as an energy and commercial hub. At the same time, UAE's regional role remained under scrutiny, including its public support for the Ethiopian federal government amid renewed conflicts in the Horn. Domestically, the government sought to preserve normality and economic resilience, with public and private schools reopening on October 19 after the mid-term break. The broader challenge for UAE was to maintain its strategic autonomy while managing growing security pressures and a widening gap between its regional partnerships and Riyadh's evolving defense architecture.

Qatar

Qatar continued to balance military preparedness with diplomatic engagement as the US-Israel-Iran war threatened Gulf security, maritime trade and the country's energy infrastructure. Addressing the Shura Council on October 13, Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani highlighted the readiness of Qatar's armed forces and reported interception rates of 95 to 98 percent against hostile projectiles. The government also strengthened protection for critical energy and water facilities following earlier attacks on the Ras Laffan gas complex, a major component of Qatar's liquefied natural gas industry. The regional escalation nevertheless disrupted civilian aviation. Qatar Airways temporarily cancelled flights between Doha and Riyadh and Dammam as Saudi airspace restrictions and continuing missile threats complicated regional travel.

Doha's diplomatic position remained grounded in the defense of Gulf sovereignty and freedom of navigation. On October 13, the Emir warned that the sovereignty and security of Gulf Cooperation Council states could not be compromised and criticized Tehran's use of the Strait of Hormuz as political leverage. Qatar brought its concerns to the United Nations Security Council on October 16, when its permanent representative called for compliance with Resolution 2817 and an end to violations of Qatari territory. At the same time, Doha reaffirmed its willingness to maintain indirect mediation between Washington and Tehran. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Majed bin Mohammed Al Ansari reiterated on October 18 that Qatar would not abandon diplomatic efforts despite being directly affected by the wider conflict. His remarks framed the war as the consequence of political decisions made in Tehran while maintaining that mediation remained necessary to prevent further escalation.

The economic consequences of the conflict added urgency to Qatar's efforts to strengthen domestic resilience. The Emir reported that disruptions to maritime trade and damage to energy facilities had reduced government revenues by 42 percent during the first half of the year. Restrictions around the Strait of Hormuz posed a particularly serious risk to Qatar's LNG exports, which account for a substantial share of global supply. In response, the government accelerated efforts to expand non-hydrocarbon revenues, including investment in solar energy, hospitality and real estate. Doha also completed preparations for the eighth Global Security Forum, opening on October 19 under the theme "The Future of Alliances." The forum offered Qatar an opportunity to reinforce its diplomatic role at a time when existing security arrangements were under strain. Its strategy remained distinct from a purely military response: strengthening defensive capabilities while preserving mediation channels and diversifying the economy against a prolonged regional crisis.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Mali

Mali continued to consolidate its military position in the north while facing persistent insurgent threats and allegations of civilian harm. Following the Azawad Liberation Front's withdrawal from Kidal earlier in October, Malian armed forces and Russian Africa Corps personnel reinforced their presence in the strategic town. The return of government forces represented an important symbolic achievement for the military authorities in Bamako, but it did not resolve the wider security challenge. Armed groups continued to threaten supply routes and conduct ambushes beyond the town, leaving the government's ability to sustain its position dependent on securing the surrounding areas. On October 19, Human Rights Watch reportedly published findings documenting a sharp increase in civilian casualties associated with Malian and Russian operations, including what it described as apparently indiscriminate drone strikes. The allegations indicated that the counteroffensive against JNIM and the FLA carried serious risks for civilians and could undermine the government's claims of restoring security.

The authorities also maintained restrictive counter-mobility measures as they sought to limit insurgent movement. On October 14, the Malian Armed Forces General Staff reiterated restrictions on motorcycles of 125cc and above outside urban centers following a fatal security incident in an operational area. Although the policy is intended to reduce the mobility of armed groups and limit hit-and-run attacks, such restrictions can also affect civilian movement and economic activity in areas where motorcycles are essential for transport. The broader humanitarian situation remained severe. UNHCR data indicated that displacement across Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger had approached four million people, reflecting the cumulative effects of armed conflict, insecurity and pressure on communities across the central Sahel.

Mali's diplomatic activity revealed a pragmatic effort to reduce regional isolation without abandoning its existing security orientation. On October 17, representatives of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), comprising Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, met with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Dakar and agreed to establish joint working groups. The initiative opened a channel for cooperation on cross-border trade and security after a prolonged period of tension following the three states' withdrawal from the regional bloc. Mali also received an intelligence delegation from Côte d'Ivoire on October 15 for discussions on counterterrorism cooperation, despite unresolved political disagreements between Bamako and Abidjan. On October 18, Rwandan Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungirehe concluded a visit to Bamako during which Mali and Rwanda pledged to deepen cooperation in security, defense technology and economic development. Together, these engagements suggested that the Malian

authorities were willing to pursue selective partnerships where shared security interests made cooperation possible.

Domestically, the military leadership continued to prioritize regime security and the consolidation of executive authority. Russia's Africa Corps remained a central security partner, while the government sought to manage economic pressure caused by vulnerable supply routes and fuel shortages. Cooperation within the AES offered a potential means of facilitating the movement of essential goods and reducing dependence on hostile or unreliable regional channels. However, the combination of continued insurgent activity, allegations of civilian casualties, economic constraints and limited political transition prospects left the authorities facing a persistent gap between territorial gains and durable national stabilization.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic faced mounting pressure from cross-border health risks, regional security tensions and continuing efforts to manage armed opposition. The spread of the Bundibugyo-strain Ebola outbreak into Nord-Ubangi in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo raised concerns about transmission across the southern border. On October 18, authorities reportedly increased frontier monitoring in response to the outbreak, adding a public health dimension to the country's existing security challenges. The risk was particularly consequential given the limitations of state capacity in remote areas and the difficulties of maintaining consistent surveillance and response mechanisms along border communities.

Relations with Chad also influenced Bangui's approach to domestic armed groups. Under pressure from N'Djamena, three prominent politico-military figures, including Mahamat al-Khatim of the MPC and Ali Darass of the UPC, reportedly advanced plans for a permanent return to Bangui. Chad's involvement reflected its interest in reducing cross-border militancy and limiting the risks posed by armed networks operating near its territory. For the Central African government, the potential return of these figures offered a possible route toward reducing armed opposition, although the long-term consequences would depend on the terms of their reintegration and the government's ability to translate political arrangements into durable security improvements.

A separate diplomatic dispute exposed the vulnerability of the Central African Republic's external security arrangements. On October 15, Rwandan President Paul Kagame reportedly expressed displeasure with President Faustin-Archange Touadéra over a newly launched defense and intelligence-sharing partnership between the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The disagreement created a difficult position for Bangui because Rwanda maintains an important military presence that contributes to protecting the capital and supporting the government against armed groups. Touadéra therefore faced the challenge of expanding cooperation with Kinshasa without

damaging a security relationship that remains central to the government's own protection. The dispute illustrated how the country's reliance on external security partners can constrain its diplomatic choices and complicate efforts to develop a more independent security framework.

The United Nations Security Council also continued discussions on the mandate and eventual transition of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). These deliberations took place as the government remained heavily dependent on external support and transactional diplomacy to secure security guarantees and budgetary assistance. Domestically, severe storms affecting the Bakouma and Nzako areas destroyed hundreds of shelters and displaced thousands of people, adding to the burden on local authorities and humanitarian services. The combination of environmental damage, health risks and diplomatic friction reinforced the fragility of the country's operating environment. For Touadéra's administration, the immediate challenge remained preserving security and political stability while managing competing external relationships and responding to growing humanitarian needs.

Niger

Niger's military authorities continued to concentrate on regime security as domestic instability intersected with deteriorating regional security conditions. Following the reported failed mutiny at Air Base 101 in Niamey in late August, the authorities maintained heightened security measures, pursued internal purges and tightened control over strategic installations. The junta's reliance on Russian Africa Corps personnel and foreign air support remained part of its effort to protect key sites and reduce the risk of further internal challenges. At the same time, renewed fighting between Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State-linked forces around the Mali-Burkina Faso-Niger tri-border region increased pressure on Niger's northwestern frontier. The conflict's cross-border character complicated military planning and exposed the limitations of a security approach increasingly dependent on national controls and selective external partnerships.

The humanitarian consequences of regional insecurity continued to intensify. UNHCR figures placed displacement across the three central Sahel states at more than four million people, reflecting the combined impact of insurgent violence, military operations and persistent insecurity. For Niger, the crisis added to the demands on already constrained state resources and increased the importance of maintaining access to border communities and essential supplies. The government's challenge was not limited to containing armed groups: it also needed to manage the social and economic effects of prolonged displacement while operating under severe financial and institutional constraints.

Diplomatically, the most significant development was the October 17 agreement in Dakar to establish joint working groups between ECOWAS and the AES states. Niger's

participation indicated a willingness to pursue practical cooperation on trade and regional security despite its formal withdrawal from ECOWAS. The discussions created a potential opening for restoring limited coordination and reducing the costs of regional fragmentation. Relations with Nigeria also produced a practical development through the reopening of the Kamba border crossing, restoring an important channel for cross-border commerce. These initiatives suggested that, despite continuing political differences, the authorities recognized the economic costs of prolonged regional isolation. At the same time, Niger continued to diversify its external relationships, favoring selective and transactional arrangements over comprehensive security partnerships with European governments.

The junta's domestic political strategy remained focused on consolidating authority rather than establishing a clear return to civilian rule. The National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland continued to govern under restrictive executive arrangements, with the constitution and conventional political party activity suspended. The judiciary was also described as being used against political dissidents and former civilian officials. Economic pressures further reinforced the government's reliance on the AES, particularly as it sought to strengthen regional supply chains, secure alternative mining partnerships and compensate for limited access to international financing. The emerging pattern was one of selective regional re-engagement alongside continued domestic political closure, with the durability of the government's approach depending on its ability to manage both insecurity and economic strain.

DRC

The Democratic Republic of the Congo experienced a major escalation in its political and military crisis following former president Joseph Kabila's announcement on October 12 that he would lead a new political-military coalition, the Front pour la Refondation de la Nation (FRN). The movement incorporated the Rwanda-backed M23 rebellion and its political coalition, the Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC), bringing Kabila directly into the leadership of the armed challenge to President Félix Tshisekedi. Corneille Nangaa and Bertrand Bisimwa were positioned as deputies, while General Sultani Makenga retained operational command of the fighters. The coalition declared its intention to end Tshisekedi's rule, including through armed force. Kabila's entry into the rebellion added a former head of state's political profile to a conflict already shaped by external involvement, territorial control and competing claims to national legitimacy. It also raised the prospect that the eastern insurgency could seek a broader political role beyond its existing territorial base.

The government responded by intensifying diplomatic pressure and strengthening its domestic security posture. On October 13, the DRC's permanent representative to the United Nations condemned continued Rwandan military involvement in eastern Congo

and called for compliance with Security Council Resolution 2773, including the withdrawal of Rwandan forces and an end to external support for the expanded rebel coalition. A Security Council briefing the following day acknowledged that technical progress in the parallel United States and Qatar-led peace processes had created a potential opening for negotiations, but that deteriorating conditions on the ground continued to obstruct a credible ceasefire. The African Union also pursued diplomatic engagement, with a delegation of facilitators, including former Ethiopian president Sahle-Work Zewde, completing emergency consultations in Kinshasa to discuss regional stability. These efforts illustrated the continuing gap between diplomatic initiatives and the realities of an expanding armed confrontation.

The political consequences of the rebellion were also felt within Kinshasa. On October 15, Interior Minister Jacquemain Shabani announced the suspension of 13 political parties as part of a national security response. Kabila's People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy was a principal target. The government presented the restrictions as necessary to prevent subversion, but the decision prompted opposition criticism and raised concerns about political pluralism at a time when the country faced a major security crisis. The move risked deepening domestic political divisions and complicating efforts to build a broad national response to the rebellion. Tshisekedi also instructed the military high command to strengthen operational measures against the new coalition and to prevent the smuggling and plundering of minerals from occupied eastern territories, linking territorial defense to the protection of national resources.

The security crisis was compounded by a worsening public health emergency. By October 19, the Ebola outbreak involving the Bundibugyo strain had reportedly spread to an eighth province, with new cases, including a death, recorded in Nord-Ubangi near the Central African Republic. The expansion placed further pressure on health authorities already operating amid insecurity and limited access to affected communities. The convergence of armed escalation, political restrictions and the spread of Ebola left the Congolese government confronting several simultaneous crises. The formation of the FRN marked a significant change in the organization of the rebellion, but its broader national impact remained dependent on whether it could expand beyond existing rebel-held areas and alter the political and military balance across the country.

Chad

Chad faced growing pressure along its eastern border as Sudan's civil war continued to generate security and humanitarian consequences. On October 17, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) reportedly attacked a civilian settlement in West Darfur near the Chadian border, prompting heightened concern over the potential spillover into Chad and the security of refugee transit routes. The humanitarian burden remained substantial. A mid-October briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

highlighted the strain on Chadian infrastructure as the country continued to host more than one million Sudanese refugees alongside internally displaced populations. The scale of displacement has placed additional pressure on public services and limited state resources, making the management of the eastern border an increasingly important security and humanitarian priority.

Against this backdrop, President Mahamat Idriss Déby moved to reconfigure Chad's external security partnerships. His October 13 meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris resulted in a declaration of intent to restore military cooperation, marking a significant shift less than two years after N'Djamena ordered French forces to leave the country. The proposed framework differs from the previous arrangement by emphasizing military training, intelligence sharing, technology and limited tactical air assistance rather than the restoration of permanent French military bases. The renewed engagement reflected dissatisfaction with alternative security arrangements and the need to strengthen Chad's capabilities amid mounting regional instability. It also demonstrated that the earlier withdrawal of French forces had not eliminated the strategic interests that could bring the two governments back into closer cooperation.

Chad also pursued measures to strengthen its digital governance and institutional sovereignty. On October 14, the Ministry of Telecommunications, Digital Economy and Digitalization validated the country's National Data Governance Strategy with support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The strategy treats national data as a sovereign state asset and seeks to improve public services while establishing clearer regulatory arrangements. The government subsequently advanced its review of a proposed National Artificial Intelligence Strategy for 2026–2030, with an emphasis on identifying development priorities and addressing institutional and digital capacity gaps. These initiatives indicate an effort to expand state capacity beyond conventional security policy, although their practical impact will depend on implementation and the resources available to public institutions.

12. North Africa

Libya

Briefing the UN Security Council on October 14, UN envoy Hanna Tetteh cited progress following an August 30 agreement by Libya's smaller political convening on election-related institutional changes. The agreement concerns reconstituting the High National Elections Commission board and addressing outstanding electoral-law disputes, with parliamentary and presidential elections envisaged within two years. Tetteh urged stakeholders to prevent obstruction.

In a separate development, the European Union announced an additional €25 million for cooperation against irregular migration in eastern Libya. The funding is intended to

support border management, search-and-rescue operations, and anti-smuggling work. The agreement builds on existing EU and International Organization for Migration assistance for voluntary returns, as Brussels seeks to reduce departures toward Europe.

Security cooperation with Malta was also discussed during a meeting in Tripoli. Libya's Interior Minister Imad Al-Trabelsi met Maltese counterpart Glenn Bedingfield on October 13 to discuss irregular migration, specialized training, and improving security personnel's effectiveness. The ministers also discussed activating the bilateral Joint Security Committee and strengthening coordination and information-sharing between the two countries' relevant security agencies.

Algeria

Foreign Policy reported on October 15 that Algeria had severed diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates in September, without publicly specifying why. The article linked the rupture to Algiers' concerns about alleged Emirati support for armed groups in North Africa and described President Abdelmadjid Tebboune's efforts to rebuild regional influence through partnerships and recalibrated relations with Washington and Moscow.

Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf attended the African Union Committee of Ten ministerial meeting in Tripoli on October 11, where participants coordinated positions on reforming the UN Security Council. The committee reaffirmed Africa's demand for two permanent seats with full prerogatives and two additional non-permanent seats, drawing on the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration.

Morocco

On October 15, the UN General Assembly's Fourth Committee adopted its annual Western Sahara resolution by 152 votes to two, with seven abstentions. The text referenced Security Council Resolution 2797, which identifies Morocco's autonomy proposal as a basis for negotiations. The vote did not determine Western Sahara's final status, and settlement efforts remain within the UN framework.

At the UN refugee agency's executive committee session in Geneva on October 13, Morocco's representative Omar Zniber urged durable solutions for residents of the Tindouf camps in Algeria. He called for voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement, raised concerns about malnutrition and alleged aid diversion, and said donor countries had expressed readiness to help finance lasting solutions.

13. Middle East

Israel

Netanyahu's 18 October Security Briefing and Revised National Security Doctrine

On 18 October, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held an in-person briefing for diplomatic correspondents in Jerusalem, described in contemporaneous reporting as his first major security briefing of this kind since the 7 October 2023 attacks. He presented a revised national security doctrine, outlined his government's stated achievements against Iran and its regional partners, and discussed Israel's military independence, regional relationships and future security priorities.

Netanyahu said the updated doctrine had been prepared with assistance from the National Security Council and its director. He described the military campaigns across Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen and Iran as having removed what he called the "chokehold" of the Iranian axis. The revised approach gives greater priority to prevention and offensive action over containment and defense, including pre-emptive strikes intended to thwart emerging threats before they materialize.

During the presentation, Netanyahu displayed a color-coded map of the Middle East under the Hebrew heading "Main Threats – Arenas," with the caption "Convergence of Axes." Reports said it closely resembled a May 2026 map by Marc Saxer and Marcus Schneider published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. The map depicted competing and overlapping regional alignments, rather than necessarily formal military alliances, and was used to illustrate what Netanyahu described as a shift in the regional balance of power.

The map depicted Iran and its "Axis of Resistance" in darker maroon or striped areas, linking Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, the Houthis in Yemen and Shiite militias in Iraq. Netanyahu presented this network as weakened and more isolated following Israeli operations. Iraq appeared as contested territory in which Iranian-linked forces, including elements of the Popular Mobilization Forces, operated alongside other domestic and external influences.

A second grouping, described as the "Sunni Diamond," centered on Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Pakistan. Green-shaded territories were described as aligned with or friendly to this grouping, including Syria, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, Eritrea and areas labelled Somalia and "Northeast State." Western Libya, associated with Government of National Unity elements, was also shown within or adjacent to this sphere. The map presented these countries and territories as part of a wider regional alignment balancing competing strategic interests.

The map separately depicted an Israeli Emirati partnership, labelled the "Hexagon alliance," in blue and light blue. Areas described as friendly to this grouping included Puntland, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Greece. Some descriptions also connected elements in Sudan associated with the Rapid Support Forces and Libyan elements associated with the Government of National Stability to this sphere. India and Azerbaijan appeared within more than one friendly category, while additional colors represented wider US- and NATO-associated regional frameworks.

Netanyahu cited the killing of senior Hamas and Hezbollah figures, including Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, as major military achievements. He also referred to the destruction of much of Hezbollah's missile arsenal, the pager operation targeting Hezbollah members, strikes against Syrian military targets, operations against Iran's nuclear program and Israeli air superiority over Iran. He described the cumulative results as a "tremendous victory," adding that "total victory" was approximately 10% away and "not far off."

Netanyahu said the doctrine required greater Israeli independence in ammunition and weapons production, including underground manufacturing facilities, and stronger capabilities in artificial intelligence, cyberwarfare, precision-guided missiles, drones, unmanned maritime systems and quantum technologies. He also identified terrorism, internal security, international efforts to delegitimize Israel and border threats as continuing challenges. Some contemporaneous reports described one border concern as the "Egyptian trap." He linked the doctrine to preserving Israel's Jewish identity and strengthening its position as a regional power.

On Gaza, Netanyahu said reconstruction would not proceed broadly until Hamas was disarmed and the territory demilitarized. He acknowledged limited infrastructure arrangements in areas described as an "Emirati bubble," including the Rafah area, but rejected wider rebuilding before the stated conditions were met. He said Israel would undertake the disarmament itself if the international community did not provide a force capable of completing the task.

On Lebanon, Netanyahu said the Lebanese army had been given an opportunity to remove Hezbollah infrastructure but had not demonstrated sufficient capacity. He warned that Israel would not wait indefinitely for the Lebanese military to act and would intervene if necessary. He also addressed continued Israeli security arrangements in southern Lebanon, saying the remaining threats had to be addressed. These remarks formed part of his stated requirement to complete the removal of military capabilities that he considers a danger to Israel.

Netanyahu also identified what he called a Türkiye-led Muslim Brotherhood axis as a regional challenge alongside the Iran-led Shiite axis. He acknowledged differences with US President Donald Trump over Türkiye and said Israel was working to prevent an

expanded Turkish military presence in Syria. He expressed a preference for avoiding direct confrontation with Ankara while saying Israel was preparing for different contingencies. He added that he remained in contact with Russian President Vladimir Putin as needed.

On domestic security, Netanyahu condemned violent acts by Jewish settlers in the West Bank but disputed the scale of some reports about the incidents. He said the Shin Bet security agency was involved and that additional measures would follow. He also reiterated the Israel Defense Forces' intended continued control of territory west of the Jordan River, opposed the return of people he described as terrorists to cleared areas such as the former Tulkarm camp, and referred to building communities as part of Israel's security policy.

The Election

Israel's parliamentary election was scheduled for 27 October. On 18 October, US President Donald Trump publicly endorsed Netanyahu's reelection bid, nine days before the vote. Trump praised Netanyahu's leadership and partnership with Washington against Iran. The endorsement followed a 16 October interview in which Trump declined to back a candidate and said he did not trust anybody in politics. The statements came as Netanyahu's government continued campaigning on its military record and national security plans.

An i24NEWS poll published on 18 October projected 25 seats for Likud, 21 for Gadi Eisenkot's Yashar party, 13 for Naftali Bennett's Together party and 10 for Ben Gvir's Otzma Yehudit. It placed Netanyahu's governing bloc at 57 seats, below the 61 required for a Knesset majority. The survey covered 525 adults and reported a margin of sampling error of approximately 4.2 percentage points.

On 17–18 October, opposition leaders Naftali Bennett and Avigdor Liberman outlined proposed legislation they intended to advance after the election. Bennett said he would seek a state commission of inquiry into the 7 October 2023 attack and legislation limiting the prime minister's tenure to eight years. Liberman said he would seek to replace Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana and advance legislation preventing criminal defendants from serving as prime minister.

On 18 October, Israel's government approved NIS 2.6 billion in ministry budget cuts to fund urgent defense procurement. Reports put the reductions at approximately 4.9% across affected ministries, including education, health, welfare and transportation. Coalition allocations were left untouched. Opposition lawmakers criticized the decision, arguing that the reductions would affect public services while preserving funding directed to parties supporting the government.

Netanyahu presented the 27 October election as a decisive choice between his right-wing security agenda and an alternative he characterized as “right or Palestine.” He rejected claims that he had been responsible for the security assumptions preceding the 7 October 2023 attack and defended his pledge of “total victory.” If reelected, he said, he would establish an inquiry with equal representation from the coalition and opposition. He also called for expanding Haredi military recruitment, with those refusing to serve potentially facing imprisonment.

Netanyahu said his priorities for another term would include eliminating the Iranian threat, expanding the Abraham Accords and positioning Israel as a global leader in artificial intelligence. He expressed a desire to form a broad government based on opposition to Palestinian statehood, recognition of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, proactive security and a free-market economy. He also said he hoped to continue working with coalition partners Itamar Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich while keeping key security portfolios under Likud control.

Iran-Israel Conflict

On 12 October, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei said Tehran was reviewing the US response to its proposal for reopening the Strait of Hormuz. He said Iran would respond through intermediaries after completing its assessment. The disagreement concerned the sequencing of maritime access, sanctions relief, regional hostilities and negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program, with Tehran insisting that its conditions be addressed before a wider settlement.

On 14 October, Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps said a cargo vessel had sunk after striking a naval mine in the Strait of Hormuz. Separately, Singaporean authorities reported that two Singapore-registered cargo vessels had been struck by unknown projectiles, with one sinking and the other reaching safety. Their crews were evacuated, and no injuries were reported aboard the Singaporean vessels. Available reporting did not establish whether the incidents were connected.

On 15 October, CNN reported that US military planners had considered using the GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast weapon, commonly called the “Mother of All Bombs,” against Iranian energy infrastructure and nuclear sites if President Trump decided to resume the war. The report cited officials familiar with military planning. It did not establish that Trump had approved the plan or decided to use the weapon.

On 17 October, the US Central Command chief, Admiral Brad Cooper, said Washington had blocked Iran from exporting US$25 billion worth of crude oil and frozen approximately US$35 million in Iranian cryptocurrency. He also said Iran-linked groups were withholding payments to fighters to redirect funds to the Islamic Revolutionary

Guard Corps. Cooper added that US forces and regional partners were facilitating commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

On 18 October, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reiterated that Iran was prepared to reopen the Strait of Hormuz within seven days if Washington accepted Tehran's conditions. These reportedly included lifting the US blockade on Iranian ports, ending sanctions affecting Iranian oil exports and halting regional hostilities. The proposal followed stalled negotiations mediated by countries including Qatar and Pakistan, while the United States continued to raise Iran's nuclear program in discussions.

On 18 October, Iran's parliament approved Mehrdad Akhlaghi as defense minister, with 237 votes in favor out of 277 cast. His predecessor, Aziz Nasirzadeh, had been killed in the opening US-Israeli strikes in February. After the vote, Akhlaghi warned that renewed US attacks would cause "enormous damage" to the United States and its regional allies, adding that Iran was preparing to defend itself against possible further military action.

On 19 October, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Navy said an oil tanker had struck a mine and caught fire while transiting the Strait of Hormuz. The report appeared amid continuing disputes over maritime access and the US blockade of Iranian ports. Separately, Araghchi accused Netanyahu of pushing Washington towards war to avoid domestic legal consequences. The claims were reported in live coverage, and independent confirmation of the tanker's reported circumstances was not provided in the cited account.

On 19 October, reporting said Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was preparing to visit Tehran for discussions with Iranian officials. The anticipated visit followed the breakdown in negotiations over reopening the Strait of Hormuz and wider efforts to contain the US-Iran confrontation. The reported agenda centered on regional developments and diplomatic coordination; the available report did not provide a confirmed meeting schedule or a published set of outcomes.

Turkey

At a 14 October meeting of the Presidential High Advisory Board chaired by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkish officials criticized Israeli actions around Al-Aqsa Mosque and what they described as efforts to obstruct Syria's recovery. The statement addressed regional stability and referenced Türkiye's defense cooperation with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia under the trilateral agreement signed in Mecca.

On 13 October, Türkiye's UN ambassador Ahmet Yıldız called on Israel to end what he termed "reckless" actions in Syria and comply with the 1974 disengagement agreement. Addressing the Security Council, he cited Israeli incursions and activity around the Sufa 53 line in Quneitra, saying violations of Syrian sovereignty threatened stability and reconstruction prospects.

a cabinet meeting on 12 October, Erdoğan condemned Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia and reaffirmed Türkiye's support for the kingdom. He said the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement involving Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan would be submitted to Parliament for ratification soon. Turkish ruling-party spokesman Ömer Çelik separately said preparations were advanced, opening a parliamentary process for possible deployment.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan spoke by telephone with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on 13 October. According to Turkish Foreign Ministry sources, they reviewed regional developments, diplomatic initiatives and efforts to resolve conflicts across the Middle East. The two exchanged views on possible routes to de-escalation and agreed to maintain contact as circumstances developed.

Türkiye and Cambodia signed a military framework agreement in Istanbul on 16 October during Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet's visit. Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan signed for Türkiye and Deputy Defense Minister Prak Sovanna for Cambodia. Erdoğan also urged Cambodia and Thailand to settle their border dispute peacefully, through dialogue and in accordance with international law.

Before the 52nd OIC Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Baghdad on 17–18 October, Türkiye said Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan would press for coordinated action on Gaza, Palestine, regional conflicts and counterterrorism. Ankara also identified Syria's territorial integrity and reconstruction, Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, attacks on Gulf states, and navigation through Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb as agenda issues.

At the OIC meeting in Baghdad on 17 October, Fidan called for solidarity and joint action among Muslim-majority countries, particularly on Palestine. Türkiye handed the organization's rotating Council of Foreign Ministers chairmanship to Iraq after holding it since June 2025. Fidan also met Iraqi President Nizar Amedi, Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi, Speaker Heibet Halbusi and other senior officials.

During Fidan's 17 October meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty in Baghdad, both ministers called for renewed dialogue and diplomatic negotiations between Washington and Tehran. They discussed proposals to reduce regional escalation, rejected threats to Gulf states and maritime routes, and addressed Yemen, Sudan, Libya and Syria. Abdelatty also supported closer coordination through the regional quadrilateral mechanism.

On 16 October, Türkiye joined 18 other foreign ministers in a joint statement condemning Colombia's inauguration of an embassy in Jerusalem. The statement said the move contradicted relevant UN Security Council resolutions and undermined the two-state solution. The ministers urged Colombia to reverse the decision and reaffirmed support for an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met Fidan in Baku on 15 October during the CICA summit. China's readout said Beijing wanted to deepen strategic cooperation with Türkiye, align the Belt and Road Initiative with Türkiye's Middle Corridor, improve conditions for two-way investment and support Türkiye's hosting of COP31. Wang also referred to Ankara's statements and actions concerning China's security concerns.

Türkiye's proposed 2027 budget would increase allocations for weapons, ammunition, weapons systems and other defense-equipment purchases by 229%, Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz said on 16 October. The proposal sets total defense spending at 2.206 trillion Turkish lira, approximately $44.5 billion, with a separate $25.2 billion for internal security. The 229% figure concerns procurement allocations, not total defense spending.

14. Global Powers

Relations between President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy came under renewed strain. On 17 October, Reuters reported that Trump had waived key sanctions and tariffs linked to Russia shortly before they were due to take effect, while continuing to criticise Ukraine's attacks on Russian oil refineries. Zelenskyy argued that easing pressure on Moscow while Russian forces continued attacking Ukraine undermined Kyiv's position. Concerns also grew over the reliability of US military and intelligence support, including reports of disruption affecting satellite internet services used by Ukraine.

The dispute intensified over the weekend. On 18 October, Trump accused Zelenskyy of lacking interest in ending the war, while Ukraine reported continued Russian attacks on its energy infrastructure. Kyiv maintained that it was prepared to stop striking Russian energy facilities if Moscow reciprocated. Trump's proposed energy ceasefire, announced on 11 October, had not developed into a clearly confirmed and mutually implemented arrangement.

On 16 October, Trump signed an executive order implementing the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026. The order established a framework for sharply higher tariffs on Russian goods and additional duties on imports from major purchasers of Russian oil and gas, as well as countries facilitating sanctions evasion. However, the same order waived the application of several sanctions, restrictions and duties provided for under the legislation, with the administration citing US national interests.

Indirect diplomatic efforts between the United States and Iran continued, but the central dispute remained unresolved. On 12 October, Iranian officials said Tehran was reviewing Washington's response to an Iranian proposal concerning the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran wanted negotiations to begin with maritime access and security, while Washington insisted that Iran's nuclear programme be addressed early in the process. Qatar and Pakistan continued to serve as intermediaries. The confrontation has major

economic consequences because the Strait of Hormuz is a critical route for global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments.

One of the most directly relevant developments for the Horn occurred on 14 October, when US Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke by telephone with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed about rising tensions with Eritrea. According to the State Department's readout, Rubio urged de-escalation, a return to the 2018 Ethiopia–Eritrea peace framework, respect for neighbouring states' sovereignty and territorial integrity, and avoidance of cross-border incursions. He stressed that the region could not tolerate another conflict. Abiy described the conversation as fruitful and welcomed continued US support for Ethiopia.

The call followed Washington's 3 October public warning that a new Ethiopia–Eritrea conflict could threaten regional stability and jeopardise US cooperation with both countries. It came amid renewed fighting in Tigray, competing accusations from Addis Ababa and Asmara, and growing international concern about possible interstate escalation.

On 18 October, Rubio arrived in Uzbekistan for meetings with leaders from the five Central Asian states under the C5+1 framework. More than 200 business executives accompanied the delegation, reflecting Washington's interest in expanding commercial ties, securing access to critical minerals and deepening relationships with countries situated between Russia, China and Iran. Rubio was expected to continue to India after the Central Asian visit.

On 18 October, Trump publicly endorsed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ahead of Israel's 27 October parliamentary election. Trump praised Netanyahu's leadership during the war involving Iran and other regional fronts, reiterating his support for a close strategic partner. Netanyahu thanked Trump for the endorsement. Its electoral impact remains uncertain, particularly amid divisions within Israel and declining American public support for the war.

In remarks to reporters, Rubio was asked directly about the risk of war between Ethiopia and Eritrea and whether Washington had made a mistake by lifting some Ethiopia-related sanctions.

Rubio rejected the suggestion that the sanctions decision had contributed to the crisis. He described the measures as limited and said Washington had lifted them partly to improve communication with Eritrea, explaining that it would be difficult for the United States to act as a mediator without being able to engage both sides. He also acknowledged that Washington communicates more frequently with Ethiopia.

Rubio recognized Ethiopia's security concerns, referring to attacks by separatist forces, including drone attacks against the Ethiopian capital. At the same time, he urged Addis

Ababa to respond with restraint, warning that the concentration of troops on both sides of the border could turn the situation into a wider regional conflict.

On 18 October, China proposed export controls covering 12 technologies associated with solar-equipment manufacturing. The proposal includes technologies used to produce thin silicon wafers, perovskite and tandem solar cells, and polysilicon through more energy-efficient processes. Some advanced solar-cell technologies would face restrictions, although the proposal does not amount to a blanket export ban. Public consultation is scheduled to run until 15 November.

The move extends Beijing's use of export controls to sectors in which Chinese companies possess significant technological advantages. It also comes as the United States, Europe and other economies seek to diversify supply chains and expand their own clean-energy manufacturing capabilities.

Chinese President Xi Jinping met Togolese leader Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé and Botswana President Duma Gideon Boko on 13 October. China and Botswana announced the establishment of a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, elevating the formal framework for bilateral cooperation. The engagements formed part of Beijing's continued effort to strengthen relationships with African governments through high-level diplomacy and economic cooperation.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi travelled to Azerbaijan, Croatia, Montenegro and Bulgaria from 14–20 October, while representing Xi Jinping at the seventh summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Baku on 15 October. The tour combined engagement with a regional security forum and bilateral diplomacy in the Balkans and the South Caucasus.

On 13 October, Taiwan's Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung warned European governments that excessive dependence on Chinese suppliers could create economic and political vulnerabilities. Speaking in Poland ahead of the EU leaders' summit, he encouraged closer European economic ties with Taiwan and argued that diversification would help protect European autonomy.

The comments came as EU governments prepared to discuss trade imbalances with China and ways to reduce dependence on suppliers in strategically sensitive sectors. Beijing rejects Taiwan's efforts to strengthen official international relationships and regards the island as part of China.

On 13 October, US President Donald Trump said he did not believe China and Russia were substantially assisting Iran in the ongoing war, contradicting reports and claims concerning possible external support for Tehran. The issue matters because the conflict has raised questions about whether Beijing is maintaining strict neutrality or providing forms of assistance that could affect Iran's military and economic resilience.

On 19 October, Reuters reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin had proposed a summit with US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping to discuss a possible settlement of the war in Ukraine. According to The Wall Street Journal, the proposal was raised during a telephone conversation between Putin and Trump on 9 October. A possible meeting could take place on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Shenzhen on 18–19 November. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov confirmed that discussions about a potential meeting were under way, but the plans and agenda remained unclear. Trump had not committed to attending.

On 15 October, Reuters reported that Russia's oil and gas tax revenue was expected to reach approximately 1 trillion roubles, or US$12 billion, in October, around 10% higher than a year earlier. Higher international oil prices, partly driven by the conflict in the Middle East, helped offset lower Russian oil production. Nevertheless, estimated cumulative oil and gas revenues for January–October remained approximately 14% below the equivalent period in 2025. Oil and gas taxes account for about one-fifth of Russian federal revenue.

On 14 October, Russian presidential envoy Kirill Dmitriev said that the reported Russia–US diesel arrangement could open the way for further economic cooperation. Trump had announced that Russia would supply diesel to the United States and international markets amid pressure over fuel prices. Dmitriev said Moscow would overcome sanctions-related difficulties to ensure delivery.

reported that Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Alimov had confirmed Moscow's readiness to facilitate contacts between Ethiopia and Eritrea on the sidelines of the Third Russia–Africa Summit in Moscow on 28–29 October. The offer comes amid renewed fighting in northern Ethiopia, severed diplomatic relations between Addis Ababa and Asmara, and escalating accusations concerning cross-border military activity.

Russia is preparing to host the Third Russia–Africa Summit in Moscow on 28–29 October. In a statement to the UN Security Council earlier this month, Russia reaffirmed its support for the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), called for African leadership in efforts to resolve the conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan, and backed greater African representation on the Security Council. The statement also framed Russia–Africa cooperation as part of a broader movement towards a multipolar international order.

15. European Countries

On 15 October, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office called on both countries to respect sovereignty and territorial integrity, avoid cross-border violations, and return to dialogue. London also stressed civilian protection, international humanitarian

law and safe humanitarian access, while backing the African Union's role in facilitating talks.

Regarding UK–EU relations, on 12 October, Burnham told Parliament that he wanted the UK–EU summit scheduled for 20 November to advance closer cooperation on food standards, emissions trading and youth mobility. He also argued that Britain should consider its longer-term relationship with the bloc, reopening a politically sensitive debate over the consequences of Brexit. Burnham cited concerns about Russian interference in European politics as another reason to strengthen UK–EU cooperation.

On the same day, Britain joined a multinational statement condemning attacks, sabotage, cyber operations and other hostile activities attributed to Iran and its networks. The statement followed the UK's attribution of Iran's involvement in an incident at RAF Fairford on 27 September. London said it would investigate and disrupt hostile activities conducted on behalf of foreign states

On 18 October, President Emmanuel Macron called for calm after nationwide demonstrations over the cost of living and deteriorating public services escalated into serious violence. Reuters reported more than 2,400 arrests and injuries to nearly 1,000 police officers. Macron condemned the violence while distinguishing rioters from peaceful demonstrators. The unrest adds to the political pressure on his government ahead of the next presidential election.

On 16 October, France and Germany announced an agreement on the future of Europe's automotive industry. The compromise would allow combustion-engine vehicles to remain on the market beyond 2035, easing Germany's concerns about the transition, while supporting France's push to favour European manufacturing in public subsidies and procurement. The deal reflects a growing determination to protect European industrial capacity against external competition, particularly from China. It also exposes a tension between industrial protection and the EU's climate commitments.

On 15 October, the Home Office announced that Eritrean officials would lose preferential visa processing. Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood also warned that Britain could suspend visa access for Eritrean nationals if Asmara did not agree to resume cooperation on returns. The UK said Eritrea had withdrawn that cooperation earlier in 2026 and noted that Eritreans were the most common nationality arriving by small boat in the year ending June 2026.

On 16 October, the UK told the UN Security Council that the parties to Sudan's war must protect civilians, permit humanitarian aid, and pursue diplomacy. Ambassador Kate Foster cited UN findings of killings, torture, sexual violence and deliberate ethnic targeting following the Rapid Support Forces' capture of El Fasher one year earlier. She also warned that external financing, weapons transfers and drone supplies were sustaining

the conflict, and called for stronger sanctions against those enabling the war. The UK cited an estimate that more than 33 million people in Sudan need humanitarian assistance.

On 15 October, Macron met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Brussels and argued that Ukraine must receive the means needed to defend its population and infrastructure against Russian attacks. Zelenskyy said France would provide further assistance to Ukraine's aviation sector, while both leaders backed accelerating the FREYJA project for a European anti-ballistic missile defence system.

On 13 October, Macron received Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Déby in Paris, where the two governments signed a declaration of intent to renew defence cooperation. The framework covers military training, expertise, defence technology and industrial cooperation. It follows Chad's termination of its military agreement with France in November 2024 and the subsequent withdrawal of French troops. The declaration is not a new defence pact and does not itself confirm the return of French forces to Chad.

On 16 October, Italy extended its suspension of border-free travel arrangements with Spain for another week following a surge in arrivals in Ceuta, the Spanish enclave in North Africa. Spain also maintained its own suspension of the arrangements with Italy. The two governments were preparing further discussions to resolve the dispute and explore alternative cooperation on migration and security.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

On 13 October 2026, UN Security Council members held closed consultations on the situation in the Horn of Africa requested by the United States in light of escalation in northern Ethiopia. Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Martin Kimani briefed. Discussions built on prior concerns about risks to the 2022 Pretoria Agreement, Ethiopia-Eritrea relations reports of Eritrean forces in Ethiopia, drone activity, airstrikes and constrained humanitarian access. Ethiopia's 9 October letter (S/2026/797) invoking Article 51 self-defence against alleged Eritrean aggression and Eritrea's response letter seeking deterrent measures under Chapter VII remained central. The Secretary-General's earlier statement of grave concern and call for cessation of hostilities and return to dialogue under the Pretoria framework continued to guide positions. The annual UN-AU cooperation joint consultative meeting with the AU Peace and Security Council remained scheduled for around 22–23 October in New York.

On 13 October 2026 the Quintet on Sudan (UN, AU, EU, League of Arab States and IGAD) met Sudanese civilian and political stakeholders in Addis Ababa as part of efforts toward an inclusive, Sudanese-owned political dialogue. Broader UN focus remained on

the interconnected risks of conflict spillover in the Horn, including northern Ethiopia developments.

Africa Union

Following Ethiopia's 1 October expulsion of Eritrean diplomats including those accredited to the AU and UNECA, Eritrea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to the AU Commission letter dated around 12–15 October publicly highlighted mid-week demanding immediate corrective measures. Eritrea argued that the expulsions violated the AU Constitutive Act the Headquarters Agreement with Ethiopia and principles of sovereign equality, effectively denying Eritrea its membership rights to representation and participation in AU activities in Addis Ababa. Eritrea called on the AU Commission to refer the matter to the Executive Council and Assembly for restoration of its full rights.

The African Union Commission maintained its call for maximum restraint by Ethiopia, Eritrea and Egypt during ongoing fighting in northern Ethiopia Tigray, Afar and Amhara, reports of border developments near Zalambessa and the earlier diplomatic ruptures. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights had early October expressed concern over hostilities, civilian impacts and risks to the Pretoria Agreement. AUSSOM operations in Somalia continued with ongoing partner discussions on mandate implementation, logistics and financing sustainability mandate to 31 December 2026.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

On 12–13 October 2026, IGAD participated in the opening of the Cyber Month Event and Member States Discussion Sessions hosted by Ethiopia's Information Network Security Administration (INSA) in Addis Ababa. Represented by Dr. Mohyeldeen Eltohami Taha, Director of the IGAD Economic Cooperation and Regional Integration Division on behalf of Executive Secretary H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu), IGAD joined senior Ethiopian officials, including the Deputy Prime Minister and cybersecurity agency heads from IGAD member states and Ghana. Discussions focused on regional collaboration in cybersecurity with bilateral sessions exploring partnerships involving Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, South Sudan and others. The event underscored IGAD's commitment to a secure digital future for the Horn of Africa.

On 13 October 2026, IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan H.E. Moussa Faki met in Juba with leadership of the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM) to review progress on ceasefire monitoring, transitional security arrangements, the electoral process and the conclusion of the transition period.

The same day the Envoy met Hon. Africano Mande Gedima, Minister of Presidential Affairs commending ongoing inter party dialogue on election related matters and stressing the need for inclusive dialogue and consensus building for a peaceful, credible electoral

process. IGAD reaffirmed its support for lasting peace and stability in South Sudan. Later in the week around 17 October the Envoy met the UK's Ambassador designate to South Sudan to discuss the peace process and election preparations.

On 13–16 October 2026, IGAD convened with SADC, COMESA, EAC and ECCAS in Lusaka, Zambia, to strengthen collaboration among Regional Economic Communities on health emergency preparedness, response and resilience across Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.

Dr. Mohyeldeen El Tohami Taha, Director of IGAD's Economic Cooperation and Regional Integration Division met with Ethiopia's Dashen Bank this week to explore a partnership aimed at dismantling barriers to cross-border trade a move that signals the regional bloc's growing emphasis on enlisting private financial institutions to operationalize its integration agenda. While the meeting itself was brief on specifics it fits squarely within IGAD's broader push to digitalize trade systems and harmonize payment infrastructure across member states efforts that have recently included validating digital trade solutions for agricultural corridors and advancing a regional digital market integration project focused on central bank digital systems and e-commerce enablers.

For Dashen Bank, engaging with IGAD offers a foothold in a region where cross-border financial flows remain fragmented by regulatory inconsistencies and disparate payment systems challenges that have historically driven up transaction costs and limited access to formal channels for traders and small businesses. Dr. Mohyeldeen characterized the discussion as a distinct honor and stressed IGAD's intent to convert dialogue into concrete partnerships, though the absence of announced deliverables suggests the collaboration remains in an exploratory phase one that will need to move quickly if it is to match the pace of parallel IGAD initiatives including the rollout of digital sanitary and phytosanitary certification and customs automation pilots along priority trade corridors.

H.E. Hüseyin Özdemir, Türkiye's newly appointed Ambassador to Djibouti presented his letter of accreditation to IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu at the Secretariat this week a routine diplomatic formality that nonetheless carries weight given Ankara's deepening institutional ties with the regional bloc. Özdemir, a former member of Türkiye's Foreign Policy Advisory Board, arrived in Djibouti in September and has already signaled his intent to leverage Djibouti's concurrent IGAD chairmanship to strengthen regional cooperation. Türkiye and IGAD have operated under a formal Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2019 and Ankara has become an increasingly visible partner in the Horn most notably through its mediation of the December 2024 Ankara Declaration between Ethiopia and Somalia an intervention IGAD's Executive Secretary publicly thanked President Erdoğan for facilitating. IGAD's deputy executive secretary has described Türkiye as a very important partner not only for the Secretariat but for member states across the region.

HORN REVIEW

IDEAS CONNECTIONS SYNERGY

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