



Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

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Horn Review: Weekly Report

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1. Ethiopia

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed arrived in Eldoret on 20 October 2026 as Guest of Honor for Kenya's Mashujaa Day celebrations, underscoring the deep historical and contemporary ties between the two nations. Paying tribute to Kenya's freedom fighters, he drew parallels with Ethiopia's victory at Adwa, emphasizing shared legacies of courage, unity and sacrifice. He called for continued cooperation under the spirit of Medemer in clean energy, connectivity, telecommunications, trade and regional security to foster shared prosperity across the Horn of Africa.

In recent interviews, the Prime Minister addressed longstanding regional challenges, noting that Eritrean cities and industries had declined significantly since secession, with once-thriving centers losing their economic vitality. He attributed this to policy choices that prioritized confrontation over development and urged a return to good neighborliness and mutual cooperation as the only viable path, warning against allowing external rivalries to dominate the region's future. He also stated that the TPLF had violated the Pretoria Agreement by preparing for renewed conflict, including arms procurement, forced recruitment and obstruction of service restoration and displaced persons' return. While the federal government fulfilled its commitments, the Premier stressed that war brings only damage and urged Tigrayan youth to abandon weapons, return to productive life in education, agriculture and industry, and contribute to the region's rehabilitation rather than serve external interests.

These themes of peace, sovereignty and cooperation converged at the 12th Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa held in Bahir Dar. Under the theme "Pathways to Peace in Africa: Economic Sovereignty and Geopolitical Transformation," African leaders, policymakers and experts examined responses to economic uncertainty, geopolitical competition and shifting global power dynamics, focusing on African-led solutions to instability in Sudan, the Sahel, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the Horn. Participants highlighted the need to convert early warning systems into timely preventive action, strengthen economic sovereignty through domestic processing of resources, youth employment and women's inclusion, and advance integration via the African Continental Free Trade Area. They emphasized that lasting peace requires addressing root causes through dialogue, inclusive governance and regional solidarity rather than military means alone, while building technological capacity and collective African agency amid external pressures.

Prime Minister Abiy used the forum to reaffirm that reliable sea access constitutes an existential necessity for Ethiopia's more than 130 million people, essential to security, sovereignty and generational prosperity. He pledged to pursue this goal through dialogue and mutual benefit, linking it to broader African needs for efficient corridors that expand trade, formalize small commerce and disrupt illicit networks financing violence, while citing the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam as a model of national determination now delivering power across neighboring countries.

On the sidelines, the Premier conferred with Mozambique's President Daniel Chapo on strengthening bilateral cooperation and honored attending African leaders for their commitment to continental unity and African-led peace efforts, reinforcing the forum's role as a platform for translating shared priorities into practical collaboration.

Development achievements further illustrated pathways from dialogue to tangible progress. At the inauguration of the Megech Irrigation Dam in Gondar, Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama praised the project's revival as an inspiration for restarting Ghana's own stalled irrigation initiatives, noting its capacity to irrigate over 17,000 hectares, supply water and generate broader economic opportunities while linking Ethiopia's historical resistance legacy to today's responsibility for continental economic transformation.

Ethiopian officials reinforced the country's central role in regional stability. National Intelligence and Security Service Director General Redwan Hussien and Prime Minister's Advisor Getachew Reda underscored the Horn of Africa's strategic importance and Ethiopia's pivotal position, calling for collective approaches to Red Sea security, innovative strategies against external interference and continued commitment to peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue and multilateral frameworks.

The forum concluded with a strong call from its board chairperson, Ghanaian President Mahama, to move from discussion to concrete action on integration, technological sovereignty and inclusive development, challenging participants to demonstrate measurable progress against conflict and opportunity creation by the next gathering. In parallel, Ethiopia marked Defense Forces Day by honoring the Ethiopian National Defense Force's resilience in safeguarding sovereignty and contributing to national development and regional peace amid evolving geopolitical challenges.

On October 25 at the same ceremony, ENDF Chief of Staff Field Marshal Birhanu Jula reaffirmed Ethiopia's commitment to safeguarding its legitimate interests in the Abay River and the Red Sea, describing both as vital to long-term development and future generations. He stressed that the government and military share responsibility to secure fair benefits from these strategic resources, warning against attempts by external factions to monopolize them, while affirming Ethiopia's resolve to protect sovereignty and pursue peaceful good neighborliness without relinquishing essential national interests.

Even as high-level discussions advanced continental peace agendas, localized violence underscored persistent challenges. Fighting between Oromo and Somali groups in the Ethiopian border town of Moyale, which erupted around 22 October and continued into the following days, killed at least nine people and injured dozens, prompting some 2,500 residents, mainly women and children, to cross into Kenya by 23 October. The Kenya Red Cross rapidly mobilized aid, including temporary shelter, tents, blankets, water containers and food supplies, while local authorities coordinated humanitarian support for the displaced families arriving with few belongings.

2. Sudan

Sudan's conflict entered another dangerous phase during the week of 19–26 October, as a succession of deadly drone strikes intensified civilian suffering and heightened regional concerns. Attacks in West Kordofan and the disputed Abyei region reportedly killed hundreds, while the United Nations warned that drone warfare was increasingly targeting civilian infrastructure. At the same time, famine risks rose amid severe drought, fuel shortages and declining livelihoods. Diplomatic efforts gained momentum through renewed international discussions on a humanitarian truce, although the prospects for a durable ceasefire remained uncertain.

The most alarming escalation involved drone strikes in West Kordofan and Abyei. According to the Sudan War Observatory, attacks in West Kordofan on 18 October killed approximately 150 people, including mourners travelling to a funeral and people gathered at the site. A separate strike hit Al-Mujlad, a town in the same state, although the full casualty toll was not immediately established. On 19 October, a drone attack struck Amiet Market in the disputed Abyei region, killing at least 153 people, according to local authorities. The market reportedly contained fuel storage facilities suspected of supplying the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Abyei officials blamed the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), while reporting suggested the strike targeted logistical networks supporting RSF operations. The identities of the intended targets and the circumstances of the attacks have not been independently established in full. Sudan's military had not publicly confirmed responsibility for the reported strikes, while South Sudan summoned Sudan's ambassador and warned against allowing its territory to become an extension of the war. The attacks demonstrated how operations against military supply networks can inflict devastating consequences on civilians and extend the conflict's effects across disputed border areas.

The broader escalation prompted renewed condemnation from the United Nations. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk reported that at least 306 people had been killed and hundreds injured in drone strikes during the first three weeks of October alone. The attacks, attributed to both the SAF and RSF, hit homes, markets, hospitals, displacement sites, power stations and water infrastructure across Darfur, Kordofan, Blue Nile, Khartoum and other areas. Türk called on both parties to comply with international

humanitarian law and refrain from attacking civilians and civilian objects. The figures underline the growing centrality of drone warfare in the conflict and the difficulty of protecting civilians when military operations increasingly reach markets, displacement settlements and essential infrastructure.

Humanitarian conditions continued to deteriorate. A joint statement issued by the United Kingdom and 31 international partners on 23 October warned that 19.5 million people were experiencing acute food insecurity, including five million facing emergency levels of hunger. The number of children expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition could exceed 825,000 in 2026. Conflict remains the principal driver, disrupting food production, markets, healthcare and supply routes, while El Niño-related drought affecting more than half the country compounds the crisis. The signatories called for unrestricted humanitarian access, protection for aid workers and the opening of cross-border and crossline routes, including air access into Darfur. Without improved access and increased funding, the risk of famine in vulnerable areas will rise further.

The economic consequences of the war were increasingly visible in everyday life. In Port Sudan, fuel shortages and rising prices have forced transport workers to spend hours queuing at petrol stations, reducing the time available to earn income. Petrol prices have also increased in other government-controlled areas, adding to transport costs and household expenses. The disruption reflects broader problems in fuel supply, foreign-exchange availability and distribution, while higher transport costs risk feeding into food prices and the cost of essential goods. Meanwhile, artisanal gold mining has become an increasingly important but dangerous source of income for families whose livelihoods have been destroyed by the conflict.

Diplomatic efforts to end the war also intensified. A Geneva meeting involving 21 countries focused on immediate confidence-building measures, including prisoner exchanges and coordination over secondary-school examinations. The Quad which includes Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States also discussed securing a humanitarian truce, improving aid access and establishing a path towards a permanent ceasefire and an inclusive, Sudanese-led political process. The participating countries reiterate that the conflict had no military solution. However, translating diplomatic momentum into an agreement will require the parties to accept practical measures and the external actors influencing them to apply sustained pressure. The continuing scale of drone attacks illustrates the distance between international initiatives and conditions on the battlefield.

The conflict's political and accountability dimensions remained equally significant. One year after the RSF captured El Fasher, Amnesty International reported that civilians continued to face unlawful killings, arbitrary detention, torture and severe restrictions on movement. Residents who escaped the city described schools being used as detention

centers and pervasive surveillance, while humanitarian access remained limited. The organization estimated that fewer than 70,000 people remained in a city whose pre-war population exceeded one million. Meanwhile, the UAE's nomination of senior diplomat Lana Nusseibeh for United Nations secretary-general has prompted scrutiny over Abu Dhabi's alleged support for the RSF, which the UAE has consistently denied. Critics argue that the allegations raise questions about the implications of her candidacy for the UN's credibility, while her supporters point to her extensive diplomatic experience.

Sudan's trajectory remains defined by escalating military violence, worsening civilian hardship and an unresolved struggle for political power. The deadly attacks across Kordofan and Abyei show that drone warfare is extending the conflict's reach and placing civilians at risk even beyond the principal front lines. Meanwhile, hunger, fuel shortages and the destruction of livelihoods are deepening the crisis. Renewed diplomatic engagement offers a possible opening, but its credibility will depend on whether it produces a verifiable humanitarian truce, safer aid access and a sustained reduction in violence. Without concrete progress, international initiatives risk remaining disconnected from the realities confronting Sudanese civilians.

3. Egypt

Egypt's parliament postponed consideration of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's request to authorize defensive military assistance to Saudi Arabia if Riyadh asks for help. The proposal requires a two-thirds parliamentary majority. The Egyptian Social Democratic Party instructed its parliamentary bloc to abstain, citing concerns about the mission's scope, duration, costs and risks to Egyptian troops.

Sisi said any Egyptian military support for Saudi Arabia would focus on defending the kingdom's territory and borders. His statement clarified the proposed mission's defensive remit as Houthi attacks continued against Saudi infrastructure. Cairo's position linked Gulf security with Egypt's national interests, including the protection of Red Sea shipping and maritime routes.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran had offered to mediate between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthis and was awaiting their response. He warned that outside military involvement could complicate the conflict as Egypt considered providing defensive assistance to Saudi Arabia. The diplomatic exchange highlighted competing efforts to contain the renewed fighting.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar called for renewed US-Iran negotiations during a meeting in Istanbul. They discussed proposals to prevent further military escalation, supported regional mediation efforts and condemned attacks on Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Both ministers emphasized diplomacy, respect for state sovereignty and a

sustainable regional security framework.

Egypt's foreign ministry spokesman Nader Zaki emphasized Cairo's diplomatic efforts to prevent wider regional escalation. He reaffirmed support for Saudi security, urged Iran to resume negotiations with Washington, defended Sudan's unity and national institutions, and rejected attempts to forcibly relocate Palestinians. Egypt also reiterated its objections to Libya's ratification of a maritime memorandum between the former Libyan government and Türkiye.

At Cairo Water Week, Sisi described Egypt's water security as a core national priority and called for Nile Basin cooperation based on consultation, information-sharing and protection of downstream interests. Ethiopia also inaugurated the Megech irrigation dam near Gondar, on a tributary of Lake Tana. Egypt's irrigation ministry assessed the project's scale and flow impact as limited while calling for joint impact assessments of upstream development.

Egyptian Irrigation Minister Hani Sewilam said Cairo had exhausted negotiation avenues over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. He described a US-hosted draft agreement involving Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia, developed with World Bank participation, as a balanced framework for protecting the countries' interests. The dispute continues to center on binding rules for dam operations during droughts, water-data sharing and coordination between upstream and downstream states.

Sewilam said Egypt's water situation remained stable despite slightly below-average Nile inflows. He explained that the irrigation ministry uses satellite monitoring to track Ethiopian dam operations and assesses water conditions daily to guide reservoir management and releases from the Aswan High Dam. He also highlighted Egypt's severe water scarcity, with annual per capita water availability estimated at 473 cubic metres.

4. Eritrea

Eritrea's Chargé d'Affaires in Washington, Berhane G. Solomon, met Egyptian Ambassador Mohamed Hamdy El-Molla around 22 October to discuss bilateral relations, Red Sea and Horn of Africa developments, and coordination with U.S. officials and other stakeholders, according to the meeting account. The exchange reflects Cairo's effort to strengthen Eritrea's diplomatic role as Egypt builds regional pressure on Ethiopia over Red Sea access and Nile politics. Their discussion comes as Ethiopia's federal forces have re-established a substantial presence in Tigray and along the Eritrean frontier, while the seven-group opposition alliance faces mounting pressure. These battlefield shifts make closer Egyptian - Eritrean coordination increasingly relevant to both countries' strategy toward Addis Ababa.

The meeting's emphasis on engaging U.S. officials and lawmakers points to a diplomatic

effort to shape Washington's approach to the Horn as tensions rise. Egypt remains a key supporter of Eritrea's strategy of applying pressure on Ethiopia through regional partnerships, with the two countries' shared interest in constraining Addis Ababa's Red Sea ambitions giving their cooperation strategic weight. The reported agenda does not detail specific measures, but the timing suggests that Cairo and Asmara are aligning their positions as Ethiopia consolidates its military position in the north.

In a related diplomatic initiative at the UN in New York around 20 October, Eritrea's Permanent Representative, Sophia Tesfamariam, met U.S. Ambassador Mike Waltz and Ambassador Jeffrey Bartos to discuss regional developments and present Eritrea's position. The meeting forms part of Asmara's broader diplomatic campaign to portray Ethiopia as the aggressor and to cast its own actions as consistent with international norms. Tesfamariam's claim that there is no bilateral crisis serves that effort, redirecting attention from Eritrea's reported military involvement in Ethiopia to Addis Ababa's statements on Red Sea access and sovereignty. The initiative comes as Eritrea's strategy in Ethiopia faces setbacks following federal advances in Tigray and the weakening of the seven-group opposition alliance.

The campaign also seeks to enlist Washington and other influential actors in deterring Ethiopia, while framing Ethiopia's maritime ambitions as the source of regional tension. Yet reporting on the ground points to a more immediate driver of escalation: AP reported that Eritrean forces entered towns in Tigray, citing an Ethiopian-allied commander and residents, while ACLED separately reported a border crossing and subsequent drone attack. Ethiopian forces have since re-established a substantial presence in Tigray, including near the Eritrean border, shifting the military balance and raising the stakes of Asmara's diplomatic messaging.

Sophia Tesfamariam also continued Eritrea's diplomatic campaign at the UN, meeting Bahrain's Permanent Representative Jamal Fares Alrowaiei on 22 October and China's Permanent Representative Fu Cong on 23 October, after hosting UN Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Martin Kimani on 7 October. In Eritrea's account, she used the meetings to present Asmara's view of tensions with Ethiopia, emphasizing Ethiopia's Red Sea ambitions and alleged threats to Eritrean sovereignty while portraying Eritrea as restrained and committed to dialogue. The engagements extend Eritrea's effort to promote a narrative of victimhood and build support for its position among UN members and senior officials.

Sophia's framing invokes sovereignty, territorial integrity and the UN Charter, while placing Ethiopia's pursuit of Red Sea access at the center of regional tension. The meetings with Bahrain and China gave Asmara opportunities to circulate that account among influential UN members; her discussion with Kimani established contact with the UN's Africa leadership. Together, the engagements show Eritrea seeking diplomatic

backing as its strategy in Ethiopia faces setbacks following federal advances in Tigray and the weakening of the seven-group opposition alliance.

Eritrea's Ministry of Information reported that Foreign Minister Osman Saleh addressed a United Nations Day gathering in Asmara on 23 October, attended by senior government and PFDJ officials, UN representatives, diplomats and other guests. Saleh used the occasion to restate Eritrea's emphasis on sovereignty, independence and self-reliance, while portraying the country as facing external provocation and asserting its right to self-defense. UN Secretary-General António Guterres's video message focused on cooperation and respect for the UN Charter, while Resident Coordinator Nahla Valji called for partners to work together for positive change.

The event also reflects Asmara's effort to cultivate multilateral engagement after a prolonged period of diplomatic isolation, using UN platforms and representatives to reinforce its international presence and build diplomatic clout. Eritrea's emphasis on sovereignty and Charter principles links its national narrative to widely recognized multilateral norms, while the public participation of UN officials lends visibility to its engagement with the organization. Such outreach can help normalize diplomatic contact and strengthen Eritrea's voice in international forums, without itself demonstrating any shift in governance or foreign policy.

Eritrea and The Gambia established diplomatic relations through a joint communiqué signed by their UN representatives in New York on 23 October, according to Eritrea's Ministry of Information. The agreement creates a formal channel for bilateral engagement, with the communiqué citing potential cooperation in political affairs, trade, economic development and culture. No specific initiatives or implementation measures were announced.

The move adds to Asmara's effort to expand diplomatic ties and build influence through multilateral channels after years of relative isolation. The emphasis on sovereignty, territorial integrity and the UN Charter also echoes Eritrea's current diplomatic messaging as it seeks support for its account of tensions with Ethiopia. For The Gambia, the immediate significance is likely to be modest unless the new relationship develops into concrete cooperation or sustained political coordination.

5. Djibouti

Ethiopia's Ambassador Legesse Tulu Goe met Doraleh Multipurpose Port CEO Ide Mohammed to discuss improving port efficiency for Ethiopian cargo. The talks reportedly acknowledged the timely clearance of Ethiopia's 2025/26 imports and focused on expanding capacity ahead of higher expected volumes in the 2026/27 production season. The meeting reflects the practical importance of Djibouti's port infrastructure to Ethiopia, which relies on neighboring states for maritime trade.

For Addis Ababa, reliable throughput at Doraleh is central to reducing logistics bottlenecks and sustaining import flows, while Djibouti benefits from its position as Ethiopia's principal maritime gateway. The focus on capacity expansion points to a continuing effort to deepen this interdependence as Ethiopia explores broader options for sea access. The discussion was operational in nature, but it underscores how port efficiency remains a strategic component of the Ethiopia–Djibouti partnership.

China and Djibouti issued a joint communiqué on Red Sea shipping security and peace in the Horn of Africa after Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Abdoukader Houssein Omar met in Beijing on 21 October, according to China's Foreign Ministry. They called for freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb, while stressing that security arrangements should respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and wishes of littoral states. The ministers also signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation under China's Global Security Initiative, extending their bilateral partnership into the security sphere. Reuters reported that the statement came amid Houthi-related disruption to shipping and renewed regional escalation linked to the war in Yemen.

The communiqué brings together two priorities: keeping a major international shipping route open and affirming coastal states' authority over regional security. Djibouti's location at Bab el-Mandeb and its hosting of several foreign military bases give its position particular weight; China also operates its first overseas military base there. Beijing's description of the communiqué as a unified message suggests an effort to shape the terms of international engagement in the Red Sea, including by resisting unilateral action by outside powers. The new memorandum signals closer security dialogue, but neither the communiqué nor the MOU, as described in the announcement, sets out operational measures or a concrete role for China and Djibouti in protecting shipping.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), as reported by Anadolu Agency, said more than 268,000 people had been displaced within Yemen since July, nearly all since early September, as fighting between government forces and the Houthis intensified. By 17 October, at least 3,836 Yemenis had crossed by sea to Djibouti, about half of them children; the agency also recorded 1,327 migrants transiting from Yemen toward their countries of residence. Within Yemen, displacement has risen sharply in Aden and Lahj, while families face shortages of water, health care and shelter, rising prices and restrictions on aid access in Taiz.

The scale and pace of displacement show how renewed fighting is compounding Yemen's long-running humanitarian crisis and pushing its effects across the Red Sea. Arrivals in Djibouti add pressure on a country already central to regional migration and maritime movements, while the hazardous crossings—including boats reportedly running out of fuel—underscore the risks civilians face as safe options shrink. IOM says its response is falling behind because of funding shortfalls, leaving displaced families and host

communities exposed to worsening needs. Continued conflict and access constraints are likely to deepen civilian hardship and complicate efforts to sustain humanitarian assistance.

Africa Intelligence reported on 22 October that Djiboutian companies are under scrutiny over alleged links to Houthi supply networks. Its public summary identifies the issue but offers few details; an August investigation by Century International provides broader context, citing interdictions of shipments imported through Djibouti by 77 Logistics, a firm reportedly linked to President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh's brother, and tracing dual-use materials and chemicals toward Houthi-held Yemen. Djiboutian authorities have denied official complicity and said they are investigating the alleged networks. These reported links should therefore be understood as allegations about commercial and logistical channels, not as established state policy.

The claims highlight how Djibouti's position at Bab el-Mandeb and its busy port and dhow networks can be exploited to move dual-use goods into Yemen, complicating efforts to monitor Houthi procurement and protect Red Sea shipping. The strategic sensitivity is heightened by the country's concentration of foreign military bases and by renewed Houthi activity along a vital maritime corridor. If the reported networks are substantiated, they would expose vulnerabilities in port oversight and create pressure on Djibouti to demonstrate effective enforcement while preserving its role as a regional trade and security hub.

6. South Sudan

South Sudan faced renewed security and political pressure this week as a deadly drone strike in the disputed Abyei region killed more than 150 people, fighting erupted between rival opposition factions in Unity State, and uncertainty continued to surround the December elections. Meanwhile, the government pursued regional cooperation on water management and promoted new oil investment opportunities, even as the humanitarian needs of refugees and conflict-affected communities remained severe.

The most consequential development was the drone attack on Amiet Market in Abyei on 19 October, which killed at least 153 people, according to local authorities. The strike ignited a nearby fuel depot, causing extensive fires and leaving some victims severely burned. South Sudan blamed the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and summoned Sudan's ambassador to protest. Sudan's military reportedly said the strike targeted fuel supplies allegedly destined for the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), while Sudan's government subsequently denied that its forces were responsible. The competing accounts have not been independently resolved. The attack nevertheless demonstrated how Sudan's war is increasingly threatening communities and commercial networks beyond its main battlefields. President Salva Kiir warned against allowing Abyei to become an extension of the conflict, highlighting the risk that cross-border military operations could further

destabilize an already sensitive region.

Domestic security concerns also intensified in Unity State, where fighting broke out between rival factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO). The confrontation reflects an ongoing leadership dispute between factions aligned with Oyet Nathaniel Pierino and those loyal to another opposition leader, Gatwech Dual. The rivalry has increasingly affected military command structures and territorial control in the oil-producing state, which has already suffered years of conflict, displacement and flooding. The latest clashes underline how divisions within the opposition movement are adding another layer of instability to South Sudan's fragile security environment.

Political preparations for the 22 December elections advanced, but significant uncertainties remained. The Political Parties Council registered four pre-election coalitions comprising 25 parties and set 22 October as the deadline for completing coalition registration. The government also continued security preparations, with Kiir directing the Interior Ministry to strengthen arrangements for voters and electoral officials. However, the electoral timetable remains contested amid concerns over funding, logistics, insecurity and political inclusion. The appointment of Bol Wek Agoth to replace Martin Elia Lomuro as Minister of Cabinet Affairs further reshaped the caretaker administration less than two months before the scheduled vote. Although the authorities continue to affirm their commitment to elections, administrative changes and persistent security challenges make effective implementation increasingly urgent.

Economic engagement offered a more forward-looking development. South Sudan called for stronger regional coordination over the Lake Victoria Basin during an East African Community meeting in Kisumu, Kenya. Officials emphasized the country's connection to the White Nile system and the importance of coordinated management of water resources amid pollution, drought and flooding. The initiative reflects growing recognition that environmental and water-security challenges require cooperation across national borders. Separately, Juba continued promoting investment in its petroleum sector ahead of the South Sudan Oil and Power conference scheduled for November. The government has identified 14 open oil blocks for potential investors, seeking to attract capital for exploration, production and related infrastructure. Yet translating these opportunities into sustained economic gains will depend on security, regulatory predictability and the ability to manage oil revenues effectively.

Humanitarian pressures remained acute, particularly for refugees fleeing Sudan's war. At Gorom refugee camp, approximately 16,000 registered residents were reported to be struggling with unsafe drinking water, expensive medicines, overcrowded classrooms and security concerns. Residents rely on water deliveries from Juba because water from local pumps is reportedly unsuitable for consumption, adding further costs for families with

limited resources. These conditions illustrate how the conflict in neighboring Sudan is compounding South Sudan's own humanitarian burdens.

Overall, the week highlighted South Sudan's interconnected challenges: spillover from Sudan's war, persistent internal insecurity, an uncertain electoral transition and the need for economic diversification. Regional cooperation and proposed oil investments offer opportunities, but their benefits will remain limited without stronger security, accountable governance and sustained humanitarian support. As December approaches, the government faces growing pressure to demonstrate that its electoral ambitions can be matched by practical preparations and a more stable political environment. 0932414243

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

Forces loyal to ousted Southwest State president Abdiaziz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen seized multiple towns around Baidoa in the preceding days, including reports of Bardale, Dinsoor, Buurhakaba, Qansaxdheere, and Awdiinle, leaving the federally backed administration largely confined to Baidoa. The federally supported side announced plans for a counter offensive. In response, the federal government accused former Southwest State president Laftagareen of links to Al-Shabaab, building on earlier financial sanctions. Residents reportedly observed fighters with his militias in seized Bay region areas, and officials warned of action against cooperators. This occurred amid calls for federal intervention to restore control in contested districts.

Parliament Speaker Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur accused Kenya of "harbouring terrorists," referring to Laftagareen and associates reportedly in Nairobi following Somali sanctions and blacklisting related to alleged Al-Shabaab links. He urged diplomatic action and also pressed for accountability from Ethiopia over the Southwest advances. The Speaker publicly called for accountability regarding the towns seized by Laftagareen-aligned forces.

Somalia's Supreme Court formally certified the results of Hirshabelle State's parliamentary elections. The Justice and Unity Party associated with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, won 78 of 99 seats. The decision, dated October 19, confirmed no timely legal challenges under the electoral law and finalized the process after provisional results from late September elections across 10 districts, with approximately 114,600 votes cast. Hirshabelle State's House of Representatives subsequently re-elected Abdihakim Luqman Haji Mohamed as Speaker with 77 votes and chose two deputy speakers, Abdirahman Abdi Iidow as first deputy and Jama Ali Mahmoud as second. This followed the swearing-in of the new one-person-one-vote parliament. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and other federal figures congratulated the new leadership. The regional presidential election was scheduled for the following day.

Galmudug State lawmakers elected Liban Ahmed Hassan of the Justice and Solidarity/Unity Party (JSP), associated with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, as the new regional president. He won 72 of 89 votes against Abdulkadir Abdullahi Diriye of Sincad, who received 14 votes, with three invalid. Abdiweli Ibrahim Garyare, also JSP-linked, was elected vice-president. This followed a Supreme Court-ordered parliamentary rerun in September after the July vote was annulled, with JSP holding a strong majority. Hassan pledged inclusive governance.

Former intelligence chief Abdullahi Mohamed Ali Sanbalolshe said his Hawadle clan intended to establish a new regional administration in Hiran after being denied the Hirshabelle presidency. He indicated the initiative could become armed resistance against the federal government and did not rule out cooperation with Al-Shabaab. The remarks, from a Gaylan Media interview, were reported amid separate warnings of possible guerrilla-style movements.

Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni, speaking at the opening of the 59th session of the Puntland Parliament in Garowe, accused President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of abandoning consensus-based elections. He rejected the federal government's electoral timetable, with parliamentary elections announced for April 15, 2027, and presidential for May 15, 2027, saying Puntland would not participate in the process as currently framed. He called for urgent national dialogue and an inclusive settlement and urged the international community to monitor the situation.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud appointed Major General Mohamed Ali Barise as Deputy Commander of the Somali National Army. Barise had previously held the post, removed under former President Farmaajo in 2020, and has held senior roles including with the Joint Operations Coordination Cell.

Somalia's federal government condemned a map displayed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during an October 18 security briefing. The graphic depicted Somaliland and Puntland separately from the rest of Somalia in a grouping linked to Israel and the UAE. Officials called it misleading, a violation of internationally recognized borders and inconsistent with the UN Charter and AU principles, reaffirming national unity and territorial integrity.

Somalia's federal government expressed anger toward Ethiopia for refusing to intervene militarily on its side in the Southwest conflict. Ethiopian commanders cited their mandate as not covering political disputes between Somali stakeholders. Ethiopian forces also declined related requests involving Egyptian forces or a Turkish base in certain areas under their influence.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held a phone call with Somali Foreign Minister Abdulsalam Abdi Ali, among other regional counterparts. They discussed

bilateral ties, Horn of Africa and Red Sea developments, Egypt's support for Somalia's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and follow-up to a prior quadrilateral summit involving Egypt, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan in New Alamein.

Somalia and Spain agreed to explore formal political consultations to strengthen bilateral ties, potentially with meetings in Mogadishu or Madrid. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Mohamed Omar (Ali Balcad) met Spain's secretary of state for foreign and global affairs in Doha on the sidelines of a Global Security Forum. Fisheries was a noted focus area amid broader efforts to expand European partnerships.

Al-Shabaab claimed or was attributed multiple attacks in and around Mogadishu in the preceding days, tracked and reported around October 18 to 19, including IED attacks on a Somali intelligence point in Hodan district, a militia barracks in Yaqshid, and an assassination of a militia member in Daynile, plus assaults elsewhere including Lower Shabelle outskirts. These highlight ongoing operational tempo in the capital and surrounding areas.

Al-Shabaab claimed armed assaults on Somali militia bases in Qoryooley, Janale, and Bariire in the Lower Shabelle region on October 19 to 20, demonstrating coordinated operations in the Shabelle River basin area. Al-Shabaab militants also launched coordinated overnight raids lasting into dawn on October 23 on government and militia outposts at Gendershe and Jilib Marka along the coastal road between Mogadishu and Marka in Lower Shabelle. Local and security sources reported that defenders withdrew or fled. The posts form part of Mogadishu's southern defensive belt. Additional claims of assaults elsewhere, including near Kismayo in Lower Juba and in Middle Shabelle, were also logged by trackers that day.

The United Arab Emirates carried out its first reported drone strike in Somalia in nearly a year, targeting Al-Shabaab militants planting roadside bombs in the Galgala mountain pass in the Cal Madow range of Puntland. Officials told AFP the strike, on Tuesday, followed surveillance. Two militants were wounded, with Puntland forces then killing two. It came as Puntland prepared a new offensive and amid strained UAE-federal relations, with Mogadishu having earlier annulled agreements. A prior US strike in the area was also noted.

U.S. Africa Command announced an airstrike targeting Al-Shabaab on October 21, in coordination with Somalia's federal government, in the vicinity of Hargeisa Yare, approximately 93 kilometers northeast of Kismayo. This was part of ongoing operations to degrade the group.

An attempt by Somali National Army special forces, including Danab and Gorgor units, to retake Buurhakaba district in Bay region from Laftagareen-aligned forces reportedly failed after an Al-Shabaab ambush near Jamaada. Sources described losses including two

armored vehicles and a subsequent withdrawal. This highlighted Al-Shabaab exploitation of the security vacuum amid the political-military contest.

A key ally of former Southwest State leader Laftagareen, former internal security minister Hassan Abdulkadir, survived an alleged Turkish drone or F-16-linked strike in Bay region on Wednesday night. Two others were reportedly killed when their motorcycle was hit. This occurred as Laftagareen-aligned forces held gains in several Bay towns. Attribution and intent remained unverified by independent sources at the time.

Somalia's Ministry of Defence reported that Somali National Armed Forces, in coordination with international partners, conducted airstrikes in the Cadow Jilib, Gayfo, and Cordheere areas of Middle Shabelle. The strikes were said to have killed 26 Al-Shabaab militants and destroyed an armored vehicle and a fuel tanker used by the group.

Somalia's federal government deployed more than 200 military vehicles, including armored personnel carriers, troop and supply trucks, and technicals, toward Burhakabo in Bay region. Forces loyal to former Southwest leader Laftagareen had seized the town and other districts earlier in the month. The column moved from the Wanlaweyn and Baledogle area along the Mogadishu-Baidoa Road. Local reports described heavy fighting near Leego and continued Al-Shabaab IED and ambush activity on the route, with Danab units reported clearing the road. Officials had vowed to retake the lost towns.

The Somali National Army, including elite Danab commandos, conducted operations as part of Operation Banooda targeting Al-Shabaab in the South West State and Bay region. The Defence Ministry reported that forces clashed with militants on the outskirts of Leego who tried to block the advance. Seven militants were said to have been killed, others wounded and weapons seized. The army continued pursuit of those who fled.

Somalia's National Security Adviser Aweys Haji Yusuf Ahmed stated that security forces had recaptured more than 55 percent of territory previously held by Al-Shabaab and ISIS over the past five years, freeing at least 1.5 million people. He also claimed a 35 percent reduction in militant financing and an approximately 89 percent drop in attacks in major cities. The figures were presented at the Global Security Forum in Doha and could not be independently verified.

Somaliland

British House of Lords member Lord Stuart Polak addressed the Somaliland Investment Summit in London and urged investors to look more closely at Somaliland. He cited its political stability, democratic transitions, expanding infrastructure, and economic potential. He specifically highlighted the expansion of Berbera Port, the operational Berbera Economic Zone, and the transport corridor linking the port to Ethiopia and the wider region.

Discussions of Somaliland's control over its airspace and the IATA Billing and Settlement Plan continued around this period, with officials stressing independent aviation administration and rejecting claims of a new agreement with Somalia. A full Council of Ministers session covering national security, described as stable, public-health preparedness including Ebola, livestock, diplomacy, and airspace was reported the following day on 21 October with some briefings tied to earlier activity.

The government highlighted recent remarks by U.S. President Donald Trump describing Somaliland as distinct from Somalia. Foreign Minister Abdirahman Dahir Adan Bakal had briefed the Cabinet in a prior session that the comments, following President Irro's U.S. visit, strengthened Somaliland's international standing and opened opportunities for engagement.

Somalia's Defense Minister Ahmed Moallim Fiqi claimed that the federal government had provided substantial financial support for President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdillahi (Irro)'s 2024 election campaign, expecting him to be more open to negotiations on Somali unity. Somaliland's Minister of National Defence, Mohamed Yusuf Ali Ahmed, strongly rejected the claim. He stated that Irro's mandate came directly from Somaliland voters, noting that Irro won approximately 63.92 percent of the vote.

Somaliland's Ministry of Civil Aviation and Airports Development issued a regulatory directive dated October 25 banning the acceptance of airline tickets issued through Somalia's Billing and Settlement Plan for departures from airports in the Republic of Somaliland, including Hargeisa Egal International Airport and Berbera International Airport. The ban applies immediately and covers previously purchased tickets, including return tickets. Passengers must obtain tickets through authorized channels: official airline websites, mobile apps, airline ticket offices, airport counters, or travel agents licensed by Somaliland's Department of Civil Aviation Regulation and Air Transport. Airlines were instructed to review bookings, set up verification procedures, notify affected passengers, and provide lists of potentially non-compliant agents, who had until October 31 to regularize. From November 1, only agents meeting Somaliland's licensing requirements could maintain distribution arrangements. This step asserts independent control over aviation operations amid ongoing disputes with Somalia over airspace, e-visas, and the IATA BSP system.

China and Djibouti reaffirmed support for Somalia's territorial integrity and opposed diplomatic recognition of Somaliland in a joint statement following talks in Beijing between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Djibouti's Foreign Minister Abdoukader Houssein Omar. The statement described Somaliland as an inseparable part of the Federal Republic of Somalia, opposed any attempt to gain diplomatic recognition for it, and opposed any form of collusion between Somaliland and the Taiwan authorities.

8. Yemen

Houthi attacks on military facilities and transport infrastructure, fighting across several frontlines and growing regional involvement shaped Yemen's conflict during the week. A deadly strike on a security forces camp in Shabwa, attacks affecting airports, deteriorating conditions in Taiz and additional British support for Saudi Arabia highlighted the conflict's domestic and regional implications. Diplomatic engagement continued, but military operations and restrictions on essential supplies remained major obstacles to stabilisation and a negotiated settlement.

On 19 October, a Houthi ballistic missile attack struck the Al-Alam security forces training camp in Shabwa, killing 58 people and injuring more than 200, according to Governor Awad al-Wazir. Fourteen people were initially reported missing. On 20 October, the provincial media office raised the death toll to 73, with 14 people still missing. The Houthis acknowledged the strike but claimed Saudi forces operated the camp. The attack inflicted heavy losses on government-aligned personnel and demonstrated the vulnerability of military facilities to missile strikes. Shabwa's economic significance also stems from its energy infrastructure, including the Balhaf liquefied natural gas facility, which remains important to Yemen's future economic recovery.

On 21 October, Yemeni military authorities accused the Houthis of launching a ballistic missile at Aden International Airport and three missiles at Al-Rayyan Airport in Mukalla, Hadramout. The government also reported a strike on a sponge factory in Taiz. The Houthis acknowledged targeting a military camp in Aden but did not confirm the full set of attacks attributed to them. Separate reports indicated that Al-Rayyan Airport's runway and electricity facilities had been targeted, although no casualties were initially reported there. Fighting also continued around western Taiz and Kahboub in southwestern Yemen as government-aligned forces sought to repel Houthi advances. The reported attacks threatened transport infrastructure and complicated efforts to maintain movement between government-held areas.

Humanitarian conditions in Taiz worsened as road closures restricted the movement of food, fuel, medicines, and other essential goods. On 20 October, the United Nations warned that the closure of the principal supply route connecting Taiz with Aden was placing civilians at grave risk. The World Food Programme reported that shifting frontlines and road closures had cut approximately 800,000 people off from life-saving assistance, most of them in Taiz. Aid organisations also warned of severe shortages of fuel, water and medical supplies, while rising prices reduced households' ability to afford basic necessities. On 21 October, further reporting highlighted the pressure on hospitals, the difficulty of evacuating wounded civilians and the risk of a broader humanitarian breakdown. These conditions reinforced calls for safe humanitarian access and the reopening of supply routes.

Regional involvement increased as Saudi Arabia reported intercepting drones launched towards its territory. On 21 October, the Saudi-led coalition announced that four drones had been intercepted, followed by a separate report of another interception. The Houthis denied conducting the reported operations. On 20 October, Britain announced additional defensive support for Saudi Arabia, including Royal Air Force Typhoon aircraft for counter-air operations, an A400M transport aircraft, military advisers, and increased air-to-air refuelling support. British officials said the deployment was intended to protect Saudi cities and critical infrastructure rather than conduct offensive strikes against Houthi positions. The measures reflected Riyadh's continuing need to defend its territory while supporting the internationally recognised Yemeni government.

Diplomatic engagement continued as the United Nations sought to preserve a route towards negotiations. UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg held meetings in London on 19 to 20 October, following consultations in Berlin on 15 to 16 October. He met with British and German officials, parliamentarians, and policy specialists to discuss developments in Yemen and the possibility of a Yemeni-led political process under United Nations facilitation. Grundberg emphasised the importance of sustained international and regional support for a negotiated settlement. However, continuing military operations and the parties' reliance on battlefield gains to strengthen their negotiating positions limited the immediate prospects for progress.

Maritime security remained a concern because of fighting along Yemen's western coast and the strategic importance of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden. Houthi territorial gains near the coast have strengthened the group's position around a major international shipping route, while government operations have sought to recover strategically important ground. The UN has previously warned that Houthi threats against Saudi-linked commercial shipping could undermine freedom of navigation. However, the sources reviewed this week did not confirm any new attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea or Gulf of Aden. The main concern remained that further military operations could expand the conflict's impact on international trade and maritime transport.

The week's developments exposed the interconnected challenges facing Yemen: substantial military losses, restricted humanitarian access, and a conflict increasingly shaped by regional security calculations. Houthi attacks demonstrated their capacity to threaten government facilities, while British assistance to Saudi Arabia reflected concern about cross-border threats. UN diplomatic engagement continued, but negotiations showed no progress. Improving humanitarian access, protecting civilian infrastructure and restoring a credible political process remain essential to limiting further civilian suffering and preventing wider regional instability.

9. Kenya

Kenya's political and diplomatic developments during the week of October 19–25 reflected the country's efforts to strengthen its regional influence while addressing emerging security and economic challenges. Relations with Ethiopia remained central to Nairobi's foreign policy agenda, alongside its growing engagement in international diplomacy and regional cooperation. Meanwhile, insecurity along the Ethiopia–Kenya border and domestic economic pressures highlighted the challenges facing President William Ruto's administration.

One of the week's most significant diplomatic developments was Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's visit to Kenya on October 20, where he attended the Mashujaa Day celebrations in Eldoret as President William Ruto's chief guest. The visit reinforced the strategic importance of bilateral relations, particularly in trade, infrastructure and regional security. Abiy emphasized the need to remove barriers to commerce and facilitate greater movement of people and goods between the two countries. Kenya's expanding commercial presence in Ethiopia, particularly through Safaricom and M-Pesa, demonstrates the growing economic interdependence between the two countries. Diplomatic engagement continued on October 24 when Kenyan Deputy President Kithure Kindiki travelled to Bahir Dar to participate in the 12th Tana High Level Forum on Security in Africa, further demonstrating the importance both governments attach to regional security cooperation.

However, the positive diplomatic atmosphere was accompanied by renewed insecurity along the shared border. On October 21, violence between Oromo and Somali communities in Ethiopian Moyale forced thousands of civilians to seek refuge in neighbouring Kenya. By October 23, approximately 2,500 displaced Ethiopians had reportedly crossed into Kenyan territory. The clashes, which resulted in several deaths and injuries, raised concerns over border security and humanitarian conditions. Given Moyale's importance as a commercial crossing, prolonged instability could disrupt trade and undermine efforts to strengthen economic connectivity. The incident reinforced Nairobi's interest in maintaining close security coordination with Addis Ababa.

Kenya also advanced its international diplomatic profile by hosting the Global Trust Summit in Nairobi from October 21 to 23. The gathering brought together government representatives, international institutions and civil society organizations to discuss declining confidence in public institutions and challenges facing international cooperation. Foreign Affairs Minister Musalia Mudavadi emphasized accountability and institutional credibility, while Kenyan officials advocated reforms to strengthen multilateral governance. The summit concluded with the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration on Trust and Call to Action, reflecting Kenya's ambition to position itself as an influential centre for international diplomacy and institutional reform.

Another development with regional implications was the Ebola outbreak, which had reportedly resulted in nine confirmed infections and two deaths by October 23. The outbreak raised concerns over cross border transmission and the need for coordinated health surveillance among Kenya, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The United States subsequently raised its travel advisory for Kenya, introducing additional uncertainty for the country's tourism and aviation sectors. The situation demonstrated the vulnerability of regional economic connectivity to public health emergencies.

Kenya also secured a \$160 million international conservation financing agreement aimed at protecting biodiversity and wildlife habitats over the coming decade. The Thamani Asili programme, supported by international donors and the Kenyan government, seeks to protect major ecosystems, including Tsavo and Maasai Mara. The agreement strengthened Nairobi's environmental diplomacy and its efforts to attract international financing for sustainable development.

Domestically, President Ruto used the Mashujaa Day celebrations to announce economic proposals intended to ease public dissatisfaction over taxation and living costs. These included proposed income tax exemptions for lower income workers, the removal of import duties on mobile phones and an expansion of employment opportunities for young people. The announcements came amid continuing public frustration over fuel prices and economic conditions. With the 2027 general election approaching, the measures reflected the administration's efforts to rebuild public confidence and consolidate political support.

Overall, the week demonstrated Kenya's determination to expand its diplomatic influence while managing the security and economic challenges affecting its regional position. Strengthening relations with Ethiopia remained particularly important, given the two countries' shared interests in trade connectivity, infrastructure development and border stability. At the same time, Nairobi's multilateral initiatives reflected its broader ambition to become a more influential diplomatic actor in Africa. Kenya's ability to translate these diplomatic gains into lasting economic benefits and regional stability will remain central to its strategic position in the Horn of Africa.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia faced continued security pressure as Houthi missile and drone attacks disrupted critical infrastructure, threatened civilian aviation and complicated the Kingdom's wider economic and diplomatic priorities. The consequences extended beyond immediate military concerns to the government's efforts to attract international investment. On October 20, organizers postponed the Future Investment Initiative (FII), commonly known as "Davos in the Desert," which had been scheduled for October 26–29 in Riyadh. The conference was moved to 2027 amid deteriorating security conditions,

marking a significant disruption to one of Saudi Arabia's principal platforms for promoting economic diversification and attracting foreign capital. The decision illustrated how the regional conflict was affecting the Kingdom's ability to host major international events and maintain confidence among global investors. On October 21, the United States ordered the departure of non-emergency government personnel and their family members from its embassy in Riyadh and regional consulates, citing the deteriorating security environment. Washington also restricted official travel through Saudi airports, while operations at King Khalid International Airport remained suspended. The US State Department subsequently updated its travel advisory on October 23, maintaining its Level 3 classification while warning of increased Houthi aggression and reported Iranian threats against American officials in the region.

Saudi Arabia continued its military response to the attacks. On October 24, the Saudi-led coalition launched airstrikes against Houthi military infrastructure in Sanaa, targeting reported ballistic missile launchers, underground tunnels and drone facilities. The following day, Saudi authorities attempted to restore limited air connectivity by partially reopening two terminals at King Khalid International Airport. The reopening was followed by renewed threats from the Houthis, who declared the airport a military target and launched another wave of projectiles. Saudi air defenses reportedly intercepted a ballistic missile and an armed drone targeting Riyadh, while coalition forces destroyed a cruise missile directed toward Khamis Mushait and intercepted additional missiles aimed at the southern border region. The sequence of attacks and interceptions demonstrated the difficulty of restoring normal operations while the threat to civilian and strategic infrastructure remained active.

The diplomatic implications of the crisis became more pronounced toward the end of the week. On October 26, Iranian state media reported that senior defense officials associated with the Mecca Defence Alliance, including Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman, were expected to visit Tehran for emergency security discussions involving Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Pakistan and Iran. If realized, the proposed meeting would represent an important diplomatic channel amid the wider regional confrontation. It would also highlight the complexity of Saudi Arabia's strategic position: Riyadh was strengthening defense coordination with regional partners while facing a conflict involving Iran and Houthi forces aligned with Tehran. The immediate priority remained protecting Saudi territory and restoring essential infrastructure, but the reported proposal for regional talks suggested that military deterrence and diplomatic engagement were increasingly being pursued in parallel.

UAE

The United Arab Emirates continued to strengthen its strategic partnerships while managing regional security risks and expanding its defense and technology capabilities.

On October 20, French President Emmanuel Macron visited Abu Dhabi for discussions with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The two governments reportedly signed an intergovernmental agreement and related strategic accords to advance cooperation on the Rafale F5 fighter aircraft programme, seeking to resolve previous technical and financial disagreements. The discussions reflected the continuing importance of the French defense relationship to the UAE's military modernization. At the same time, Emirati officials reported that the country's \$1.4 trillion, ten-year technology investment framework in the United States was progressing ahead of schedule, with substantial investments directed toward military equipment, artificial intelligence and energy. These initiatives illustrated Abu Dhabi's effort to combine external defense partnerships with long-term technological and economic investment.

The UAE also pursued a more prominent role in international diplomacy. On October 21, the government announced the candidacy of Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Lana Nusseibeh for the position of United Nations Secretary-General, whose current officeholder, António Guterres, is due to complete his term at the end of December. The nomination positioned the UAE within the emerging debate over the future leadership of the United Nations and the possibility of appointing the organization's first female secretary-general. On October 22, Abu Dhabi expanded its economic engagement with Greece during the UAE-Greece Strategic Forum in Athens. Crown Prince Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan met Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, with the two sides signing 18 memoranda of understanding and commercial partnerships reportedly valued at €12.75 billion. The UAE also announced plans for an additional €15 billion in investment in Greek infrastructure, energy and artificial intelligence. The agreements reinforced the UAE's use of economic partnerships to extend its influence across European markets and strategic sectors.

Security cooperation remained another important component of Emirati policy. On October 22, the Ministry of Interior, working with Interpol and 30 partner countries, announced the conclusion of Operation Confrontation Ghost, an international cybercrime operation. Authorities reported that the operation had exposed more than \$39 billion in illicit funds, blocked 4,126 bank accounts and resulted in more than 960 arrests worldwide. The results highlighted the UAE's efforts to position itself as a participant in international financial-security and cybercrime enforcement networks. Meanwhile, an oil spill from the tanker *Gem No.2* prompted the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment to impose protective closures along parts of the Umm Al Quwain coastline. The incident underscored the environmental risks associated with maritime activity at a time when the security of Gulf shipping routes remained a major regional concern.

The UAE's defense and technology agenda continued to develop over the remainder of the week. On October 23, attention focused on expanding military artificial intelligence capabilities through the EDGE-Leonardo joint venture, alongside domestic plans to move

a substantial share of federal administrative operations onto the localized FedAI agentic cloud network. These initiatives reflected the government's effort to integrate emerging technologies into both national defense and public administration. From October 24 to 26, the UAE maintained heightened attention to airspace security, maritime corridors and critical logistics infrastructure amid continuing regional tensions. Its broader strategy combined defense modernization, international investment and diplomatic diversification, while developments across the Gulf and the Horn of Africa continued to influence its external security calculations.

Qatar

Qatar combined defense cooperation, security-sector modernization and diplomatic engagement as regional instability continued to affect Gulf security and international economic activity. On October 20, the Milipol Qatar 2026 exhibition opened in Doha, bringing together more than 270 security-technology exhibitors from 33 countries. The event provided a platform for examining developments in homeland security, surveillance and security infrastructure, reinforcing Qatar's efforts to modernize its domestic security capabilities. On the sidelines of the Global Security Forum, Foreign Ministry spokesperson and adviser to the Prime Minister Majed Al Ansari also held discussions with NATO's Special Representative for the Southern Neighborhood, Javier Colomina. The talks focused on regional security and defense cooperation, reflecting Doha's continued engagement with international security institutions while maintaining its own diplomatic channels across the Middle East.

On October 21, Qatar joined Pakistan, Türkiye and Indonesia in signing the Badr Memorandum of Understanding, a framework intended to expand cooperation in military manufacturing, joint research and development, technology transfer and collaborative training. The agreement signaled an interest in strengthening defense-industrial cooperation among participating countries rather than relying exclusively on established external suppliers. The same day, the eighth Global Security Forum concluded in Doha after three days of discussions under the theme "The Future of Alliances." The gathering brought together officials and representatives from more than 100 countries to discuss regional attacks, energy disruptions and the consequences of escalating conflicts. The forum gave Qatar an opportunity to maintain its position as a venue for international security dialogue at a time when established alliances and regional defense arrangements were facing increasing pressure. Milipol Qatar concluded on October 22, ending a series of exhibitions and discussions focused on security technologies and infrastructure.

Qatar's diplomatic messaging continued to emphasize the relationship between regional stability, collective security and economic development. On October 25, Qatar's Minister of State addressed the World Investment Forum in Doha, arguing that lasting peace and collective security were necessary conditions for international trade and investment. The

position reflected the economic vulnerabilities facing Gulf states as conflict threatened shipping routes, energy infrastructure and commercial connectivity. For Qatar, security-sector modernization and defense partnerships offered ways to strengthen preparedness, while international forums provided channels to promote dialogue and cooperation. Its approach during the week therefore combined practical security measures with an emphasis on the wider regional conditions required to sustain investment, trade and economic resilience.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Mali

Mali's security situation remained particularly severe in the northeast, where attacks against civilian communities coincided with continued military diplomacy and persistent humanitarian needs. The week also brought reports of deeper engagement with Russia as the transitional authorities pursued external partnerships amid ongoing conflict.

On October 20, details emerged of a deadly attack carried out over the preceding weekend against nomadic camps in the Ménaka region. Community sources attributed the attack to suspected Islamic State militants. Gunmen on motorcycles targeted camps largely inhabited by members of the Daoussahak community, killing at least 48 civilians. The attack was described as apparent retaliation for recent military operations and actions by the government-aligned Movement for the Salvation of Azawad. The incident highlighted the vulnerability of nomadic communities caught between jihadist groups, state forces and armed movements operating in the north.

At the diplomatic level, a high-level Malian military delegation led by Major General Sambou Minkoro Diakité, director of the Military Security Directorate, visited Rabat between October 18 and 22. The delegation met Moroccan Major General Ahmed Laghlid, head of the Royal Armed Forces' Fifth Bureau, to discuss bilateral defence cooperation and specialized military training. The visit demonstrated that Mali continued to pursue military partnerships beyond its immediate security relationships.

Humanitarian pressures remained substantial. In its country brief released on October 23, the World Food Programme highlighted persistent acute food insecurity and internal displacement affecting more than 1.5 million people. Restricted trade corridors and ongoing conflict continued to undermine access to food and livelihoods, adding to the consequences of prolonged insecurity.

On October 26, regional platforms reported that transitional leader General Assimi Goïta had accepted an invitation from Moscow to attend the third Russia–Africa Summit, scheduled for October 28–29. The reported invitation acceptance pointed to continued efforts to deepen Mali's strategic relationship with Russia. Taken together, the week's

developments showed a government pursuing military and diplomatic partnerships while facing sustained civilian casualties, displacement and food insecurity.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic's security outlook during October 20–26 was shaped by warnings against a premature reduction of the UN peacekeeping presence, the continuing spillover of Sudan's conflict and growing threats to humanitarian personnel. Although the country had made political and disarmament progress, insecurity along its borders and in several regions continued to complicate stabilization efforts.

The week opened with the reported release, on October 19, of hostages held by the Azandé Ani Kpi Gbé militia since an assault on Bambouti on December 28, 2025. The liberation operation was planned and carried out by MINUSCA forces. On October 20, the mission's head, Valentine Rugwabiza, briefed the UN Security Council and warned against withdrawing peacekeepers prematurely. She highlighted the direct spillover of Sudan's war into eastern CAR, including a cross-border clash at Am-Dafock in Vakaga Prefecture that reportedly killed civilians and local security personnel, displaced 17,000 people and wounded six UN peacekeepers.

With MINUSCA's mandate due to expire on November 15, the UN and member states, including France, urged the Security Council to maintain current force levels and ensure adequate funding. Following consultations, Council members welcomed the completion of CAR's recent election cycle and the disarmament of nearly 2,000 local combatants, while emphasizing that security in the northeast remained fragile. Separately, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that more than 900 civilians had fled threats of armed reprisals near Batangafo in the northwest.

On October 21, the African Union Peace and Security Council and the UN Peacebuilding Commission held their Ninth Annual Consultative Meeting in New York and adopted a joint communiqué intended to strengthen cooperation on peacebuilding, including in CAR. That same day, MINUSCA outlined its strategic transition roadmap in Bangui. Officials acknowledged political progress and the integration of armed groups into the newly formed government, while identifying border security as an immediate priority. The emphasis on border control reflected the wider regional pressures facing the country, particularly the movement of armed actors and violence linked to neighbouring conflicts.

Humanitarian access remained a further concern. Updated information released on October 23 indicated that more than 84 security incidents had affected humanitarian staff in CAR during 2026, with localized attacks on relief infrastructure reportedly rising by 133% as the final quarter began. These incidents threatened the ability of aid organizations to reach vulnerable populations at a time of displacement and insecurity. Overall, the week's developments reinforced the UN's argument that political progress

and disarmament had not yet translated into sufficiently stable conditions for a premature peacekeeping drawdown.

Niger

Niger's principal developments during the week concerned fuel shortages, security coordination in the north and a significant proposed expansion of military cooperation with Algeria. These developments reflected the government's continuing efforts to manage domestic supply pressures while addressing insecurity across its extensive northern borderlands.

Beginning October 19, presidential chief of staff General Bacharou Ibro Amadou visited the Kavar area in the Bilma department of the Agadez region to inspect security conditions and regional coordination. The visit placed attention on a strategically important northern area where security and cross-border coordination remain major concerns.

On October 24–25, the government announced a nationwide overnight curfew on petrol sales, prohibiting transactions between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. The measure was intended to allow the national petroleum company, Sonidep, to replenish supplies and ease a countrywide fuel shortage. The restrictions illustrated the practical pressures facing the country's fuel distribution system and the government's reliance on administrative controls to stabilize supply.

A more consequential regional security development followed on October 25, when Algeria's two parliamentary chambers approved President Abdelmadjid Tebboune's resolution to deploy an army unit to northern Niger. The planned deployment is centred on Madama, near the Libyan border, and is intended to protect energy facilities and implement bilateral security agreements. The move was reported as Algeria's first foreign troop deployment since 1973. If implemented as described, it would mark a notable expansion of Algeria's direct security role beyond its borders and introduce a new dimension to cooperation with Niger in the strategically sensitive Sahel-Sahara region.

DRC

The Democratic Republic of the Congo faced renewed political tension and continuing conflict in the east during the week of October 20–26. The emergence of a political-military front associated with former president Joseph Kabila, international concern over the conflict, and debate over constitutional procedures unfolded alongside a worsening humanitarian emergency linked to the Ebola outbreak.

On October 20, the UN Security Council held a ministerial-level debate on the Great Lakes region. Special Envoy Huang Xia briefed members on implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the wider region. The

following day, the Critical Threats Project's Congo War Security Review described continued fighting between pro-government forces and the Front pour la Refondation de la Nation, or FRN, led by Kabila and aligned with M23, in North and South Kivu. The review also discussed reported government financial transfers to US-linked defence firms. On October 22, Belgium condemned the creation of the FRN, warning that the new political-military formation could further undermine efforts to secure peace.

Domestic political tensions increased on October 23, when the National Assembly approved legislation regulating the organization of referendums. The measure passed with 346 votes in favour out of 347 participating lawmakers, following revisions by the Constitutional Court. Although the vote was overwhelmingly supportive, the legislation added to debate over possible constitutional changes at a time when the country was already confronting armed opposition and uncertainty over the political future.

The humanitarian situation remained severe. On October 23, the World Health Organization and the World Food Programme reported that the Bundibugyo Ebola outbreak had spread to Nord-Ubangi, its eighth affected province in the DRC. The reported cumulative figures reached 9,704 cases and 4,687 deaths, while response efforts faced serious access and funding constraints. On October 24, the WHO announced the start of the first clinical trial of an Ebola vaccine using Ervebo in Bunia, Ituri province, under the Tumaini trial. However, the risks facing health workers remained immediate: on October 26, the WHO reported that a nurse had been killed and another health worker seriously injured in an attack while responding to an Ebola alert in eastern DRC. The week therefore exposed the parallel challenges of political-military instability, contested domestic political processes and a public health emergency operating under dangerous conditions.

Chad

Chad's political and security environment from October 20 to 26 was shaped by the continuing spillover of Sudan's war across its eastern border, alongside growing humanitarian pressures and persistent insecurity around Lake Chad. Two cross-border incidents during the week demonstrated the risks to civilians and humanitarian personnel as fighting continued near Chadian territory.

On October 20, a drone strike hit the Bamna, also reported as Bamina, area inside Chad near the border town of Tine, killing five people, including two humanitarian volunteers affiliated with the local Emergency Rooms Council and three displaced Sudanese refugees. A second strike on October 22 targeted fuel reserves at the Adikong border market in West Darfur, close to the Chad-Sudan frontier. The resulting explosions killed four people and injured 23 others, including women and children. Médecins Sans Frontières responded to the medical needs of victims on the Chadian side. Together, the incidents underscored the danger that military operations in Sudan pose to border

communities and humanitarian activities.

In western Chad, insecurity around Lake Chad continued to threaten civilian populations. An October 22 assessment by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported an increase in civilian targeting, extortion and kidnappings for ransom attributed to Boko Haram and its splinter factions. These activities have displaced an estimated 75,200 people. The combination of armed violence in the west and cross-border threats in the east is placing additional demands on Chad's security and humanitarian systems.

The humanitarian situation along the eastern border also deteriorated. On October 24, Western countries, led by the United Kingdom, called for an expanded international response as the number of Sudanese refugees in Chad exceeded 700,000. Legal advocacy networks proposed establishing emergency relief hubs along border corridors linking Chad with West Darfur to address worsening food shortages and malnutrition. By October 25, tensions remained elevated as Sudanese military operations continued near the frontier. Chadian forces remained on high alert, seeking to prevent unauthorized movements by armed groups and pursue mutineers. The week's developments reinforced the difficulty of containing Sudan's conflict while managing a growing refugee population and insecurity within Chad itself.

12. North Africa

Libya

Eastern Libya's House of Representatives unanimously approved the 2019 maritime boundaries agreement between Libya and Türkiye, reversing its earlier rejection of the deal and restoring political ties with Ankara. Greece condemned the decision, arguing that the agreement infringes on the maritime rights of regional states. The approval renewed disputes over maritime boundaries, energy exploration and strategic influence in the eastern Mediterranean.

Libyan Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah expressed his government's willingness to address Egypt's concerns over Mediterranean maritime boundaries and economic waters. He conveyed the position during discussions with Egypt's intelligence chief, amid Cairo's objections to the Libya-Türkiye maritime agreement. The discussions opened a channel for addressing competing maritime claims between the neighboring countries.

Saddam Haftar, deputy commander-in-chief of Libya's eastern-based forces, arrived in Cairo for an official visit amid renewed diplomatic tensions over the Libya-Türkiye maritime agreement. His visit followed Egypt's rejection of the agreement and came as Cairo maintained contact with political and military figures in eastern Libya.

Algeria

Algeria's parliament approved the deployment of army units to neighboring Niger to protect energy infrastructure and strategic interests. The decision followed a military cooperation protocol signed during Nigerien Defense Minister Salifou Mody's visit to Algiers. The deployment would mark Algeria's first overseas military mission since 1973, amid closer security cooperation, persistent armed-group activity in the Sahel and joint interests in energy projects, including the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline.

Morocco

Debate intensified over the Western Sahara peace process as a proposed United States resolution placed Morocco's autonomy plan at the center of negotiations. The proposal raised concerns about the future mandate and military presence of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, known as MINURSO. The Polisario Front's position and differing views among Security Council members remained important factors in the diplomatic negotiations.

13. Middle East

Iran-Israel Conflict

Tensions with Iran remained elevated. Trump raised the possibility of renewed U.S. military action, referring to a potential operation as "Epic Fury," while later announcing a one-day pause in strikes as Qatari mediators visited Tehran. Iranian officials said they remained open to diplomacy through intermediaries but criticized U.S. demands and stated that renewed fighting would not alter Tehran's policies. Iranian security chief Mohsen Rezaei was expected to meet defense officials from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Turkey.

Reports indicated the United States and Israel were preparing contingency plans for possible strikes in early November after the U.S. midterms. Iranian officials claimed preparations for such an eventuality. Separate reporting described Iranian contingency plans to target undersea internet cables in the Gulf in the event of resumed attacks, with potential disruption to communications, finance, and cloud services. Tensions around the Strait of Hormuz persisted after an unverified claim that another tanker had struck a mine; Brent crude traded above \$105 per barrel. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Tehran amid the exchanges. Turkey warned that further attacks risked widening the conflict and urged diplomacy. Israeli and Lebanese delegations were scheduled to meet at U.S. Central Command in Florida.

Israeli forces launched a multi-day counterterrorism operation in Hebron after a Hamas attack killed two Israeli soldiers and wounded others at a checkpoint. The IDF and Shin Bet conducted searches for weapons and militant infrastructure, questioned suspects, and

carried out parallel raids in Jenin, Nablus, and east Jerusalem. Authorities imposed roadblocks and additional restrictions around Hebron. More than 200 Palestinian families were displaced, with some spending nights outdoors; the Hebron governorate declared a state of emergency. Demolitions of buildings began in one neighborhood. Forces arrested 36 Palestinians in raids across the West Bank on 22–23 October. Reports also documented attacks on Palestinian farmers during the olive harvest, including assaults, crop theft, tree damage, and restricted access to farmland. Netanyahu promised a “big surprise” for the Palestinian Authority as the operation continued.

Final pre-election polls painted a tight contest ahead of the 27 October Knesset vote. Gadi Eisenkot’s Yashar party held a four-seat lead over Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud in one survey, while other late polls showed the two camps essentially locked together. Both Netanyahu’s right-wing bloc and the opposition struggled to project a clear path to the 61 seats needed for a majority, pointing to intensive coalition negotiations after the vote.

Benny Gantz withdrew Blue and White from the race, saying he would continue pushing for a national unity government and aiming to prevent opposition votes from fragmenting. Opposition figures welcomed the move; Netanyahu’s camp urged smaller right-wing parties to consider similar consolidations. Naftali Bennett’s B’Yachad alliance gained ground after the withdrawal. Main contenders also included Yair Lapid and Avigdor Lieberman, with debates over ultra-Orthodox military conscription and potential Arab-party participation remaining central.

Donald Trump publicly endorsed Netanyahu, praising his leadership in the Iran conflict. Netanyahu posted an AI-generated image of a nuclear explosion over Tel Aviv alongside warnings about Iran’s nuclear ambitions and the risk of a “second Holocaust,” drawing sharp criticism from Eisenkot and Yair Golan as fear-based campaigning. Netanyahu separately cautioned that Iran and its allies might try to disrupt the election; security forces remained on high alert. Thousands of protesters gathered in Tel Aviv’s Hostages Square demanding an independent inquiry into the 7 October 2023 failures. Analysts noted the election is Israel’s first national vote since those attacks and the formation of the current far-right government, with a fragmented Knesset and possible prolonged talks—or another election—widely anticipated.

Turkey

Foreign ministers from Türkiye, Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia met counterparts from Britain, France, Germany and Italy in Istanbul to discuss Iran, Gaza, Houthi attacks, shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb, and Black Sea security. Hakan Fidan warned that renewed strikes on Iran would broaden the war. The R4 group described Israeli occupation as a fundamental source of regional instability, called for a two-state solution, and urged diplomacy and safe navigation.

Türkiye submitted the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to parliament for ratification, advancing a mutual-defense framework among the three countries. A ruling AK Party lawmaker said Ankara would subsequently seek parliamentary authorization for personnel deployments in Saudi Arabia. The initial role could involve technical specialists supporting air defense, electronic warfare and other defensive capabilities as Riyadh faces continuing Houthi attacks.

Iranian security chief Mohsen Rezaei was scheduled to meet Turkish, Saudi and Pakistani defense officials in Tehran as Houthi attacks and fighting in Yemen intensified regional security concerns. The planned talks brought together representatives of the three Mecca Defense Alliance members and Iranian officials amid efforts to manage tensions involving Gulf security and maritime routes.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reaffirmed Türkiye's commitment to mediation during the Istanbul Mediation Conference, citing Russia-Ukraine prisoner exchanges and diplomatic efforts in Africa. He called for reform of the United Nations system and emphasized the importance of keeping diplomatic channels open during difficult conflicts. Erdoğan also highlighted the frustration of people in Palestine, Lebanon and Sudan with international institutions and their response to regional crises.

Erdoğan reaffirmed Türkiye's support for Syria's sovereignty and territorial unity, accusing Israel of seeking to stir instability despite positive developments in the country. Defense Minister Yaşar Güler said Turkish forces would remain in Syria and Iraq until Ankara judged that border and regional security conditions allowed a review of deployments. Turkish and Syrian officials also continued discussions on institutional cooperation and bilateral security.

Canada and Türkiye launched a strategic partnership covering trade, energy, defense and security during Prime Minister Mark Carney's visit. The leaders welcomed a defense-sector memorandum intended to expand industrial cooperation between the two NATO allies. They also advanced cooperation on liquefied natural gas, civil nuclear energy, renewable energy and critical minerals, while establishing plans for free-trade negotiations and signing an expanded air transport agreement.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and Romanian Foreign Minister Dan Neculăescu agreed to strengthen cooperation on Black Sea security following attacks on commercial vessels. They supported closer coordination within NATO and expanded trilateral discussions with Bulgaria, emphasizing maritime safety, regional connectivity and joint efforts to protect shipping across the strategically important waterway.

Türkiye's Foreign Ministry criticized Greece's appointments of muftis in Komotini and Xanthi, arguing that the process overlooked the rights and religious freedoms of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace. Ankara invoked the Treaty of Lausanne and urged

Athens to recognize muftis selected by the minority. The statement added a fresh religious and diplomatic dispute to longstanding disagreements between the two NATO allies.

Libya's eastern-based House of Representatives approved a maritime agreement with Türkiye, according to the Critical Threats analysis. The agreement could extend Ankara's economic and military influence in the eastern Mediterranean and intensify disagreements involving Greece, Cyprus and Israel over maritime boundaries and regional influence. The development placed Türkiye's longstanding maritime interests at the center of wider eastern Mediterranean security dynamics.

14. Global Powers

On 20 October, Trump said Ukraine needed to settle the war and suggested Russia held the military advantage. His administration continued to press Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to make concessions, while Kyiv raised concerns about delays in military assistance, missile-attack warnings and restrictions affecting satellite services used by Ukrainian drones. US officials denied deliberately weakening Ukraine's defences.

On 20 October, US special envoy Steve Witkoff met Zelenskyy in Oslo, alongside Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and Finnish President Alexander Stubb. US officials described the talks as constructive and said they had made progress on elements of a potential peace framework, including security guarantees for Ukraine, post-war economic arrangements and European security. Witkoff was also expected to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin.

On 22 October, Reuters reported growing opposition in Congress to Trump's decision to ease pressure on Moscow. The administration had temporarily lifted restrictions affecting Russian diesel exports and waived the application of newly enacted sanctions against Russian officials, oligarchs, banks and state enterprises. Trump has defended the measures as part of an effort to bring Russia into negotiations and ease pressure on global fuel prices.

On 19 October, Trump said he was open to a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Putin, potentially on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Shenzhen on 18–19 November. He said the discussions would focus on nuclear weapons and denuclearisation, although trade and other issues could also be addressed. The Kremlin confirmed that the possibility had been discussed.

Diplomatic prospects with Iran remained uncertain during the week. On 19 October, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi accused Washington of contributing to insecurity in the Strait of Hormuz and called for a regional security arrangement without foreign military forces. Tehran continued to argue that reopening the waterway should be

addressed before broader nuclear negotiations.

By 26 October, reports indicated that messages were still passing between Washington and Tehran through intermediaries, despite stalled negotiations. Trump said there would be no US strike against Iran that day, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned of possible Iranian or proxy attacks and threatened a forceful response. These statements indicate that diplomacy remains possible, but military escalation has not been ruled out.

On 26 October, Reuters reported that Trump had sharply criticised Norway, using vulgar language to describe the country and declaring that Norwegian immigrants were unwelcome in the United States. His comments linked the attack to his frustration at not receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. The Norwegian Nobel Committee is independent of the Norwegian government, making the episode particularly revealing of the personalised nature of the dispute.

On 26 October, senior Chinese Communist Party leaders began a four-day Fifth Plenum, a closed-door meeting focused on party discipline, governance and the implementation of Xi Jinping's priorities ahead of the next party congress in 2027. The deliberations come amid an extensive anti-corruption campaign and a wave of removals affecting senior military officials.

On 24 October, China's Ministry of Commerce urged Washington to abandon proposed restrictions on American investments in sensitive technologies, warning that the measures would damage bilateral economic relations. The US Treasury proposal, announced on 22 October, would expand restrictions to biotechnology and broaden existing controls covering high-performance computing and hypersonic systems. The measures would apply to investments involving China and other countries designated as security concerns.

On 16 October, Beijing proposed restricting or prohibiting exports of 40 technologies spanning artificial intelligence, semiconductors and solar energy. The draft would expand China's catalogue of technologies subject to export controls, including advanced AI models, AI agents designed for sensitive environments and technologies associated with solar manufacturing. Chinese authorities cited national security and the prevention of misuse as justifications.

On 21 October, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met Djibouti's Foreign Minister Abdoukader Houssein Omar in Beijing. Their joint communiqué expressed concern about the security of shipping lanes in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden and called for freedom of navigation through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Both governments argued that de-escalation in the Middle East was essential to addressing the Horn of Africa's security challenges.

The communiqué also reaffirmed China's support for Djibouti's ambitions as a regional trade, logistics and connectivity hub. Beijing pledged to continue working with regional states on security, development and governance under its existing Horn of Africa peace and development initiative, while stressing that mediation should respect the wishes of the countries concerned.

On 25 October, the South China Morning Post reported that Xi Jinping's four principles for addressing African conflicts had gained renewed attention following his meeting with Togolese leader Faure Gnassingbé earlier in October. The principles emphasise African-led responses, sovereignty and fairness, cessation of hostilities through dialogue, and addressing both the immediate causes and deeper roots of conflict.

On 21 October, Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov said Putin had told US special envoy Steve Witkoff that Moscow was willing in principle to resume negotiations involving Russia, Ukraine and the United States in November. The proposed talks would focus on post-war security arrangements for Russia and Ukraine.

The following day, Putin said negotiations should address security guarantees for both countries and the wider European security system. He stressed that Moscow wanted a comprehensive settlement rather than a temporary ceasefire.

Russia is preparing to host the third Russia–Africa Summit on 28–29 October in Moscow. The Kremlin is seeking to strengthen ties with African governments through economic cooperation, trade, technology, food security, humanitarian engagement and security partnerships. Reports published on 22–23 October indicated that at least 17 African heads of state were expected to attend.

15. European Countries

During Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's state visit to Britain on 21–23 October, the two governments announced plans to deepen cooperation across trade, investment, defence, maritime security and technology. London said the visit would support more than £1 billion in new investment and expanded financing for British exports to Oman.

On 23 October, the UK and 31 international partners issued a joint warning that Sudan's food-security situation was deteriorating rapidly and required urgent action to prevent famine. The statement cited estimates that 19.5 million people, or 41% of Sudan's population, were experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, including five million facing emergency levels of hunger. It warned that the number of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition could exceed 825,000.

On 23 October, British Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband joined counterparts from France, Germany and Italy, alongside foreign ministers from Türkiye, Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, in Istanbul. The meeting addressed the US–Israel–Iran conflict, the Israeli–

Palestinian conflict, attacks by Yemen's Houthi movement against Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni government, and threats to freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb and the Black Sea.

On 24–25 October, Prime Minister Andy Burnham said he was open to discussing whether the UK should return to some form of the European Union's freedom-of-movement arrangements for workers. In an interview reported by Reuters, Burnham argued that the issue should be considered as part of a wider reset in UK–EU relations, alongside economic growth, data-sharing and migration enforcement. He ruled out recommending adoption of the euro or joining the Schengen border-free travel area.

On 25 October, Reuters reported that Britain would not join Canada's proposed Defence, Security and Resilience Bank. The two governments instead agreed to develop a cooperation framework linking their separate defence-financing initiatives.

The negotiations reportedly stalled over issues including the proposed bank's headquarters, lending arrangements, joint procurement and membership rules. Britain's Multilateral Defence Mechanism is intended to support defence investment and procurement among NATO allies, while Canada's proposed institution would focus on financing defence industries and supply chains.

French President Emmanuel Macron visited Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar from 19 to 21 October. According to the Élysée, the tour focused on restoring stability in the Middle East, maintaining freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, diversifying energy supplies and strengthening France's strategic, economic and defence partnerships with Gulf states.

On 23 October, France participated in a meeting in Istanbul with Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Türkiye, Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The foreign ministers discussed the US–Israel–Iran conflict, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia and Yemen's internationally recognised government, and the safety of commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb and the Black Sea. The participants committed to continued dialogue and diplomatic efforts to prevent escalation.

During a visit to Montenegro on 22–23 October, Chancellor Friedrich Merz endorsed accelerating the EU accession process for the Western Balkan states. He urged candidate countries to advance reforms and reiterated Germany's support for closer integration. Germany and France have also supported improving the countries' access to the EU single market before full membership.

On 20 October, Germany's Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, Serap Güler, began a trip covering Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The announced agenda included discussions on the conflict in eastern DRC, support for health

personnel responding to Ebola, a visit to a refugee camp in Burundi and engagement with German business representatives. Berlin described peace, stability and economic progress in the Great Lakes region as priorities.

On 22 October, Italy and Spain agreed not to prolong their suspensions of Schengen arrangements following a dispute linked to increased migration into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. The two countries' interior ministers said they would strengthen information-sharing to safeguard the common travel area. The measures had been introduced in July and had generated friction between Rome and Madrid.

On 20 October, Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares argued that the European Union needed a genuine strategic awakening and a more consequential role in the emerging international order. His remarks came amid wider debate over Europe's capacity to act independently while maintaining its transatlantic relationships.

On 20 October, Belgium and Türkiye resumed high-level ministerial dialogue after a ten-year gap. Seven ministers from the two countries met in Brussels to discuss security, justice, migration and broader bilateral cooperation. The meeting was also intended to advance police cooperation against transnational criminal networks. Belgium explicitly recognised Türkiye's diplomatic influence in the Horn of Africa and its role in wider European and regional security.

On 21 October, the Swedish government published its development cooperation strategy for Somalia for 2026–2028. The strategy applies from 1 July 2026 to 31 December 2028 and provides an indicative allocation of approximately SEK 200 million annually through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Sweden describes development assistance as both a means of addressing poverty and a foreign-policy instrument for advancing its priorities.

On 20 October, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Finnish President Stubb and US special envoy Steve Witkoff for talks on the diplomatic process to end Russia's war against Ukraine. US special envoy Jared Kushner participated remotely. Discussions included Ukraine's security, post-war prosperity and territorial questions. National security advisers from the UK, Germany, Italy, the EU and NATO also joined a working dinner.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

On 21 October 2026, Switzerland and the UN Office of the Personal Envoy for Sudan co-hosted the Sixth Consultative Meeting on Enhancing Coordination of Peace Initiatives and Efforts in Sudan at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, co-chaired by Swiss State Secretary Alexandre Fasel and Personal Envoy Pekka Haavisto, bringing together 22

countries including the Quad members, all five P5 states, neighbouring and regional countries alongside the AU, EU, IGAD, League of Arab States and UN to align diplomatic engagement around the urgent needs of the Sudanese people.

Participants expressed grave concern at the unabated conflict, atrocities, escalating drone warfare and a deepening humanitarian crisis, underscoring that continued fighting, access restrictions and climate

related stocks were increasing famine risk, and reaffirmed commitment to Sudan's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity while rejecting parallel governments and any action risking division or regional spillover. They stressed there is no military solution, urged foreign states and non-state actors to refrain from fueling the war through mercenaries, arms particularly drones and destabilising financial support, welcomed Quad efforts toward a humanitarian truce as a step to a durable ceasefire, and called for an inclusive, credible, Sudanese-owned political process facilitated by the Quintet. Quad and Quintet members met on the margins to further coordinate, and participants agreed to convene a Seventh Consultative Meeting with date, venue and agenda to be determined.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

On 20 October 2026, IGAD Special Envoy to South Sudan H.E. Moussa Djama Ali accompanied by IGAD Head of Mission Dr. Victoria Anib, met in Juba with Hon. Amb. Agnes Adlino Orifa Oswaha, Undersecretary of South Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation to discuss the peace process, election preparations and mutual interests both sides reaffirming continued cooperation for peace and stability.

This meeting follows the Envoy's earlier engagement with the National Elections Commission on 19 October regarding voter registration and electoral calendar preparedness as South Sudan moves toward its first general elections since independence, scheduled for 22 December 2026 following the dissolution of the transitional government in September and the signing of the amended National Elections Act . The discussions also occur during broader regional efforts including the African Union C5 Summit's call for a feasible, consensual and time bound electoral roadmap and the release of politically detained persons, while concerns persist over the exclusion of key opposition groups such as the SPLM/A-IO from the ongoing inter-party dialogue .

On October 19, 2026, IGAD Special Envoy to South Sudan Ambassador Moussa Djama Ali, accompanied by IGAD Head of Mission Dr. Victoria Anib Majur, held talks with National Elections Commission (NEC) Chairperson Gabriel Bol Deng and Secretary-General Ahon Malou at the NEC headquarters in Juba, reaffirming IGAD's commitment to supporting South Sudan's electoral preparations through continued engagement and technical assistance.

The Special Envoy stressed the urgency of voter registration and the need for a clear electoral calendar while the NEC side briefed on preparations for voter registration, recruitment and training of electoral staff and efforts to harmonize the electoral legal framework emphasizing the importance of civic and voter education, women's participation, reliable electoral data and freedom of movement for citizens and electoral personnel. This engagement took place against the backdrop of South Sudan's scheduled general elections on December 22, 2026, just three months away.

The NEC has not yet officially launched voter registration and has denied rumors of an existing voter roll the legal framework was adjusted in September 2026 to decouple elections from permanent constitution making and census preconditions the transitional government was dissolved on September 22 and the inter-party dialogue was launched President Kiir has sought regional support for electoral materials and training during visits to South Africa and other countries however civil society and analysts have pointed to insufficient political consensus, delayed voter registration and challenges to inclusive participation as ongoing concerns.

On 20 October 2026, IGAD Executive Secretary H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu attended Kenya's 63rd Mashujaa Day celebrations at Kipchoge Keino Stadium in Eldoret, presided over by President William Ruto and attended by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali and other dignitaries with IGAD joining Kenya in honoring the heroes and heroines whose sacrifices shaped the nation's independence, development and prosperity.

This year's celebrations hosted for the first time by Uasin Gishu, Nandi and Elgeyo Marakwet counties under the theme of security, sports and the economy also featured a regional dimension through Prime Minister Abiy's presence. Following the event, President Ruto hosted both Prime Minister Abiy and Executive Secretary Gebeyehu at his Koilel dairy farm in Uasin Gishu County, where the leaders toured the agricultural investment as part of continued bilateral and regional engagement.

On 22 October 2026, IGAD Deputy Executive Secretary H.E. Mohamed Abdi Ware representing Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, participated in the Peace, Security & Transnational Solidarity panel at the Global Trust Summit 2026 in Nairobi where he stressed that building trust requires sustained dialogue and practical cross border cooperation to prevent conflict, respond to shared crises and strengthen the region's voice in global negotiations.

The panel held under the summit's Peace & Security Baraza track also featured figures including Ambassador Martin Kimani of the UN DPPA DPO and former Kenyan Foreign Minister Raychelle Omamo and formed part of a broader summit programme running from 21 to 23 October under the theme Weaving Trust Binding Strands for a Stronger Global Order, convened by Kenya's State Department for Foreign Affairs in partnership with Strathmore University and the Open Government Partnership. Ware's remarks align

with IGAD's ongoing emphasis on regional solidarity and collective security themes he has recently voiced in contexts including the AUSSOM transition in Somalia and anticipatory action on climate risks in the Horn of Africa.

From 21–24 October 2026, IGAD convened a regional meeting in Arba Minch, Ethiopia under its World Bank supported Food Systems Resilience Program (FSRP) to advance the IGAD Digital Agro-Climate Advisory Services (DACAS) Knowledge Network and validate Regional and Country Gender Profiles in Food Systems, bringing together technical experts from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda along with regional partner institutions.

Discussions underscored the growing demand for actionable, localized climate and agricultural information described by IGAD Head of Mission to Ethiopia Abebaw Bihonegn as no longer a luxury but a fundamental necessity for risk management and produced recommendations to establish national coordination arrangements, develop regional minimum standards for data quality and interoperability and train extension workers and community trainers while the gender profile validation sought to strengthen the evidence base on inequalities women face in access to land, finance, technology, climate information and markets. The meeting builds on the DACAS Knowledge Network's formal launch in Bishoftu in May 2025 and reinforces IGAD's broader push, alongside partners such as AICCRA, toward coordinated, evidence based food systems transformation across a region confronting recurring droughts, unpredictable rainfall and land degradation.

IGAD participated in the Smart Africa CRASA Workshop on implementing SADC sub regional roaming agreements under the One Africa Network (OAN), held from 20–22 October 2026 in Gaborone, Botswana, represented by Daniel Deng Malok (PhD) of the Economic Cooperation and Regional Integration Division (ECRID), where delegates from Regional Economic Communities and the African Telecommunications Union exchanged experiences and explored pathways toward a unified African roaming framework.

The OAN initiative seeks to facilitate affordable and seamless cross border communication by eliminating excessive roaming charges and harmonizing regulatory frameworks across the continent and as part of these efforts IGAD is planning a feasibility study in early 2027 under the World Bank supported Eastern Africa Regional Digital Integration Project (EARDIP) a flagship initiative covering Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda to explore regional mobile roaming across the IGAD region. Beyond digital integration IGAD continues to emphasize its Regional Infrastructure Master Plan (IRIMP) for transport, energy, ICT and water resources to support trade and connectivity, recognizing that inadequate infrastructure remains one of the main barriers to regional integration and growth.

African Union

On 20–21 October 2026, the African Union Commission participated in the Sixth Consultative Meeting on Enhancing Coordination of Peace Initiatives and Efforts in Sudan, co-hosted by Switzerland and the UN Personal Envoy for Sudan at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, with Special Representative of the Chairperson Amb. Mohamed Belaiche leading the Quintet (AU, UN, EU, League of Arab States, IGAD). The meeting brought together 27 international and regional delegations, including neighbouring states, Quad members, P5 countries, and the Quintet organizations to align diplomatic engagement around de-escalation, humanitarian access and civilian protection, with participants welcoming efforts particularly by the Quad to secure a humanitarian truce as a step toward a durable ceasefire and stressing that there can be no military solution to the conflict.

The AU reaffirmed its leadership in coordinating with the Quad to advance an African led framework linking a humanitarian truce and cessation of hostilities to an inclusive Sudanese led political process building on convergence achieved with the Quad. The discussions took place against a grave backdrop over 15 million people displaced nearly 34 million in need of assistance as of May 2026, eight million children out of school and a war increasingly characterized by deadly drone warfare and famine like conditions in Darfur and Kordofan. Participants rejected the establishment of parallel governments or governance structures and reaffirmed commitment to Sudan's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

The African Union Commission and IGAD welcomed the Quad joint statement on Sudan which was issued by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the United States and aligns with their own peace roadmaps in calling for rapid humanitarian access and protection of civilians a three month humanitarian truce pursued through the Jeddah process as a first step toward a permanent cessation of hostilities the launch of an inclusive and accountable civilian led transition within nine months, and a firm rejection of external military support and extremist influence.

Both organizations reaffirmed that there can be no military solution to the Sudanese crisis and expressed readiness to work with the Quad the Sudanese people and all partners to end the war, protect Sudan's sovereignty and unity and advance an inclusive civilian led political transition. In partnership with the League of Arab States, the United Nations and the European Union the AUC and IGAD were also set to convene a new round of consultations with Sudanese civilian groups in October to promote unity and prepare the ground for an inclusive Sudanese dialogue. This welcome follows the Sixth Consultative Meeting in Geneva on 21 October where more than 20 countries and international bodies

gathered to align peace efforts and builds on earlier engagement between the Quintet and Sudanese anti-war coalitions in Addis Ababa.

From 21–23 October 2026, the AU Peace and Security Council held three successive joint engagements in New York its 9th Annual Consultative Meeting with the UN Peacebuilding Commission on 21 October under the theme of synergies for nationally owned peacebuilding, its 11th Informal Joint Seminar with the UN Security Council on 22 October covering AU/UN peace operations including Resolution 2719, Youth, Peace and Security, counter-terrorism, children and armed conflict and natural resources and the 20th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting with the UNSC on 23 October, with agenda items spanning AUSSOM resources and support, Sudan, South Sudan and eastern DRC and discussions addressing coordination, financing challenges and specific crises.

Morocco's Ambassador Mohammed Arrouchi, speaking on behalf of the PSC served as keynote speaker on Youth, Peace and Security and also addressed the protection of children affected by armed conflict calling for continental commitments to be translated into concrete action and for stronger AU–UN cooperation on the protection rehabilitation and reintegration of children associated with armed groups. PSC members further met with the UN Secretary General on Africa's peace, security and stability priorities and a joint communiqué from the PBC and AUPSC meeting advanced follow up mechanisms with peacebuilding financing and national ownership emerging as central themes.

An investigation published by The Insider on 23 October 2026 identified the intruder who covertly entered the African Union Commission chairperson's residence in Addis Ababa in April 2025 as Major Aleksandr Dubikov, a GRU officer then serving as assistant to Russia's military attaché in Ethiopia who slipped through the gate of Africa House behind a car carrying Chairperson Mahamoud Ali Youssouf's daughter, went directly to Youssouf's bedroom remained inside for four minutes and 24 seconds briefly encountered the daughter and was released by private security who mistook him for a lost VIP.

The report based on CCTV footage and facial-recognition analysis, linked Dubikov's military education and service records to the GRU and found frequent phone contact with Vladislav Popov, a hacker associated with GRU unit 74455, known as Sandworm, though the purpose of the intrusion remains unconfirmed and no theft or planted devices were established. The incident prompted tighter security at Africa House, and flight records indicated Dubikov remained in Ethiopia at the time of the investigation with no public indication that Ethiopian authorities had identified or acted against him. The revelations surfaced just days before Moscow was set to host the third Russia - Africa Summit on 28–29 October 2026, raising questions about the relationship between Russia's diplomatic engagement with African institutions and its intelligence activities on the continent.

European Union

As a member of the Quintet, the European Union participated in the Sixth Consultative Meeting on Sudan held in Geneva on 21 October 2026, joining the African Union, IGAD, the League of Arab States and the United Nations alongside 22 countries to coordinate international peace efforts for Sudan. In parallel, the EU continued its partnership with IGAD and the AU on South Sudan's electoral preparations and broader Horn of Africa stabilization, with the EU Ambassador to South Sudan stressing in May 2026 that the country stood at a precarious moment and reaffirming EU support for implementing the 2018 peace agreement, election preparations, constitution-making and civic education in close coordination with the AU and IGAD. This work is underpinned by the EU-funded project EU Support for Facilitating Regional Stabilization in the Horn of Africa, which IGAD launched in mid-2026 to back political dialogue, mediation and preventive diplomacy in Sudan, South Sudan and the wider region, while the AU–EU–UN trilateral framework has further cemented cooperation on Horn peace and security, including support for AUSSOM in Somalia.



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