

CLAWS Newsletter



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by Suyash Dwivedi

Domestic Developments

24 July ([Al Jazeera](#)): Deadly clash in West Bank village of Tel Aviv leaves six dead

A violent confrontation in the West Bank village of Tel, near Nablus, left four Palestinians and two Israelis dead in one of the bloodiest single incidents of settler-related violence in months, according to Palestinian and Israeli accounts. Palestinian officials said the dead included a resident who briefly seized a weapon from a settler during clashes with soldiers and settler guards. Israeli media identified the two Israelis killed as a settler serving as an area guard and an active-duty soldier. The incident followed days of tension after settlers set fire to a Palestinian home in the village on July 18, part of a broader pattern of escalating violence across the territory.

25 July ([The Times Of Israel](#)): Israeli strike kills Hamas-run police chief in northern Gaza

An Israeli airstrike killed Brigadier-General Abdel-Nasser al-Maqadma, head of the Hamas-run police force in northern Gaza, according to the group's interior ministry and Gaza medics. The strike came as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prepared to convene Israel's security cabinet ahead of a trip to Washington. Separately, tension persisted in the West Bank village of Tell, near Nablus, where settlers and Israeli soldiers were seen operating amid a tense standoff following a deadly incident days earlier that left both Palestinians and Israelis dead. Iraqi air defenses also shot down a drone near the US consulate in Erbil, in the Kurdistan Region, underscoring the wider volatility gripping West Asia even as ceasefire arrangements in Gaza and Lebanon remained formally in place.

27 July ([Syrian Arab News Agency](#)): Syrian President outlines vision for Syria's political transition

In an extended interview, Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa laid out his vision for Syria's long-term political future, saying he had resolved the country's longstanding conflict with its Kurdish community and describing plans for a gradual restoration of democratic governance. He reiterated that Damascus would play no role in any military action in Lebanon or in Hezbollah's disarmament, while confirming exploratory security talks with Israel. Al-Sharaa's government continues to face pressure over drafting a new constitution and demands for transitional justice

against former regime officials, seen by analysts as the two biggest tests of Syria's post-Assad transition through the remainder of 2026.

11 August ([Anadolu Agency](#)): Syrian court sentences Bashar al-Assad to death in absentia

A Damascus court sentenced ousted Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, his brother Maher and cousin Atef Najib to death in absentia for crimes against humanity and war crimes, including premeditated murder, torture and the killing of children under 15, committed during Syria's nearly 14-year civil war. It was the first such ruling since Assad's fall in December 2024 and the first prosecution to reach a verdict under the transitional government. Several other former officials, including ex-defence minister Fahd al-Frej, received the same sentence in absentia. Assad and his brother, both now in Russia, fled as opposition forces closed in on Damascus. Syrians gathered outside the Palace of Justice to mark the ruling.

22 August ([The Times of Israel](#)): Israel says it killed Hamas tunnel commander in Gaza strike

The Israeli military said it killed Sharif al-Hasnat, described as a senior Hamas operative who had directed efforts to rebuild the group's underground tunnel infrastructure, in a strike on Deir al-Balah. A separate drone strike killed one person and wounded another in central Gaza. Gaza health authorities said more than 1,280 Palestinians had been killed in the enclave since the October ceasefire took effect, while Israel said four of its soldiers had died in the same period. Syria's foreign minister separately met the head of Israel's Mossad in Jordan, with both sides focused on halting strikes and reviving talks toward a security accord.

23 August ([Iran International](#)): Iran's president acknowledges mounting economic pressure

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said the country was facing numerous problems as Washington prepared additional sanctions following the lapse of the negotiating deadline, according to regional reporting. The comments reflected growing acknowledgement within Tehran's leadership of the economic strain caused by the extended conflict with the United States and Israel, even as officials continued to reject what they characterised as unrealistic demands over the Strait of Hormuz and the country's nuclear programme. The remarks came

as diplomatic activity continued around Oman's mediation efforts, with Gulf states including Qatar and the UAE urging a return to negotiations to stabilise regional shipping and security.

External Affairs

25 July ([Al Jazeera](#)): UN chief visits Damascus for first time since Assad's fall

UN Secretary-General António Guterres visited Syria on July 25–26, his first trip to the country since 2009 and the first since the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government, meeting President Ahmed al-Sharaa, Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani and representatives of women's groups and civil society. The visit came weeks after Syria's transitional parliament, the 210-seat People's Assembly, held its inaugural session, with roughly a third of seats directly appointed by al-Sharaa and three seats reserved for the Druze governorate of Suwayda left vacant because the interim government does not control the area, underscoring the fragility of Syria's post-war political transition.

26 July ([Qatar Tribune](#)): Qatar, UAE coordinate on regional de-escalation efforts

Qatar's prime minister and foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, held a telephone call with UAE counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan to discuss bilateral cooperation and coordinate on easing regional tensions. Both sides stressed the importance of all parties adhering to dialogue and implementing the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Iran, including guaranteeing freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. The call reflected intensified Gulf diplomatic activity aimed at preventing renewed escalation between Washington and Tehran from spreading further across shipping lanes and Gulf states already on edge after earlier rounds of Iranian strikes on regional targets.

28 July ([NBC](#)): Trump and Netanyahu meet at the White House

President Donald Trump hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House, with discussions centred on the stalled second phase of the Gaza ceasefire, Hamas's disarmament and the future governance of the enclave under the Board of Peace framework. The meeting came as Washington pressed both Israel and Hamas to advance the UN-endorsed roadmap, even as Netanyahu signalled growing reluctance to accept the plan's terms without full disarmament guarantees, a position he would formalise in a cabinet statement less than two

weeks later. Officials on both sides described the talks as part of continuing efforts to align Washington and Jerusalem's approach heading into the autumn.

1 August ([The Times of Israel](#)): Israeli officer hurt in clash with Hezbollah gunmen near Nabatiyeh

An Israeli officer was moderately wounded in an overnight clash with Hezbollah gunmen near the Ali Taher Ridge close to Nabatiyeh, an area where the group's operatives are believed to maintain a major tunnel system; the army later said it killed the operatives involved. Lebanese military sources said Hezbollah was shifting tactics in the south, relying more on reconnaissance drones and targeted attacks on Israeli assets to offset Israel's air superiority while reducing exposure of its own fighters. The approach, according to regional assessments, aims to raise the cost of continued Israeli operations without triggering a full return to war, as both sides continued trading accusations of ceasefire violations.

4 August ([Al Jazeera](#)): Seventh round of Lebanon talks opens in Rome as strikes continue

A seventh round of US-mediated talks aimed at establishing 'pilot zones' in southern Lebanon, from which Israeli forces would begin phased withdrawals, opened in Rome, even as Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon continued despite the conditional ceasefire reached in early June. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi visited the Imam Ali shrine in Iraq's holy city of Najaf, part of wider regional diplomatic contacts, while Tehran and Muscat worked toward finalising a framework for commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, though officials cautioned it would not automatically reopen the strategic waterway. US Vice President JD Vance said negotiations with Iran would take time and be difficult to conclude.

5 August ([CNN](#)): Houthis claim tanker attack as Trump predicts Hormuz reopening

Yemen's Houthi movement claimed an attack on a Saudi oil tanker, adding to a string of incidents around the Strait of Hormuz even as President Trump predicted the waterway would reopen soon, citing falling oil prices as a sign of easing pressure. Vice President JD Vance said reaching a durable deal with Iran would take time given the country's fractured political system, while affirming that Washington's overriding goal remained preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Iran's foreign minister visited the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf, Iraq, days after

officials in Tehran and Muscat said they were nearing a framework for commercial shipping through the strait.

7 August ([The Times of Israel](#), [Kataeb](#)): Lebanon, Israel agree on countries to verify Hezbollah disarmament

Lebanon and Israel agreed on a shortlist of countries that could verify Hezbollah's disarmament process, with the United States expected to make the final selection of nations to oversee monitoring, a Lebanese official said, despite the deadly flare-up in violence days earlier. Separately, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan signed the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, a mutual-deterrence pact building on Riyadh's earlier defence agreement with Islamabad. Analysts described the deal, combining Saudi capital, Turkish drone and defence-industrial capability, and Pakistan's nuclear-armed manpower, as a significant step toward a new regional security architecture amid tensions linked to Israel's expanding reach and Iran's influence.

7 August ([Ajel News](#)): Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Pakistan sign Makkah Mutual Defence Agreement

Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan have signed the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement, establishing a trilateral framework for long-term defence cooperation. According to Saudi Defence Minister Khalid bin Salman, the agreement seeks to strengthen deterrence, military coordination, and institutional integration among the three countries. A key provision reportedly treats an armed attack against one member as an attack against all three, signalling a collective approach to regional security. The agreement reflects an effort to deepen strategic cooperation among the three states amid evolving regional security dynamics and could contribute to greater defence coordination and interoperability while supporting broader regional stability.

9 August ([Gulf News](#)): Houthis declare blockade on Saudi Arabia in the Red Sea

Yemen's Houthi movement declared a blockade against Saudi Arabia in the Red Sea, threatening shipping through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and adding a new front to its campaign against the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and, by extension, the kingdom itself. The move followed months of rising friction after momentum from the 2022 truce collapsed, with the Houthis accusing Riyadh of reinforcing forces along Yemen's west coast and in Taiz province.

Saudi officials did not immediately comment on the blockade declaration, though the kingdom's defence posture in the following weeks, including the new Mecca pact with Turkey and Pakistan, was widely read as a response to the deteriorating security environment along its southern border.

9 August ([Gulf News](#)): Houthis strike Saudi Aramco's Jazan refinery; Netanyahu rejects Gaza roadmap

Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed a drone strike on Saudi Aramco's Jazan refinery on the Red Sea coast, saying it was retaliation for Saudi drone incursions into Yemen's Saada and Hajjah provinces; a resulting fire was extinguished with no casualties reported. The attack came a day after Riyadh signed its defence pact with Turkey and Pakistan. In Jerusalem, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu formally rejected the Board of Peace's 15-point roadmap for Gaza, insisting Israeli forces would not withdraw until Hamas is "genuinely disarmed." Hamas said it remained committed to the agreement and called on mediators to press Israel to honour previously negotiated terms.

10 August ([Iran International](#)): Houthi attacks on Yemeni port of al-Makha kill seven

Houthi missile and drone strikes on the Red Sea port city of al-Makha killed seven people, with the group saying the operation targeted what it called a continued Saudi military buildup along Yemen's western coast and in Taiz province. A Houthi political council member claimed the resulting fires and explosions stemmed from weapons and equipment stored at the port. The escalation, among the deadliest in years between the Iran-aligned Houthis and Saudi-backed Yemeni government forces, raised concern that the 2022 truce that ended heavy fighting could unravel, with clashes intensifying over the preceding month across government-held areas including Marib and Hadramout.

17 August ([The Jerusalem Post](#)): Deadliest Lebanon flare-up in months as Israel kills senior Hezbollah commander

Israel said it killed senior Hezbollah commander Abu Hassan Alaa in southern Lebanon, part of strikes that left eleven people dead in the deadliest single day of fighting since the two sides reached a ceasefire in early June. The escalation added pressure on already stalled US-Iran negotiations, coming as Washington prepared additional economic measures against Tehran. Separately, foreign ministers from the UAE, Qatar, Jordan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt,

Indonesia and Pakistan issued a joint statement condemning Israel's rejection of the UN-endorsed roadmap for completing the Gaza ceasefire, saying the move undermined collective efforts toward a lasting settlement and repudiated Palestinian statehood.

18 August ([Gulf News](#), [CNN](#)): UAE detects missile threat as Trump denies active Iran talks

The United Arab Emirates said its air defences had detected a missile threat and urged residents to stay in safe locations, a day after President Trump said his administration had opened a back channel with Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps. Trump later said no talks with Tehran were under way or scheduled, adding that the naval blockade of Iranian waters remained in force even as the Strait of Hormuz stayed open. Qatar's foreign ministry voiced support for continuing Omani-Iranian efforts to secure the strait, saying a ceasefire guaranteeing freedom of navigation and a return to negotiations represented the only way forward for the region.

20 August ([DW](#)): Netanyahu warns Turkey against expanding role in Syria

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz accused Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of pursuing reckless policy in Syria, while Prime Minister Netanyahu warned Ankara against increasing its military footprint there, days after the strike on the Abu al-Duhur airbase. Turkey's communications directorate said Netanyahu's comments reflected expansionist policy ahead of Israel's elections. Analysts noted the dispute unfolded against the backdrop of a years-old Turkish-Israeli deconfliction mechanism in Syria, brokered by Azerbaijan, and warned that further military incidents risked drawing two of the region's most capable militaries into direct confrontation over influence in post-Assad Syria.

21 August ([Qatar Tribune](#)): Qatar reaffirms diplomatic push with Gulf and Egyptian partners

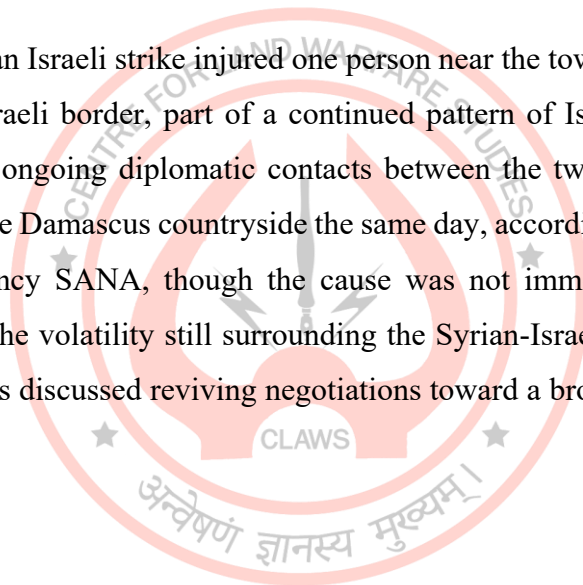
Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said Doha would continue coordinating with Gulf states, Egypt and other regional partners to pursue diplomatic solutions to the region's overlapping crises, expressing hope that parties would return to dialogue rather than escalation. The remarks came ahead of the eighth session of the Qatar-Egypt Joint Higher Committee, due to be held in Doha, with officials on both sides describing a marked improvement in political and economic cooperation between the two countries under their respective leaderships.

21 August ([The Times of Israel](#)): Israeli politics intensifies as Gadi Eisenkot leads in polls

Political tensions in Israel rise ahead of the October Knesset election, with reports that Prime Minister Netanyahu had asked the Shin Bet security service to boost protection for former military chief of staff Gadi Eisenkot, an emerging election frontrunner in some polls, though the agency said it was already providing what it described as maximum coverage. A separate legal request from a smaller party to provide the same candidate additional campaign security was rejected by an elections panel citing lack of authority. Analysts said Netanyahu's hardline stance on Gaza and Iran was increasingly shaped by the approaching electoral contest.

22 August ([Syrian Arab News Agency](#)): Israeli strike injures one near Syrian border town of Beit Jinn

Syrian media reported an Israeli strike injured one person near the town of Beit Jinn, about ten kilometres from the Israeli border, part of a continued pattern of Israeli military activity in southern Syria despite ongoing diplomatic contacts between the two sides. A bus was also damaged in a blast in the Damascus countryside the same day, according to images released by Syria's state news agency SANA, though the cause was not immediately confirmed. The incidents underscored the volatility still surrounding the Syrian-Israeli security track even as officials from both sides discussed reviving negotiations toward a broader accord during talks held in Jordan.



About the Author

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