



(AP Photo/Elhady Ould Mohamedou, 2019)

## Mohamed Ould Ghazouani Sworn in as Mauritanian President; Car Bomb in Cairo Leaves 20 Dead

*Following his election victory, Mohamed Ould Ghazouani was sworn in as President of Mauritania. In Tunisia, over 90 candidates have registered for the elections to replace the late-President Caid Essebsi, and Algeria has faced renewed “civil disobedience” in the capital.*

*A bomb attack outside a hospital in Cairo left 20 people dead, with Egyptian authorities set to target those responsible, while a drone strike in Libya killed over 40, in an attack blamed on Haftar. And in Morocco, over 400 migrants were intercepted by authorities in the Mediterranean Sea on their way to Spain.*

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## Algeria

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There were further protests as Algerians gathered in the capital Algiers on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> in huge numbers calling for "civil disobedience", despite a heavy police presence (*France 24*)<sup>1</sup>. Protestors also called for the release of people arrested during the demonstrations and the removal of checkpoints erected around the capital, among other demands. Despite this increased pressure, General Gaid Salah rejected conditions put forth by protesters for talks to end the political crisis (*Al-Monitor*)<sup>2</sup>. Elsewhere there was tentative progress towards elections as the National Forum for Dialogue and Mediation, tasked by the government to conduct consultations to define the conditions of the future presidential elections, opened up a dialogue with militants of the Hirak (*Jeune Afrique*)<sup>3</sup>.

In other news, sources told *The Independent* that an Algerian official opened a consultation with academics regarding reopening the land borders with Morocco, closed since 1994 (*The Independent Arabic*)<sup>4</sup>. Sources expect the discussion to progress due to "positive" indications from Morocco.

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## Egypt

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A car bomb in Cairo killed at least 20 people outside a hospital treating cancer patients, with many more people injured in the blast (*The Guardian*)<sup>5</sup>. The Egyptian interior ministry blamed the Hasm Islamist group for the attack. President al-Sisi sent condolences to the families of those killed in what he dubbed a "cowardly terrorist incident" on social media (*BBC*)<sup>6</sup>.

The President later made a televised address to the nation, urging the Egyptian people to push back against terrorism (*VOA News*)<sup>7</sup>. This speech came a day before authorities made public the identities of the suspected attackers, before conducting a raid on their place of operation with reports of 13 suspected terrorists killed during raids by Egyptian security services (*Egypt Today*)<sup>8</sup>.

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## Libya

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There are reports that at least 42 people have died in a drone strike in south-western Libya. Local officials have blamed the attack on the forces of Khalifa Haftar (*BBC*)<sup>9</sup>. Meanwhile, Haftar's forces have claimed to have destroyed a Russian-made cargo plane that was carrying supplies to the western forces (*Bloomberg*)<sup>10</sup>. Ghassan Salamé, the UN Special Envoy for Libya, has also announced a new three-point de-escalation plan to calm tensions in the war-torn country, which also includes new steps

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.france24.com/en/20190802-algeria-protest-civil-disobedience>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/08/algeria-army-chief-reject-conditions-protesters-dialogue.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/814100/societe/algerie-linstance-de-dialogue-rencontre-pour-la-premiere-fois-des-militants-du-mouvement-de-contestation/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://bit.ly/2GfLrQ>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/05/at-least-20-dead-and-47-injured-in-explosion-outside-cairo-hospital>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-49233845>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/egypt-president-urges-nation-back-push-against-militants>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/73730/National-Cancer-Institute-explosion%E2%80%99s-terrorist-identified-13-terrorist-killed>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-49236340>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-08-06/east-libya-forces-say-they-destroyed-cargo-plane-carrying-arms>

towards the national dialogue process, that was suspended due to the escalation of tensions in recent months (*The Libya Observer*)<sup>11</sup>.

Migration continues to feature in the news in Libya, following the announcement that the western Libyan government will shut three migrant detention centers (*Africa News*)<sup>12</sup>. This comes as reportedly 141 Sudanese migrants were deported from the country after spending time in detention (*Africa News*)<sup>13</sup>.

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## Mauritania

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Mohamed Ould Ghazouani was sworn-in as the new President of Mauritania, succeeding former President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz (*France 24*)<sup>14</sup>. The ceremony was attended by several African heads of state. Following this, President Ghazouani named former minister Ismail Ould Badah Ould Cheikh Sidia as Prime Minister and tasked him with forming a new government (*Asharq Al Awsat*)<sup>15</sup>.

There were other political events of significance that also occurred during this period. Amnesty International reported that blogger Mohamed Mkhaitir was released after five years in detention for publishing a blog (*Amnesty International*)<sup>16</sup>. There are also signs that the new Mauritanian administration will take a differing approach to relations with the Polisario, with some reporting that the new government has cooled its ties with the movement's representatives (*The North Africa Post*)<sup>17</sup>.

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## Morocco

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424 irregular migrants heading to Spain were intercepted by Moroccan authorities in the Mediterranean Sea (*RTL*)<sup>18</sup>. According to a military source, some of the migrants were "in a state of degraded health" and received first aid aboard the Moroccan coastguard boats before being taken back to various ports in the north of the country.

Elsewhere, Morocco compensated hundreds of rights victims from 1956-99, including dozens of people allegedly abducted by the Polisario (*The Washington Post*)<sup>19</sup>. This came following a commission established by King Mohammed VI in 2004 to turn the page on the state-sponsored abuses in the country's past.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/un-envoy-libya-reveals-three-point-deesclation-plan>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.africanews.com/2019/08/04/libya-to-shut-down-three-migrant-detention-centers/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.africanews.com/2019/08/08/libya-deports-141-sudanese-migrants/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.france24.com/fr/video/20190802-el-ghazouani-militaire-carriere-soufi-nouveau-president-mauritanie-0>

<sup>15</sup> <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1844586/mauritania-president-assigns-ismail-ould-sidia-pm>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/mauritania-blogger-mohamed-mkhaitir-released-after-five-years-detention-publishing>

<sup>17</sup> <http://northafricapost.com/33086-mounting-signs-of-major-shift-in-mauritania-polisario-ties.html>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.rtl.fr/actu/international/maroc-424-migrants-en-route-vers-l-espagne-interceptes-7798150836>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/morocco-compensates-hundreds-of-rights-victims-from-1956-99/2019/08/07/60e0d6c4-b929-11e9-8e83-4e6687e99814\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/morocco-compensates-hundreds-of-rights-victims-from-1956-99/2019/08/07/60e0d6c4-b929-11e9-8e83-4e6687e99814_story.html)

And, there were virulent reactions to a group of young, Belgian volunteers working in shorts at a construction site in southern Morocco (*Le Parisien*)<sup>20</sup>. A 26-year-old Moroccan teacher was arrested after posting a message calling for the beheading of the women.

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## Tunisia

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Following the death of President Caid Essebsi, a significant number of candidates have been registered for the upcoming Tunisian Presidential elections, with the deadline for registrations set for August 9<sup>th</sup> (*Mosaïque FM*)<sup>21</sup>. So far, notable candidates include Youssef Chahed, the current head of the government, Nabil Kharoui, the prominent businessman, and Abdelfatteh Mourou, who is the first official candidate ever fielded by Ennahdha and the current interim parliamentary head (*Mosaïque FM*; *Espace Manager*; *Le Monde*)<sup>22</sup>.

In other news, two suspected jihadists were shot dead in southern Tunisia during an anti-terrorist operation led by the National Guard and army units (*Le Figaro*)<sup>23</sup>. Also, 36 Ivorian citizens were arrested in Sfax and taken to Medenine to be deported to the desert between Tunisia and Libya (*La Croix*)<sup>24</sup>. Reportedly among them are 11 women, including one pregnant woman, and 4 children.

### About:

*This is a weekly, non-exhaustive snapshot of regional, and international news regarding the politics of the North African region. Selections demonstrate varying perspectives and opinions from French, Arabic and English media sources. Taking such an approach enables regional trends to be observed and documented so they may be used and applied in our detailed research projects.*

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/maroc-un-instituteur-arrete-pour-avoir-appelle-a-decapiter-des-benevoles-belges-en-short-08-08-2019-8130483.php>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.mosaiquefm.net/fr/presidentielles/590114/presidentielle-56-candidats-enregistres>

<sup>22</sup> <https://bit.ly/2YTKnAP>; <https://www.espacemanager.com/presidentielle-nabil-karoui-depose-officiellement-sa-candidature-video.html>; [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/08/07/tunisie-abdelfattah-mourou-candidat-du-parti-islamiste-ennahda-a-la-presidentielle\\_5497425\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/08/07/tunisie-abdelfattah-mourou-candidat-du-parti-islamiste-ennahda-a-la-presidentielle_5497425_3212.html)

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/tunisie-deux-djihadistes-presumes-abattus-lors-d-une-operation-antiterroriste-20190803>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.la-croix.com/Monde/Afrique/Tunisie-refoule-Ivoiriens-desert-2019-08-07-1201039770>

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