



(AP/Michael Sohn, 2017)

For the first time since fighting escalated in April, a new international conference for Libya, with support from the UN, has been proposed by Germany to seek a new diplomatic solution to the crisis. In Egypt, there have been new convictions for senior Muslim Brotherhood figures, while an appeal trial for 24 individuals linked to the backpacker murders in Morocco resumed this week to much attention. Reports of blackouts of local news providers in Algeria has prompted suspicion, while in Mauritania the new Ghazouani administration has continued to consolidate its international partnerships. And candidates for the upcoming presidential elections in Tunisia have participated in the first TV debates in the country's history as the election day draws near.

Germany Announces New Conference for Libya; Tunisia Prepares to Vote for New President

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Algeria

Karim Tabbou, a major political opposition figure and leader of the Union Démocratique et Sociale, was arrested at his home by two plainclothes policemen on Wednesday 11th September, for “undermining the morale of the army” (*France Info*)¹. Tabbou was then, the following day, presented before the prosecutor of the court of Kolea, in the wilaya of Tipaza (*TSA Algérie*)².

This major arrest follows several weeks of some local media sources, including TSA and ObservAlgérie, experiencing blockages, whereby they have been unavailable in Algeria for no official reason (*Le Monde*)³. The ministry of justice also proposed the creation of an independent electoral commission this week (*France Info*)⁴.

Meanwhile, social protests in the country have persisted for a successive week, in a current of activism that has been in place since the political events of February (*Le Point*)⁵.

Egypt

This week, Egypt arrested 16 members of the Muslim Brotherhood for communicating with fugitives based in Turkey (*Egypt Today*)⁶. This comes as another 11 figures of the Brotherhood were sentenced to life in prison, under charges of espionage and sharing state secrets with Hamas and Hezbollah, including the Brotherhood’s leader, Mohammed Badie (*Asharq Al-Awsat*)⁷. Badie was previously convicted for life last week on charges linked to the mass prison breaks during the 2011 revolution.

At the state level, President El-Sisi announced the appointment of Hamada El-Sawy as the new Egyptian prosecutor general, a role whereby he will be the principle source of legal advice for the Egyptian government (*Egyptian Streets*)⁸. And internationally, Egypt has led a push to remove neighbouring Sudan

¹ https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/politique-africaine/algerie-letrange-enlevement-de-lopposant-karim-tabbou_3613623.html

² <https://www.tsa-algerie.com/karim-tabbou-sera-presente-au-procureur-tribunal-de-kolea/>

³ https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/09/12/en-algerie-la-presse-en-ligne-subit-des-blocages-a-repetition_5509447_3212.html

⁴ https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/algerie/algerie-le-ministre-de-la-justice-propose-de-creer-une-autorite-electorale-independante_3612787.html

⁵ https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/algerie-la-colere-sociale-continue-de-monter-12-09-2019-2335274_3826.php

⁶ <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/74663/In-pics-Egypt-arrests-16-MB-members-communicating-with-fugitives>

⁷ <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1897876/egypt-sentences-11-muslim-brotherhood-leaders-life-spying>

⁸ <https://egyptianstreets.com/2019/09/12/egypt-appoints-new-prosecutor-general-hamada-el-sawy/>

from the US “terror” blacklist, a status that till now has curbed international investment in the country (*Arab News*)⁹.

Libya

Germany has announced its intent to host a new conference with the UN regarding the crisis in Libya (*Reuters*)¹⁰. While the plans are still in their initial stages, this marks the first major international diplomatic push for Libya since the escalation of fighting in April earlier this year. Meanwhile, there has been further developments with the fighting. Another missile strike hit Mitiga international airport in Tripoli, and further combat fatalities have been reported during clashes in the south of the Libyan capital (*Anadolu Agency; Middle East Monitor*)¹¹.

Elsewhere, an NGO vessel belonging to Doctors Without Borders and SOS Mediterranee rescued 50 migrants off the coast of Libya (*Libyan Express*)¹². This comes with another announcement as a further 500 refugees within Libya are to be evacuated to Rwanda (*The Washington Post*)¹³.

Mauritania

A number of partnerships have been concluded between the Ghazouani administration and the international community. For his first official international visit, President Ghazouani will visit fellow G5 member, Burkina Faso (*The North Africa Post*)¹⁴. Mauritania also had the opportunity to review its defense cooperation with the UAE (*Emirates News Agency*)¹⁵. And the state has extended the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between it and the EU for another year (*The North Africa Post*)¹⁶.

Ties to the G5 have been further reinforced as Mauritania hosted 36 G5 officers in Nouakchott to share ways of working between the regional partners (*RFI*)¹⁷. All this comes as the Mauritanian parliament voted to validate the agenda of the Ghazouani government for the foreseeable future (*RFI*)¹⁸.

⁹ <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1551921/middle-east>

¹⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-germany/germany-aims-to-host-libya-conference-to-stabilize-oil-producer-idUSKCN1VW23S>

¹¹ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/libya-missile-strike-hits-mitiga-international-airport/1577331>;
<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190908-libya-3-killed-in-renewed-fighting-in-southern-tripoli/>

¹² <https://www.libyanexpress.com/ngo-vessel-rescues-50-illegal-migrants-off-libyas-coast/>

¹³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/refugees-trapped-in-libya-to-be-evacuated-to-rwanda/2019/09/10/52b60106-d3b3-11e9-8924-1db7dac797fb_story.html

¹⁴ <http://northafricapost.com/33850-mauritania-president-ghazouani-to-visit-burkina-faso-in-maiden-international-trip.html>

¹⁵ <https://wam.ae/en/details/1395302785565>

¹⁶ <http://northafricapost.com/33726-mauritania-eu-extend-for-one-year-fisheries-agreement-pending-renewal-of-4-year-deal.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190910-mauritanie-formation-officiers-g5-sahel>

¹⁸ <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190908-mauritanie-deputes-valident-programme-gouvernement>

Morocco

The appeal trial of 24 men convicted for being part of the murders of two Scandinavian tourists on behalf of the Islamic State (IS), resumed briefly on Wednesday 11th September in Salé, Morocco, before being adjourned (*La Libre*)¹⁹. This follows the conviction of the 3 principal culprits for the murders, and their sentencing to death back in July, the first such death sentence since the early 1990s. Elsewhere a separate jihadi cell dismantled in Morocco had, among its targets, members of the Spanish security forces protecting the Melilla border (*Yabiladi*)²⁰. According to the ongoing investigation, its intention was to conduct a stabbing attack against elements of the Civil Guard deployed near the Beni Ensar border crossing.

In domestic news, thirteen years after being repealed, military service for young people aged 19 to 25 has been reinstated in Morocco (*France 24*)²¹. There was also a serious bus accident in south-east Morocco that killed 17, and wounded a further 29 (*RTBF*)²². Authorities say that the cause was due to flooding of a local river.

Tunisia

News in Tunisia has focussed on the upcoming first round of presidential elections scheduled for this weekend. Three televised debates have been organized between the presidential candidates on national TV, a first in the country's history (*Euronews*)²³. Regarding the candidates, Nabil Karoui, the TV owner and presidential candidate in prison, started on Wednesday a hunger strike from his cell in Al Mornaguia prison (*Mosaïque FM*)²⁴. He has requested his release and his right to vote in the elections. Slim Riahi, another presidential candidate who escaped to France to escape a detention order for corruption, has requested to be able to participate in the TV debates via skype (*Kapitalis*)²⁵. His request was denied and he decided to sue.

Meanwhile, Hafedh Caid Essebsi, son of the late Beji Caid Essebsi, has allegedly left Tunisia for France seeking asylum (*Jeune Afrique*)²⁶.

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.

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