



SECURITY EXCHANGE



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AFRICA

The Gambia: Government foils alleged coup attempt

On 20 December, government officials in The Gambia announced that they had thwarted a coup plot against President Adama Barrow. The capital, Banjul, remained peaceful during the alleged attempt, witnessing none of the characteristic gunshots and military frenzy that usually comes with government takeovers. The plan, allegedly orchestrated by suspects inside and outside the country, involved detaining ministers and senior officials to prevent foreign parties from stopping the coup. Reports emerged in the following days that a group of soldiers from the Gambia Armed Forces were arrested in connection with the plot, with eight charged with two counts of treason and felony conspiracy to commit treason. Two civilians and a police officer were also arrested, and the government has stated that one soldier is still at large. Several details of the coup attempt are still unknown, and the government has established a panel to investigate the incident further.

The Gambia's democracy is fragile, as the country is still reeling from the 20-year authoritarian rule of Yahya Jammeh. Jammeh's time as head of state was characterised by ruthless repression of dissent, violence against the opposition and civilians, strict controls on the media, and rampant corruption. Since President Adama Barrow assumed office in 2017, there have been two coup attempts, and the current situation in the country suggests that there could be others.

Ex-President Jammeh has been in exile in Equatorial Guinea since losing the 2017 election, but he is still said to maintain a high level of influence in The Gambia's politics. The country's socioeconomic conditions are also a risk – Barrow has been criticised for failing to address a slowing economy and rising living costs in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic as poverty rose to over 53 percent.

What may be the most significant contributing factor to future coup attempts is The Gambia's security structure. Military spending in the country is high; data suggests that four percent of government expenditure goes to the ministry of defence, nearly double what is spent for the ministry of agriculture in a country where 80 percent of the rural population relies on farming to survive. Analysts suggest that the money the government is putting into the military is largely unnecessary. An ongoing conflict in Senegal's Casamance region does pose a threat to The Gambia's southern border, and clashes between separatists and Senegalese armed forces early last year did prompt The Gambia to reinforce its border controls. Nevertheless, the levels of financial support to the military are disproportionate to the level of security risk The Gambia experiences.

In addition, President Barrow is said to be deeply distrustful of his armed forces despite the extensive resources given to the national military. Barrow has refused to use Gambian soldiers for his personal security and instead chooses to use troops from neighbouring Senegal. Troops from Nigeria guard The Gambia's main international airport, and Ghanaian soldiers protect the seaport. Sources say these security decisions have made Barrow unpopular with many Gambians, who claim that using foreign troops threatens national sovereignty.

Last month's events in The Gambia are the latest in a tumultuous political era for West Africa. Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso all experienced coups over the past two years, and in 2022 coup attempts were reported in São Tomé and Príncipe and Guinea Bissau. The fact that military governments continue to rule three countries in the region – despite the threat of sanctions and isolation from international partners – may make coup attempts in other vulnerable countries all too tempting for the armed forces.

For The Gambia specifically, the risk is elevated. With unfavourable security conditions, rifts between the president and the armed forces, and a well-resourced military in the context of an already fragile democracy, the country already holds some of the classic ingredients for a coup. The events of 20 December may have inevitably been the result of a half-baked plot, but if these issues go unaddressed, West Africa may soon have yet another political crisis.



Mozambique

1 December 2022: Dozens of militants killed in SADC military operation in Cabo Delgado

According to the Southern African Development Community (SADC), 30 suspected militants were killed during a security operation in Cabo Delgado last Tuesday. The operation was carried out by Samim; a military mission deployed to northern Mozambique to fight jihadists in the region. SADC troops reportedly recovered several weapons used by the suspected militants.

South Africa

2 December 2022: Police officer shot dead in Cape Town

A police officer has been shot and killed in Grassy Park, Cape Town. The 26-year-old constable was responding to reports of an armed man on Thursday afternoon when he was shot in the chest. The suspect fled the scene, while the constable's partner was unharmed. Police spokesman Col Andre Traut said members of the Hawks team are leading the investigation into the killing.

DR Congo

12 December 2022: Congolese army kills 30 ADF militants in Irumu

The Congolese army reportedly killed 30 militants of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in Irumi, Ituri. The army targeted an ADF position in Boga in a security operation that started on Sunday night and continued to Monday morning. Several items were reportedly seized from the militants.

Zambia

12 December 2022: Dozens of migrants found dead in Ngwerere

Zambian authorities say the bodies of 27 men, believed to be migrants from Ethiopia, were discovered in Ngwerere, Lusaka province on Sunday. Preliminary investigations indicate that the victims, aged between 20 and 38 years, had died from hunger and exhaustion before being dumped in a farming area. One survivor was found and is being treated at a hospital in Lusaka. Ethiopian migrants frequently travel through Zambia to get to countries such as South Africa.

Eswatini

20 December 2022: Three police officers injured in Kwaluseni shooting

On Monday, three police officers were injured during a shooting in Kwaluseni, Manzini Region. The officers were reportedly shot by unknown suspects outside the OK Foods shop at around 21:00 local time. Sources say the

suspects were targeting the food shop for a robbery attempt. No arrests have been made.

Chad

21 December 2022: Seventeen irregular miners, five soldiers killed in Tibesti clashes

On Monday, at least 17 artisanal miners and five soldiers died during clashes at a gold mine in Wour, Tibesti. Security forces were deployed after they were notified that the miners were illegally extracting gold in the area. Military sources say the security operation took place in the afternoon local time and lasted nearly two hours. Since gold was discovered in Tibesti in 2015, clashes between irregular miners and security have become a regular occurrence.

Somalia

23 December 2022: Dozens of al-Shabaab militants killed in Middle Shabelle

The Somali National Army (SNA) killed 67 al-Shabaab militants during a security operation in Middle Shabelle on Thursday night. The operation took place in El-Ba'ad village.

Burkina Faso

27 December 2022: Ten killed after bus hits landmine

At least 10 people have been killed after a bus hit a landmine in eastern Burkina Faso. The bus was travelling from the town of Fada N'Gourma to Ouagadougou when the device exploded. The wounded were taken to a nearby hospital for treatment. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

Nigeria

28 December 2022: Several people killed at Calabar festival

At least 14 people were killed and 24 others were injured on Tuesday after a car drove through a festival in Calabar, Cross River State. The incident occurred in front of the Jumat Mosque in the Borobiri area at around 17:00 local time during the annual Calabar Carnival. Police say the driver of the vehicle, who has since been arrested, lost control and was intoxicated while driving.

South Sudan

29 December 2022: Dozens killed in Jonglei ethnic clashes

Officials in Jonglei region said on Wednesday that at least 57 people have been killed and dozens of others have been injured in recent ethnic clashes. Armed youth from the Nuer ethnic group reportedly attacked members of the Murle ethnic group in Greater Pibor on Sunday. Casualties were sustained on both sides. Local leaders have called on humanitarian organisations and the national government to intervene as State officials cannot contain the violence.



AMERICAS

Mexico: Arrest of El Chapo's son sparks violent unrest

Early on 1 January, gunmen in armoured cars headed towards the entrance of a state prison in the border city of Ciudad Juárez and opened fire. The attacks, just a few hours into the New Year, left 19 people dead, including 10 security guards, and triggered a mass escape of inmates, including kingpin Ernesto Alfredo Piñón de la Cruz aka 'El Neto'. In response, hundreds of military personnel were flown into Chihuahua in order to hunt for the escapees.

On 5 January, a military spokesperson said 'El Neto', had been killed. 'El Neto' is known as the leader of 'Los Mexicles' a group known for its alignment with the Sinaloa Cartel. On Thursday of that week, authorities announced the arrest of Ovidio 'El Ratón' Guzmán, son of former Sinaloa Cartel boss Joaquín 'El Chapo' Guzmán. Mexican authorities celebrated the arrest as "a major blow" to the cartel's drug trafficking empire, and a major victory in anticipation of the America's Summit this week.

Defence Minister Luis Cresencio Sandoval said that 19 suspected gang members and 10 military personnel were killed during the arrest. Twenty-one others were also arrested in the same operation. In response, the Sinaloa Cartel and its allies launched a series of flagrant attacks against security forces and civilians across Culiacán. Cartel members hijacked trucks and set them ablaze, blocking major exits to the city, and fired live rounds at an Aeroméxico commercial airliner at the city airport.

As civilians scrambled inside the airport for safety, cartel gunmen fought for control of the airfield at around 08:00 local time. A full 24 hours later, would-be passengers were still stranded inside the airport as Mexican troops battled to regain full control of the site. According to the government, on top of the 29 people killed, 35 soldiers were injured during the struggle, while Sinaloa Security Secretary Cristóbal Castañeda urged citizens to remain inside their homes.

Former DEA chief Mike Vigil said Mexican authorities are partly responsible for these incidents after its response to the October 2019 incident known as 'Black Thursday', where 'El Chapo' Guzmán was arrested and later released. Vigil said AMLO's decision had sent a clear message to the leaders of Mexico's two most feared organized crime groups, the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation Cartels, "that if a leading member of the cartel was captured and you generated wholesale violence, there was a good possibility that they would be released".

According to the Council on Foreign Relations, the arrest of Joaquín 'El Chapo' Guzmán in 2016 left a power vacuum in the Sinaloa Cartel that has led to further violence. Since then, more than 260,000 Mexicans have been killed due to drug violence and 31,127 in 2022 alone. Additionally, the weak judicial system has seen 95 percent of all violent crimes go unpunished, according to thinktank México Evalúa. Officials in the state of Sinaloa warned residents to "brace for increased violence" after the arrest of Ovidio Guzmán.



Ecuador

05 December 2022: Two people kidnapped and killed in Santa Elena

Two people were kidnapped and killed in Santa Elena. Police found the victims' bodies in Anconcito during the early morning hours. No arrests have been made.

Jamaica

05 December 2022: Two-day curfew imposed in Kingston after uptick in violence

The local government in Surrey imposed a 48-hour curfew over the weekend in Kingston. The curfew remained in place from 20:00 local time on 2 December through 20:00 local time on 4 December. The measure was imposed after an uptick in violence in the area. Citizens were to remain on their premises unless authorized by a ground commander.

Peru

12 December 2022: President Boularte hints at early elections amid deadly protests

President Dina Boularte announced that she is willing to submit a bill to Congress bringing general elections forward by two years amid mass and deadly protests in the country. President Boularte was sworn in last week after Congress sacked Pedro Castillo. Additionally, at least four people have died in violent protests over the country's political future.

Brazil

14 December 2022: Three men killed near Rio

Police are investigating the murder of three men in metropolitan Rio de Janeiro. The Baixada Fluminense Homicide Police Station (DHBF) said the victims were shot dead in the Jardim America area of Itaguaí on Tuesday afternoon. The victims, who have not yet been identified, were found in a car. No arrests have been made so far.

USA

19 December 2022: Congressional panel recommends charges against Trump

Members of the US House committee investigating the attack on the Capitol on 6 January last year have recommended criminal charges against former President Donald Trump. The panel voted unanimously to refer four charges to the Department of Justice, which will then decide whether to proceed with an indictment. "The committee has developed significant evidence that President Trump intended to disrupt the peaceful transition of power under our Constitution," said Congressman Jamie Raskin. The charges are obstruction of an official proceeding, conspiracy to defraud the United States, conspiracy to make a false statement and insurrection.

Colombia

19 December 2022: ELN announces Christmas ceasefire

The National Liberation Army (ELN) has announced a unilateral ceasefire during the upcoming festive period. The announcement came after Colombia's largest rebel group concluded the first round of peace talks with the Colombian government, which were held in neighbouring Venezuela. The ceasefire, which covers the "military forces and the state police", will begin at 06:00 on Christmas Eve and end on 2 January.

Haiti

21 December 2022: Canada sanctions two former ministers

Canada has sanctioned two former Haitian justice ministers after accusing them of corruption. Officials also said that Berto Dorce and Liszt Quitel were involved with criminal organisations in Haiti, adding that their assets would be frozen. "Canada has reason to believe these individuals are using their status as high-profile elites in Haiti to protect and enable the illegal activities of armed criminal gangs," Canadian foreign minister Melanie Joly said on Tuesday.

Argentina

23 December 2022: IMF approves further \$6bn funding

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved an additional \$6bn in funding for Argentina. The IMF's executive board voted in favour of the funding after the latest review, stating that it was satisfied with the government's implementation of economic policies. Argentina has now received \$23.5bn since signing a new debt assistance programme last March.

Bolivia

28 December 2022: Police arrest opposition leader

Police have arrested a prominent opposition leader, according to the interior minister. Carlos Eduardo Del Castillo said that Luis Fernando Camacho, the governor of Santa Cruz, has been detained. Camacho recently organised protests in his department over the national government's delay in carrying out Bolivia's population census. "The operation to kidnap the governor was carried out in the streets near his home, as he was returning from his duties," the Santa Cruz government said in a statement. "In these moments, the governor's whereabouts are unknown."



ASIA

China: The end of 'zero-Covid'

December saw a major shift in China's notoriously strict 'zero-Covid' policy, following unprecedented mass protests against the harsh restrictions and lockdown measures. While protests have diminished following Beijing's response to calls for restrictions to be eased, tensions have continued to build, and public concern has increased over the surge in Covid-19 cases which has emerged in recent weeks, sparking fears of a new wave of infections. As cases increase, many have also expressed doubts over the reliability of official figures being released by Chinese health authorities.

China abandoned key parts of its 'zero-Covid' strategy in early December, lifting its most severe policies, such as mandatory quarantine camps. The announcement on 7 December was initially met with a mixture of relief and concern by the Chinese public, as the sudden major change prompted questions over whether the accelerated opening-up and lifting of measures would risk overwhelming the country's medical system. By 13 December, China's national Covid-19 tracking app was officially deactivated, going offline after almost three years of continuous operation. The following day, reports emerged that hospitals in cities were believed to be under strain, facing increased pressure as Covid-19 wards filled up following the sudden lifting of strict measures with no gradual easing strategy. The news reinforced concerns hospitals were unprepared for a wave of new infections. In some cases, medical staff shortages were allegedly so bad, that staff were reportedly being told to show up for work even if testing positive for the virus.

By 18 December, schools were ordered to close in Shanghai due to rising Covid-19 cases, and by 19 December, leading health experts in the country went public with concerns that the country looked set to face three winter Covid-19 waves, with the current surge in cases anticipated to peak in mid-January. Mass travel for the Lunar New Year is thought likely to trigger a second wave, which is then predicted to be followed by a third wave when people return to work in late-February. Since this forecast has been reported, protests have been reported by health workers at some hospitals and the World Health Organisation (WHO) has further backed concerns of health experts after warning that Chinese hospitals were at risk of filling up. The following week, Beijing persevered with pressing on with further easing travel restrictions, regardless of the warnings, announcing that Covid-19 quarantine travel measures were to end.

The move means quarantine requirements for travellers entering the country end from 8 January 2023, following almost three years of closed borders. Within days of the announcement, several countries began to impose new restrictions on travellers from China in response to the sharp rise in cases being reported there. India has imposed a negative test-result entry requirement from 1 January 2023, and the US has re-introduced mandatory testing from 5 January. Other countries to impose new restrictions for travellers from China include the UK, Italy, Japan, and Taiwan. Beijing has criticised the measures, claiming the travel restrictions are politically motivated and has threatened to retaliate with tit-for-tat policy. Meanwhile, increased concerns have been raised over the accuracy of Chinese Covid-19 figures, as an increasing number of high-profile public figures are reported to have died from Covid-19 in China, including opera singer Chu Lanlan and politician Xhao Qing, along with several well-known academic figures.

The recent slew of publicly confirmed deaths has undermined the official narrative that the outbreak remains under control and has instead renewed fears of widespread underreporting due to the sudden lack of testing facilities to confirm cases. Top health officials in China are also alleged to have sharply narrowed the definition of Covid-19 deaths to only patients who die of respiratory failure or pneumonia – thereby excluding a large number of deaths linked to conditions complicated by Covid-19. In the absence of reliable national data, Chinese communities have reportedly begun recording deaths independently online, with some forums specifically used to anonymously report and tally unofficial Covid-19 deaths at a local-level.



India

13 December 2022: Opposition parties protest in Pune

Opposition parties have reportedly organised a protest march in the southern city of Pune, Maharashtra. The demonstration comes in response to alleged recent controversial comments and remarks about historic Indian ruler Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, made by the state governor. The protest march is set to commence on Tuesday, at the Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj statue on Fergusson College Road, before ending at the Lal Mahal on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Road.

Pakistan

13 December 2022: Politician shot dead in Loralai

A politician has reportedly been shot dead amid an incident in the Loralai area of Balochistan on Monday. The shooting happened in the village of Dargai Kadizai, when a Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) leader was apparently shot dead in his car. The victim's driver was also injured in the seemingly targeted attack, which was allegedly carried out by unidentified assailant near a private residential property belonging to the victim.

Papua New Guinea

14 December 2022: One killed amid Papua shooting incident

One person - a civilian bystander - has apparently been killed by a stray bullet amid an exchange of gunfire between police and suspected militants in the Papua region. The crossfire reportedly broke out on Tuesday afternoon at around 12:20 local time along the Trans Yapen Saubeba-Angkaisera Road in Papua.

Malaysia

16 December 2022: Selangor landslide kills 21

A deadly landslide which has occurred in the Selangor state during the early hours of Friday morning has reportedly killed at least 21 people. The victims had been sleeping when the landslide happened at around 03:00 local time, hitting a number of tents on a holiday campsite in the town of Batang Kali. Search and rescue efforts have involved hundreds of people, with some 14 people still reported missing. At least four children are among those killed in the landslide, which was likely caused by rainfall. All 'high-risk' camping sites located near rivers, waterfalls, and hillsides have been ordered to close with immediate effect nationwide.

Thailand

19 December 2022: Dozens missing amid warship accident

Dozens of sailors are missing and feared dead after a Thai

warship capsized amid a storm in the Gulf of Thailand. The Thai Navy says some 31 sailors are missing after a warship carrying over 100 crew capsized and sank during a storm on Sunday night around 32km east of Bang Saphan. The HTMAS Sukhothai is understood to have capsized after water flooded its power controls. Search crews have managed to rescue 75 people so far amid rough sea conditions. An investigation into the cause has been launched.

Philippines

22 December 2022: Former local official killed in Leyte shooting

A former local official has apparently been killed amid a recent shooting incident which allegedly occurred in the Leyte province on Wednesday. The shooting apparently happened in Barangay Libongao near Kananga, along the main highway. The victim has been identified as a former municipal administrator. Initial investigations have yet to identify any suspects or make any arrests.

Taiwan

27 December 2022: Major Chinese military incursion reported

China has staged a major military incursion over the Taiwan Strait. The latest is one of its biggest incursions to be reported so far in the seas and skies around Taiwan. According to reports, around 71 Chinese air force planes, including fighter jets and drones, allegedly entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ). The move has triggered international criticism, with the US labelling China's military activity as "destabilising".

Australia

28 December 2022: Woman killed in home invasion, Brisbane

A British woman has been killed during a home invasion in Brisbane. Emma Lovell, 41, was fatally stabbed after she confronted intruders in the North Lakes area on Boxing Day. Her husband was also wounded in the attack, while police have arrested two 17-year-old boys and charged them with murder.

Indonesia

30 December 2022: Domestic Covid-19 restrictions lifted

Indonesia has removed all domestic Covid-19 restrictions following a drop in cases. "No more crowd or movement restrictions," said President Joko Widodo at a press conference on Friday. He warned people to remain vigilant and urged the continued use of face masks in public places, even after the mandatory requirement has been removed.



EUROPE

France: Kurdish anger over Paris shooting

A deadly shooting which occurred in Paris last month has triggered recent unrest and protests in the capital city. The shooting happened two days before Christmas, on Friday 23 December, when a gunman opened fire in central Paris, killing three people and wounding three others. The attacker targeted a Kurdish cultural centre and shot several members of the local community in an attack which is understood to have been racially motivated. The 69-year-old suspect is claimed to have expressed his hatred for 'foreigners' in the wake of the shootings.

The attack unfolded in the city's 10th arrondissement, outside a Kurdish cultural centre on Rue de Faubourg Saint-Denis, near the intersection with Rue d'Enghien. Both roads were immediately cordoned off as police responded to the scene that morning. The suspect – a retired train driver who had previously been charged with racist violence, had a history of weapons charges and had just days before been released on bail – was quickly arrested with minimal resistance following the attack, before later being released from custody for health-related reasons. Sources indicate the suspect has previously described himself as racist and has since been transferred to a psychiatric facility. The suspect is believed to be the same individual who was arrested and charged with racist violence last year over a sword attack at a migrant camp in Paris. French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin stated that there is currently no known link between the suspect and 'ultra-right' groups.

Three places came under direct fire during the attack: the Ahmet-Kaya Kurdish centre, a nearby restaurant, and an adjacent hairdresser. Clashes are understood to have broken out in the area between police officers and a group which gathered at the scene in the aftermath of the attack. Footage from the scene shows rioters lighting fires in the middle of the street and smashing car windows. Riot police used tear gas in response after protesters attempted to break through a security cordon. Clashes continued into Saturday 24 December, when an initially peaceful gathering of hundreds of Kurds in the Place de la République unexpectedly turned violent. In total, around 31 police officers and one protester were injured amid the unrest, while at least 11 arrests were made. Kurdish protesters have been calling for better protection from French authorities as they demonstrate, with community leaders convening with Parisian police heads in a bid to come to a resolution.

The attack came almost a decade after the still unsolved murders of three Kurdish female activists in Paris and quickly inflamed community tensions with a devastating effect, as many still vividly remember the January 2013 murders. As the 10th anniversary of the 2013 attack approached, gatherings to pay tribute to the victims of both attacks have gained momentum as they enter the new year, with thousands of Kurds from across Europe reportedly travelling to the suburbs of the capital for the funeral of the December attack victims in Villiers-le-Bel, north of Paris. The coffins were wrapped in the flags of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Kurdish-controlled Rojava territory in northern Syria.



Italy

12 December 2022: Three women killed in Rome cafe shooting

Three women have been killed and four people wounded in a shooting at a cafe in Rome. The deceased included Nicoletta Golisano, a friend of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. Roberto Gualtieri, the mayor of Rome, described the shooting as a “grave episode of violence,” while a 57-year-old suspect has been arrested. The incident occurred during a meeting of apartment block residents.

France

15 December 2022: Teenage boy killed in Montpellier hit-and-run

A 14-year-old boy has died in hospital following a hit-and-run incident in the southern city of Montpellier. According to reports, the teenager was struck by a car following France's World Cup semi-final victory over Morocco. The incident occurred in Montpellier's north-wester La Paillade district shortly after the match on Wednesday, when the driver of a car draped in a French tricolour flag allegedly panicked amid the crowds and accelerated into two teenagers before speeding away from the scene.

Sweden

15 December 2022: Nykoping stabbing injures one

A stabbing incident which has apparently occurred in the Nykoping area of Sodermanland has reportedly left at least one person injured. The stabbing allegedly happened on Wednesday, during the late hours of the evening, shortly after 23:30 local time. Police have responded to the incident and are believed to have made at least four arrests in connection with the attack - the motive behind which has yet to be confirmed.

Poland

16 December 2022: Polish police chief injured in incident

Poland's top police chief, Jaroslaw Szymczyk, has reportedly been injured after a gift given by Ukrainian officials exploded at his office headquarters in Warsaw. The object is rumoured to have been a grenade launcher, which had been given to the officer on a recent visit to Ukraine. Poland has asked for an explanation from Kyiv; however, Ukraine has yet to issue a public statement. A civilian employee was also injured amid the blast.

Germany

21 December 2022: Climate change activists protest in Hamburg

Climate change activists have apparently protested in the

city of Hamburg on Wednesday. The demonstration has reportedly taken place on the Kennedybrücke on Wednesday morning, leading to significant localised travel disruption in the immediate and surrounding area. The protest has been led by members of the Extinction Rebellion environmentalist activist group.

Ireland

22 December 2022: Dublin Port Tunnel targeted by protesters

Protesters have targeted the Port Tunnel entrance in Dublin, blocking access to the south entrance on Wednesday evening. The protest was apparently staged near the East Wall area by a group of demonstrators who have been rallying as part of a wider campaign to protest against the proposed construction of a new asylum centre in the capital.

Spain

27 December 2022: Seven die in Galicia coach plunge

Seven deaths have been confirmed after a passenger coach plunged into a river on Christmas Eve (24 December) in Galicia. The accident occurred near the village of Pedre on Saturday when the bus was travelling from Lugo to Vigo, but fell off a bridge from a height of about 30 metres, into the fast-flowing Lerez river. Bad weather is believed to have caused the crash.

UK

27 December 2022: Two detained over Merseyside Christmas Eve killing

Two suspects have been arrested in connection with the murder of a 26-year-old woman in Merseyside. The killing took place on Christmas eve, at the Lighthouse pub in Wallasey Village, where the woman was shot in the head. A 30-year-old man and a 19-year-old woman have been arrested on suspicion of murder and conspiracy to murder, respectively. Four others were also injured in the incident - the precise motive behind which has yet to be confirmed.

Belgium

30 December 2022: Flights grounded by cabin crew strike

Cabin crew staff from the airline Ryanair have started a three-day strike in Belgium, prompting dozens of flights to be grounded. The staff said the airline was not properly declaring salaries to Belgian authorities and sometimes paying below the national minimum wage. The crews also claim that they are often pressured to work from Ryanair's other European bases, including its headquarters in Dublin. Around 22,000 passengers are expected to be impacted by the reduction in flights from Belgium.



MENA

Tunisia: President Saied under pressure after ‘fiasco’ election

In December just 11.22 percent of eligible voters took part in Tunisia’s parliamentary elections, the lowest turnout in the country’s history. The ISIE electoral authority had initially announced that participation was 8.8 percent, but this was later revised. The figures were evidence of the growing apathy towards autocratic President Kais Saied, whose push towards one-man rule has undermined Tunisia’s hard-won democracy.

The opposition boycotted the vote and called on Saied to resign following the election. Nejib Chebbi, head of the National Salvation Front (NSFT), said the poll was a “fiasco,” while the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) said the result was a threat to democracy. The union also called on the president to postpone the second round of elections, which are due to take place later this month. “I was expecting that after low turnout, the president would say that he received the message and admit that the path was wrong ... but he is going ahead with his plan,” said Nouredine Taboubi, the head of the UGTT.

The union has been leading strikes and protests against the president, with transport workers from the state-owned Transtu walking out last week. A further two-day strike by air, land and sea transport workers is scheduled for 25 and 26 January as part of a dispute over pay and conditions. Opposition parties have also staged a series of protests in Tunis and other cities to denounce the president, the most recent of which was held in Mnhla near Saied’s residency on Monday. The security forces fired tear gas to disperse the crowds.

In the summer of 2021, Saied dismissed Tunisia’s parliament and sacked Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi. This was the start of what critics denounced as an attempt by the president to seize power, although he justified his actions by claiming that political and economic mismanagement had forced him to intervene. He announced plans to rule by decree and pushed through a new constitution, which gave him greater powers and was passed via a referendum held in July. Turnout was just over 30 percent and the opposition – along with human rights and other civilian groups – strongly rejected the new process. There were also several electoral violations flagged by the ISIE, as well as the Tunisian Association for the Integrity and Democracy of Elections (ATIDE) and the Independent High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAICA).

Since Saied seized power the country’s economy has shown little sign of improvement. The government is still negotiating with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a package worth around \$2bn and while an agreement in principle was reached in mid-October, issues with Tunisia’s budget and the restructuring of state-owned companies have caused delays. Last week the head of the central bank warned that inflation could spiral out of control if it did not raise interest rates further. The warning came after President Saied criticised the bank for raising rates to 8 percent. Inflation is expected to reach 11 percent this year, which will add further pressure to Tunisians who are already struggling with rising prices and a shortage of basic goods. Without a strong mandate from the public and a deepening economic crisis, Saied’s strongman regime is expected to face louder calls for him to step down.



Sudan

13 December 2022: Two dozen killed in West Kordofan clashes

At least 24 people have been killed in clashes in the Abu Zabad area of West Kordofan. Local officials said gunmen carried out an ambush after 170 sheep were stolen from Teiba Um Jafala on Saturday. The Hamar and Misseriya tribes have been involved in multiple clashes since the summer as part of a dispute over border demarcations in the area.

Algeria

14 December 2022: Students protest against President Tebboune

Algerian students have started an indefinite strike to protest against President Abdelmadjid Tebboune. Students from 11 schools refused to take part in their studies on Tuesday morning to protest against the tenure of nearly 60,000 contract teachers decided by the Head of State during the last Council of Ministers. The strike resulted in rallies in Bouzaréah, Kouba, Constantine, Béchar, Sétif and Laghouat.

Yemen

14 December 2022: STC leader survives assassination attempt in Hadramout

A senior Southern Transitional Council (STC) leader has survived an assassination attempt in Hadramout governorate. Brig Gen Saeed Al-Mugammadi was targeted by a gunman on a motorcycle outside his house in Mukalla on Tuesday. He suffered minor injuries and was transported to hospital for treatment, while an investigation is underway to track down the assailant.

Lebanon

15 December 2022: Irish soldier killed in attack on US peacekeeping mission

An Irish soldier has been killed in an attack on a UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon. The Defence Forces said two armoured vehicles came under small arms fire while it was travelling to Beirut on Wednesday night. Another soldier was seriously wounded while two others suffered minor injuries. "As a people, we take great pride in our unbroken record of peacekeeping with the United Nations. However, we must never forget the dangers that come with this work," Irish President Michael D. Higgins said in a statement.

Jordan

16 December 2022: Police officer killed during fuel protests, Maan

A police officer has been killed during protests over high

fuel prices, which have erupted in town and cities across Jordan. The officer was shot in the head in the Husseiniya area of Maan late on Thursday after clashes erupted. "We will strike with an iron fist anyone who tries to attack lives and property," the police statement added. Unrest was also reported in Zarqa, parts of the capital Amman along with on the main highway that links it to the Dead Sea.

Iraq

18 December 2022: Nine police killed in blast near Kirkuk

Nine Iraqi police officers have been killed in a bombing near Kirkuk. The Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the blast, which occurred as a convoy of federal police passed by the village of Safra on Sunday. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said the security forces should show "vigilance, carefully inspect the roads and not provide any opportunity for terrorist elements".

Iran

19 December 2022: Four IRGC members killed near Pakistan border

Four members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) have been killed in a "terrorist" attack near the border with Pakistan, according to Iranian state media. The IRNA news agency said the attack was carried out in the Saravan region of the Sistan-Baluchistan province. The report claimed that the assailants fled toward Pakistan following the incident. Earlier this month a cleric was kidnapped from his mosque in Khash and later killed.

Syria

27 December 2022: Six SDF members killed in al-Raqqah attack

Six members of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have been killed in an attack in the northern city of al-Raqqah. Suspected Islamic State (IS) fighters carried out the attack, which also left several others wounded. Two of the assailants detonated suicide vests at a checkpoint manned by the Internal Security Forces. One attacker was killed in the ensuing clashes and another arrested.

Egypt

31 December 2022: Four killed in attack on police checkpoint in Ismailia

Three police officers and another person has been killed in an attack on a police checkpoint in Ismailia. Twelve others were wounded in the incident, most of them police conscripts. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which local officials described as a "terrorist" strike.