

HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR



AMMAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES

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in The Middle East and North Africa

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Algeria national team dedicates the winning of Arab Cup to the Palestinian cause

On the 18th of December, Algeria won the FIFA Arab Cup against Tunisia.

At the end of the game, Algerian team coach Madjid Bougherra **dedicated** his team's win to "the Palestinian people and our people in Gaza". During the match, the solidarity to Palestine was manifested all over the stadium, as across both fanbases Palestinian flags were waved. Algeria has been one of the most vocal countries in North Africa in publicly promoting the Palestinian cause.

It is not the first time that the Algerian national team shows its support for this cause: indeed, **the players raised the Palestinian flag after beating Morocco in the quarter-finals**. In particular, this gesture held a special significance as Morocco last year carried out a normalisation process of diplomatic relations with Israel, as an exchange for the US's recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. On the other hand, Algeria support of the Polisario Front's requests for a self-determination referendum fomented the tensions between the two countries.

EGYPT

Increasing amount of trials against human rights defenders

The Egyptian government has started at least five Emergency State Security Court hearings targeting prominent human rights advocates, activists, and opposition politicians for supposed speech violations. In Egypt, evolving from their 1958 Emergency Law, special emergency courts were established. In a **statement** from the 19th of December, Human Rights Watch underlines the injustice these courts bring along. They state that the Emergency Law empowers the president or a designated other person, to confirm or revoke verdicts and decrease punishments. Furthermore, the human rights organisation states that it is in the President's power to appoint whomever he pleases. These rights gravely weaken the independence and impartiality of the tribunals.

On the 25th of October, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi declared the end of the state of emergency. Just before this date, almost fifty arbitrarily arrested human rights defenders and protesters were assigned to the emergency tribunals for trial. In the knowledge that these individuals had been kept in pre-trial custody for months or years and new cases cannot be brought to the emergency court anymore after the end of the state of emergency, HRW states that it is clear that the government intended to expose the human rights defenders to the special procedures of the emergency law. Deputy Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch, Joe Stock, states that: "[this action] is a blatant attempt by the Egyptian government to undermine justice for these well-known activists and politicians. [...] This legal manipulation reveals the travesty of Egypt's justice system when it comes to political dissent".

Unlawful execution of political prisoner Heydar Ghorbani

On the 19th of December, Heydar Ghorbani was executed in Sanandaj Central Prison. Ghorbani was sentenced to death for *baghy* (armed rebellion) and participation in the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran. According to Ghorbani's lawyer, the man never admitted to being armed or firing a gun and there was no proof to the contrary.

Iran Human Rights strongly condemns his execution, which they see as unlawful in every aspect. First of all, Ghorbani's case was still under review at the Iranian Supreme Court. His execution, therefore, violates the right to a fair trial. Furthermore, IHR states that neither his family nor his lawyer were aware of the decision of execution. Lastly, his body has been buried in secret. One of the family members of Ghorbani states that all Ghorbani's confessions were out of force and torture.



Heydar Ghorbani

Image source: Iran Human Rights

Rockets fired at Baghdad's Green zone

On the 19th of December, two rockets **struck** the Green Zone of Baghdad. The Iraqi military stated that one rocket was destroyed by the air defence system and the other landed near the National Monument, damaging two cars.

The Green Zone has foreign embassies, including US embassies and government buildings, and is often the target of rocket launches by groups that US and Iraqi officials claim are backed by Iran. The security forces began an investigation to detect the launch site. There has not yet been claimed responsibility for the attacks.

LEBANON

Fear of cut in cancer medicine subsidies

Last November, the government of Lebanon lifted many subsidies on medication. Even though cancer medicines are still subsidised, fears grow of a cut in the cancer medicine subsidies, due to the economic crisis.

According to [AlJazeera](#), the prices of other chronic illness prescriptions, such as insulin, have already been severely impacted by the loss of subsidies and now cost more than the average monthly income (from about 180,000 Lebanese pounds to 730,000).

In response to the current handling of the situation, Amnesty International has condemned the Lebanese government for "failing to safeguard the rights to health and life for the country's population". As a result of the worsening living conditions, many protests take place every day. An AlJazeera source states: "In the north, if you are ill and don't have money for treatment, they'll let you die".

Presidential elections remain uncertain

A couple of days are left before the presidential elections that, supposedly, will be held on the 24th of December. The country persists in a state of incertitude, as the electoral calendar does not appear to be tenable and the electoral campaigns have not started yet - regardless of the 2.5 million citizens that are supposed to express their vote. Indeed, the publication of the official list of candidates has been postponed until further notice.

The presidential election was supposed to be the outcome of a political process promoted by the UN, in the attempt of restoring stability after the decade of chaos and conflict between Western and Eastern Libya. According to Hafed al-Ghwell though, Libya expert and researcher **interviewed** by FRANCE 24, "The international community pretends to deal with this country as if it were a stable state. But this is an illusion because there is no sense of state in Libya, there are no institutions, there are only rival camps and militias that face each other". Al-Ghwell also believes that executing the elections could be extremely risky and bring violence back in the country, as the three main (and most controversial) candidates, Khalifa Haftar, Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibeh and Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, are not likely to accept a possible defeat. The uncertainty of the elections coincides with the **resignation** of the UN's special envoy for Libya last month.

MOROCCO AND WESTERN SAHARA

Security forces attack Sahrawis after Morocco-Algeria Arab Cup match

On the 11th of December, Moroccan police **attacked** Sahrawi football supporters in Laayoune in occupied Western Sahara. This happened after Morocco's loss to Algeria in the Arab Cup. After the match, Sahrawi football supporters took to the streets to celebrate but were attacked by Moroccan police forces. Some were detained and beaten at the police headquarters. Algeria supports the Sahrawi cause and hosts the Polisario, Western Sahara's independence movement, in the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf, Western Algeria.

Human Rights Watch: Israeli police abuse against peaceful Palestinian protesters

In a [statement](#) from the 14th of December, Human Rights Watch documents how Israeli law enforcement agencies have made use of excessive force against Palestinian peaceful protesters in Lod/al-Lydd in May 2021. In this statement, HRW argues that Israeli authorities of acting half-heartedly towards the Israeli nationalists who were committing violence against the Palestinians. HRW focuses on the situation in Lod, where in the last couple of years, where the Israeli nationalists group, the Garin Torani, has been on the rise, where the city's current mayor evidently sympathizes with the group.

QATAR

Human Rights Watch sheds light on unfulfilled promises of Qatar to improve migrant workers conditions

On December 18th 2022, the final game of the Qatar World Cup will be played. This means that Qatar has exactly one year to finish the building of the stadiums and all that comes along with it, ending the ten-year period of construction.

When Qatar was chosen as the host country to the World Cup, many complaints were made regarding the human rights situation of the country, with an emphasis on the migrant workers whose workforce have been used for the creation of eight stadiums, hotels, railroads, an airport and other infrastructure. According to [Human Rights Watch](#) (HRW), Qatar's workforce, in general, relies 95% on migrant workers.

In 2017, the [International Labour Organisation](#) made the official "complaint concerning non-observance by Qatar of the Forced Labour Convention". In response, Qatar promised to amend their kafala system and enhance migrants' labour rights. However, Human Rights Watch states that "such reform efforts mean little for migrant workers if they [the State of Qatar] continue to face widespread withholding of wages, unexplained deaths, high recruitment costs, and if they are prevented from speaking up about abuses".

To raise awareness of these human rights violations, HRW has published an [article](#) outlining the failures of the State's upholding of its promises. Moreover, the organisation urges both Qatar and FIFA - as main actors - to introduce 'real and durable reforms'.

Saudi Arabia to provide humanitarian aid to Afghanistan

For the first time since the Taliban got into power in Afghanistan this summer, Saudi Arabia has provided **two aircrafts containing more than 65 tonnes of humanitarian aid, including 1647 food baskets**. This decision is part of a regional plan to "contribute in mobilising international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people and to improving their economic conditions", as expressed in a summit of the Gulf Arab countries on the 14th of December. Saudi Arabia was one of the three countries, together with the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan, that recognised the previous Taliban rule. Since August's overthrowing of the US-backed government though, the Taliban regime still lacks any formal recognition and is subject to international sanctions.

SUDAN

Wave of attacks against civilians in Darfur

Human Rights Watch **reports** a new wave of attacks on civilians in Darfur, that has been ongoing since mid-November. On the 5th of December, armed members of Arab tribes attacked Darfur, including a camp for displaced people in the area, causing more than 44 deaths and 35 people injured, according to the HRW. This happens a year of the withdrawal of the United Nations/African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) peacekeeping force.

Since the beginning of 2021, Darfur has faced multiple of violence causing hundreds of people killed, displaced and hundreds in vulnerable conditions in need of humanitarian assistance.

Furthermore, since the Military Coup in October, Human Rights Watch has documented the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF)'s attacks against civilians, including killings and destroying properties, including two camps for displaced people.

In recent months, Sudan has witnessed a wave of attacks. For example, t Human Rights Watch calls on the UN to deploy human rights monitoring in Darfur to refocus on crimes in Darfur, including gender-based crimes.

Last Tuesday, **the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Sudan signed a Memorandum of Understanding** with the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces and Paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), who will work together to ensure officers and soldiers implement and respect the Geneva Conventions and the Human Rights Law.

EU sanctions against Wagner PMC over human rights violations in Syria

On the 13th of December, **the European Union denounced the Russian group, Wagner**, for continuing the violence and instigating civilians in Syria in violation of international law and human rights. The Wagner Group is a private Russian military entity that is active in Libya, Syria, Ukraine and other conflict areas around the world.

According to the European Commission, the Russian group represents a great threat to the peace and security of the people in the countries where the group is present. Therefore, the European Commission has imposed four sanctions regimes on the Russian group; the EU's global human rights sanctions regime and the sanctions regimes in relation to the situation in Libya and Syria, as well as in Ukraine.

On the 13th of December, **the Official Journal of the European Union announced the sanctions list**, which includes three Russian energy companies working in the Syrian oil and gas sector. The three companies are Evro Polis LLC, Velada LLC and Mercury LLC. On the 14th of December, **EURONEWS** listed sanctioned individuals: among these is Colonel Andrei Roshev: the founding executive director of Wagner and who commands mercenary troops in Syria in support of Bashar al-Assad's regime.

TUNISIA

Protests on the anniversary of Bouazizi's Revolution

On Friday the 17th, several thousand protesters went on the streets of Tunis to protest against the current president, Kais Saied. Saied took power this summer by suspending the parliament, and it is widely considered as unconstitutional and a **coup**. The protests occurred on the anniversary of the beginning of the Arab spring, where fruit seller Bouazizi set himself on fire in frustration with the Tunisian system.



Image sources: France 24

Inflation increases poverty among the population

On Friday 17th December, the Turkish Lira hit a **new low, namely a 1:17 rate against U.S. dollars**. Turkey is facing serious consequences due to the unconventional monetary policy strongly promoted by Erdogan in the past two years, which foresees the adoption of lower interest rates as a way to fight inflation, increase economic growth, push exports and produce new jobs. Erdogan's "unorthodox" visions have brought him to fire three governors of the Turkish Central Bank, leaving only "**yes-men**" in the institution.

Meanwhile, the population is witnessing prices skyrocketing in food, electricity, water and heating and inflation is vanishing the savings of millions of people. Prices at supermarkets change almost daily, and more and more people queue for subsidized bread. In the streets of Ankara and Istanbul, Turks have been **protesting** against the growing poverty in the country.

WAR IN YEMEN

Rights groups reveal French involvement in Emirati crimes in Yemen

France has failed to respect its international human rights commitment under its arms export to UAE, used in the war in Yemen. This **has been revealed** in a report by the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), Mwatana for Human Rights, the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR), and the Human Rights League (LDF) in a collaboration with the Observatoire des armements.

The report documents how French authorities have equipped the UAE government with arms to use in the Yemeni conflict. This, in spite of French human rights principles and guidelines of their weaponry export. The UAE is the fifth-largest importer of French weapons, and in 2020, France was the third-largest exporter of military equipment.

The report documents '**how this country [UAE ed.], a strategic ally of the Western powers, is, in reality, a particularly repressive dictatorship, where any dissenting voice risks imprisonment and torture**'. Moreover, the report maps out the UAE government and authorities as an autocratic police state who uses a high degree of censorship and is skilled at counter-revolutionary activities in the region. Lastly, the report shows how the UAE authorities are directly and indirectly responsible for the main violations in the Yemeni conflict.



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ABOUT ACHRS

ACHRS is an independent non-governmental Think Tank center advocating for the enhancement of democracy and human rights in Jordan and the MENA region. The Center's five priorities are the right to life, the right to speak, the right to think, the right to participate and women's rights.

ACHRS has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

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