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WEST ASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from West Asia

- **Growing calls for ceasefire between Israel and Hamas**
- **Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to the US**
- **Saudi Arabia announces US\$ 6.4 billion investment in Syria**
- **US approves US\$ 4.67 billion Air Defence System Sale to Egypt**
- **Houthis sink two commercial ships in the Red Sea**
- **Türkiye, Indonesia sign warplane and frigate deals**
- **Israel's actions in Syria**
- **CENTCOM strike kills ISIS leader in Syria**

Growing calls for ceasefire between Israel and Hamas

On 21 July 2025, a group of 28 countries, including the UK, France and Spain, issued a joint statement demanding an immediate end to the war in Gaza, condemning Israel's restrictions on humanitarian aid and the killing of Palestinians seeking relief. The signatories also called for the immediate and unconditional release of the Israeli hostages held by Hamas. Reaffirming support for diplomatic efforts by the US, Qatar and Egypt, the group pledged readiness to take further action to support a permanent ceasefire and a lasting political resolution.

On 25 July 2025, the leaders of the UK, France and Germany issued a joint statement urging an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the unconditional release of hostages held by Hamas. The E3 condemned the ongoing humanitarian crisis, calling on Israel to lift aid restrictions and allow urgent humanitarian access. The leaders proposed a transition plan involving international partners to establish governance and security mechanisms in Gaza, linked to a future two-state solution. Moreover, French President Emmanuel Macron announced on 24 July 2025 that France will recognise Palestine as a state and will formalise the decision at the UN General Assembly in September 2025.

Meanwhile, from 28-30 July 2025, the High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine took place at the UN General Assembly, co-chaired by the Foreign Ministers of France and Saudi Arabia.

Delegates condemned Israeli actions in Gaza and urged swift action for a two-state solution. They called on Hamas to disarm and relinquish power in the Gaza Strip. They also condemned the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel, and proposed the deployment of "a temporary international stabilisation mission" upon invitation by the Palestinian Authority and "under the aegis of the United Nations." The Israeli ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, described the UN conference as "a political circus" against Israel. The UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, warned that the conflict in Gaza has reached "breaking point." The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) reiterated their position of support for a two-state solution and condemned the continuing Israeli aggression against Gaza.

Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to the US

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the US for the third time since President Donald Trump assumed office for the second term. Netanyahu, meeting Trump on 7 July 2025, discussed the ongoing situation in the Gaza Strip, a possible ceasefire deal, hostage strategy and Iran strikes. Both leaders repeated the proposal to transfer Palestinians out of the Gaza Strip. Netanyahu told the media that the US and Israel are working with other countries to give Palestinians a 'better future' through relocation. Netanyahu presented Trump with a letter nominating the US President for the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end conflicts in West Asia. Meanwhile, the latest US ceasefire proposal reached an impasse. The plan included a

60-day truce, release of 10 living and 18 dead hostages, freeing Palestinian prisoners and expanded aid. Hamas demanded international guarantees for ending the war, Israeli withdrawals, and the dissolution of the Gaza Humanitarian Fund (GHF), accused of killing aid seekers. Israel remains firm on continuing military operations until Hamas is fully defeated. On 7 July, Defence Minister Israel Katz instructed the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) to draft plans for a “humanitarian city” on Rafah’s ruins to house 600,000 Palestinians, who would be confined to the zone. Separately, on 23 July, the Knesset passed a non-binding motion supporting West Bank annexation.

Saudi Arabia announces US\$ 6.4 billion investment in Syria

Saudi Arabia announced US\$ 6.4 billion in investments in Syria on 24 July 2025, deepening ties with interim President Ahmed Al Sharaa’s government amid post-war reconstruction efforts. In a meeting in Damascus, Saudi Investment Minister Khalid Al Falih revealed 47 agreements covering real estate, infrastructure, telecommunications and cybersecurity, with the involvement of major Saudi companies. Falih said that the visit was mandated by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, signalling Riyadh’s support for Syria’s recovery after a 14-year civil war. The summit also saw the creation of a Saudi-Syrian Business Council, delayed earlier due to regional conflict. The announcement followed Riyadh and Qatar’s joint move to clear Syria’s World Bank arrears and comes as international firms, including those from the Gulf,

Türkiye and the US, eye reconstruction projects in power, ports and transport.

US approves US\$ 4.67 billion Air Defence System Sale to Egypt

On 24 July 2025, the US State Department approved a potential US\$ 4.67 billion Foreign Military Sale to Egypt for the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS) and related support. The package, formally notified to Congress by the Defence Security Cooperation Agency, includes 100 AMRAAM-ER and 100 AIM-120C-8 AMRAAM missiles, 600 AIM-9X Sidewinder Block II tactical missiles, Sentinel radars and training equipment. It also features non-Major Defence Equipment such as fire distribution centres, launcher systems, tactical control centres, secure communications, IFF systems and GPS receivers. The US government stated the sale would enhance Egypt’s ability to counter evolving air threats and strengthen regional security, noting that the equipment is fully absorbable by Egypt’s armed forces. RTX Corporation will serve as the prime contractor. The implementation will involve around 60 US personnel, including government and contractors, for on-ground support.

Houthis sink two commercial ships in the Red Sea

Between 6 and 9 July 2025, the Houthis attacked and sank two Greek-operated, Liberia-flagged cargo vessels in the Red Sea, killing at least five crew members and detaining six others. On 6 July, the *MV Magic Seas* was struck by rocket-propelled grenades near Hodeidah and sank the

following day after all 22 crew members were rescued. On 7 July, the *MV Eternity C* was hit by drones and missiles, sustaining further strikes overnight and sinking on 8 July. The vessel had 25 people onboard, including three armed guards; ten were rescued at sea, five are confirmed dead, and ten were initially believed to be in Houthi custody. On 28 July, the Houthis released a video showing ten surviving crew members.

Türkiye, Indonesia sign warplane and frigate deals

Türkiye and Indonesia signed major defence contracts on 26 July 2025, marking a deepening of military ties and Türkiye's growing defence presence in Southeast Asia. Under the agreements, Indonesia will acquire 48 KAAN fifth-generation fighter jets and two İstif-class frigates. The contracts include provisions for technology transfer, engineering cooperation and the establishment of aerospace infrastructure in Indonesia. Deliveries of the KAAN aircraft will take place over the next decade, with Indonesian firms PT Republik Aero Dirgantara and PT Dirgantara Indonesia as key partners. The frigate contract marks the first export of a MILGEM-class warship to Indonesia. KAAN, Türkiye's first indigenous fighter, made its maiden flight in February 2024 and is expected to enter serial production by 2028.

Israel's actions in Syria

Sectarian tensions flared in Suwayda on 13 July 2025 after a Druze merchant was abducted, sparking clashes between Sunni Bedouin fighters and Druze militias. The Al

Sharaa government deployed troops to contain the violence but faced resistance from Druze forces. By 20 July, over 1,000 had been killed, including 336 Druze fighters, 298 civilians, 342 government troops and 21 Bedouin fighters. In response to Syrian military presence, the IDF struck over 160 targets and later hit Syria's Defence Ministry in Damascus, killing three and injuring 34 others. Israeli airstrikes and pressure forced Syrian troops to withdraw from Suwayda, triggering further Druze-Bedouin clashes. On 17 July, Al Sharaa affirmed that the Druze community is an integral part of Syria. Netanyahu defended the strikes as part of Israel's policy to enforce demilitarisation near the Golan Heights.

CENTCOM strike kills ISIS leader in Syria

US Central Command confirmed on 25 July 2025 that a senior ISIS leader, Dhiya Zawba Muslih Al Hardani, and his two sons were killed in a precision strike in Aleppo, Syria. The operation occurred just weeks after the US began drawing down its military presence from roughly 2,000 troops. CENTCOM stated the targets posed a threat to Coalition forces and the new Syrian government. No American personnel were harmed, and six nearby civilians were reported unharmed. The strike came as Syria's Foreign Ministry acknowledged joint talks with US and French officials to bolster counterterrorism cooperation. Despite reduced deployments, American forces continue training regional fighters against Islamic State remnants, even after former president Bashar Al Assad's ouster last December.