



# MIDDLE EAST WEEKLY

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## *Middle East in a Week*

Regarding international relations and world politics, the Middle East may be the most controversial region in the current times. On the one hand it sits on most of the world's oil reserves, while on the other hand, it inhibits the followers of the most controversial religion in the world, Islam. These matters combined have created a region filled with drastic events. Every day, there are new wars erupting in the region and every day, there are new ways through which the west and the far east try to increase their influence in the region. This region inhibits 411 million people out of which 28 % are under the age of 25 years old. This newsletter tries to give weekly updates on the important issues in the Middle East and combining them with some analysis, hopes to have a role in changing the region's situation to the better.

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## ***US-RUSSIA REIGNITED FLAIRE<sup>1</sup>***

As the Geneva summit reached its end, a newly formed allegiance seems to be shaping between the United States and Russia. United States President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin have agreed to hold talks on arms control and cybersecurity and to return their respective ambassadors to their posts, after a summit in Geneva that Putin described as “constructive”. The talks on Wednesday were the first meeting between the pair since Biden took office in January, and lasted for several hours. Prior to the summit, expectations for any substantial breakthroughs had been low, with Moscow and Washington both openly cool on the prospects of significant progress. The pair are currently at odds over a range of issues from arms control and cyber-hacking to election interference and Ukraine. After the summit, Putin said there was “no hostility” during the “constructive” summit and Biden described the talks as “positive”, as the two leaders held separate press conferences.



## ***ONE MORE VICTIM OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE<sup>2</sup>***

Over the years and in many places on the globe, time after time, human decency was, is and apparently will be crushed under the weight of selfishness and greed. Aster Goshu squints as she speaks quietly into the phone’s camera. “They lock me in the home when they leave,” she says in Arabic, speaking in a frantic tone. “I spend my days crying,” she adds, pointing to the dark circles under her swollen eyes. “I’ve cried so much that I have trouble seeing things from a distance.” It was late 2019, and the then-24-year-old Ethiopian woman had waited for her employers to leave their home for work in Beirut, Lebanon, before hitting record. “I went four years without hearing from my parents,” Aster says into the camera. Six years earlier, Aster left Ethiopia in search of work. But after a Lebanese family hired her as a live-in housekeeper in 2014, she found herself cut off from the outside world and laboring without pay. Aster’s family, unable to contact her, feared she was dead.



## ***IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL AFTER THE ELECTION<sup>3</sup>***

Come this Friday, Iranians are to elect their next president. With the election getting near, the question rises as to what will come of the JCPOA and the latest round of talks in Vienna. Rouhani was one of the key architects of the 2015 nuclear deal which saw Iran consent to limiting its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. The vote comes at a moment of tension over the accord. Then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the deal in May 2018 and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran. Iran responded by steadily lowering its compliance with the agreement, of which it remains a signatory. The other current signatories are the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the European Union, Russia and China. The European parties to the deal, which is officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), have scrambled to restore it since Washington's withdrawal.



## ***DEATH DESPITE THE TRUCE<sup>5</sup>***

Despite both sides agreeing on a truce after a bloody encounter, one thing that did not end was the bloodshed. Mai Afanah, 29, from Abu Dis, was shot by Israeli forces and left bleeding at the scene, Palestinian media reported. Palestinian media, which identified the victim as doctoral student Mai Afanah, 29, from Abu Dis, said she was shot and left bleeding at the scene of the incident on Wednesday. A military statement said the woman attempted to ram her car into a group of Israeli soldiers before exiting the vehicle with a knife near the town of Hizma, northeast of Jerusalem. An Israeli soldier was slightly wounded, according to Israeli media. The Palestinian health ministry said the woman died of her wounds. “The Palestinian civil liaison informed the health ministry of the death of a woman shot by [Israeli forces] in Hizma,” it said in a statement, citing the body that coordinates with Israel on military and civilian issues concerning the occupied West Bank. Palestinian media reported that no ambulance arrived at the scene after she was shot.



## **ISRAEL'S LACK OF RELIABILITY<sup>4</sup>**

After 11 days of bloodshed and with the help of Egyptian officials, the Gaza Strip reached truce. However, it seems to be more volatile as one might hope. Israel launched air raids on the Gaza Strip after Palestinian groups in the besieged enclave sent incendiary balloons into southern Israel. The overnight air strikes gave way to calm by morning, and there were no reports of casualties on either side. The raids early on Wednesday come less than a month after Israel's 11-day bombardment of Gaza in May and followed a march in occupied East Jerusalem by Jewish nationalists that drew Palestinian condemnation and anger. The Israeli military said its aircraft attacked Hamas compounds in Gaza City and the southern town of Khan Younis and said it was "ready for all scenarios, including renewed fighting in the face of continued terrorist acts emanating from Gaza". The raids, the military said, came in response to the launching of the balloons, which caused 20 blazes in open fields in communities near Gaza.



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