

NORTH AFRICA REGIONAL REPORT

High-level overview and brief analysis of regional political, economic and security activity, distributed every fortnight.

EGYPT

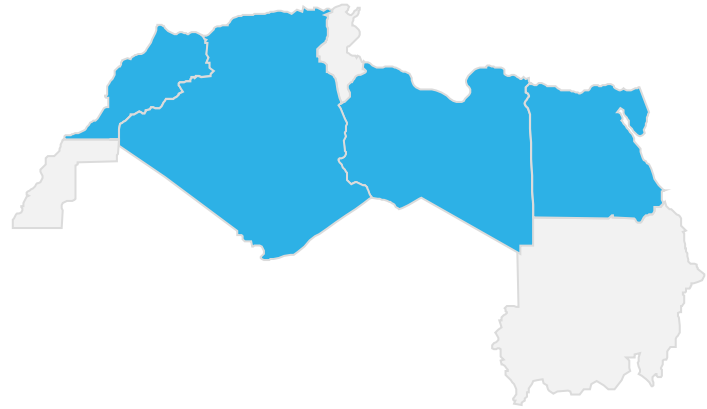
Egyptian and Qatari officials and businessmen held meetings in the last week, concluding with agreements to boost bilateral economic cooperation and promises of greater investment.

Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouly and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani announced a deal to end double taxation on income, corporate profits and capital gains, and plans to implement measures to combat tax evasion. Following the announcement, PM Madbouly urged Qatari entrepreneurs to invest in Egypt, assuring that he would adopt even more reforms to facilitate business. The two countries are also reportedly considering establishing a joint investment fund, although there are no further details available. This development demonstrates Qatar's increasing outreach, as Saudi Arabia and the UAE have shown decreased willingness to provide aid or invest in Egypt due to the lack of economic reforms and failure to repay its loans.

LIBYA

On 27 February, UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Head Abdoulaye Bathily briefed the UN Security Council on the recent consultations with Libyan and international parties. During the briefing, Bathily highlighted the continued non-agreement between the House of Representatives (HoR) and the High Council of State (HCS) on the constitutional basis for elections. Bathily announced an initiative with the end goal of holding presidential and legislative elections in 2023. The initiative includes the establishment of a High-level Steering Panel for Libya. The proposal would bring together relevant Libyan stakeholders, including representatives of political institutions, major political figures, tribal leaders and civil society organizations to come up with a legal framework and a roadmap. Bathily also announced plans for the UNSMIL and the 5+5 Joint Military Committee to facilitate talks with representatives of armed actors in Libya and discuss ways to secure the elections. Bathily's initiative is expected to receive pushback from local stakeholders who assess that they themselves will lose their respective elections. This will likely include the members of the HoR and the HCS who have been criticized for failure to finalize the electoral law.

The Region at a Glance



MOROCCO - ALGERIA

Morocco made an appeal during the 52nd UN Human Rights Council, denouncing the humanitarian conditions at the Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria. Moroccan Minister of Justice Abdellatif Wehbe claimed that Sahrawi refugees have been subjected to "extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances and the practice of all forms of torture, rape, human trafficking and recruitment of children." These claims are supported by eyewitness testimony given by independent journalist Ricardo Sanchez-Serra to the UN General Assembly, as well as a report issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), both in October 2022. Sanchez-Serra stated that the realities at the camps were "abysmal," and that the Sahrawi refugees were essentially political prisoners of the Polisario Front. In November 2022, fifteen NGOs signed a statement denouncing the Algerian military's role in allowing for these human rights violations, as well as the Algerian human rights council's failure to adhere to international standards. Since then, there have been few significant developments regarding the Tindouf camps. This latest appeal by Rabat was made in light of greater Western support for its proposed solution for the Western Sahara region. The move is likely intended to encourage even more Western support as a buffer against the developing Algeria-Russia cooperation.

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SUB-SAHARAN AFRICANS IN TUNISIA

Tunisian President Kais Saied is intensifying a security campaign targeting sub-Saharan Africans in Tunisia, very likely as a tactic to draw attention away from increasing economic and political unrest, and to build popular support by stoking nationalist and racist sentiments.

On 21 February, President Saied convened a meeting with his National Security Council to call for “all necessary” diplomatic, security and military efforts to curb the illegal migration of sub-Saharan Africans into Tunisia. During the meeting, he claimed that the increase in illegal migration was part of a conspiracy to change the demographic makeup and cultural identity of Tunisia; an “undeclared goal” of which was to dilute its Arab and Islamic heritage so that it would only be viewed as a “purely African country.” He also stated that the increased presence of the migrants resulted in crimes and acts of violence, although he did not directly blame the migrants for those incidents. He did not specify any parties to the alleged plot, but is likely claiming that Western countries had given “enormous sums of money” to former Tunisian government officials to prevent the migrants from attempting to cross over to Europe.

The meeting corresponded with increasing reports of harassment of sub-Saharan Africans in the country. On 18 February, a non-profit organization for African students issued a warning regarding what it claimed was an “ongoing systematic campaign of control and arrests” of black Africans, and urged all students to carry their residence papers at all times. The total numbers of those arrested are unclear, but the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES) claimed that it exceeded 300 as of mid-February. There are also reports of sub-Saharan Africans being forcibly evicted from their homes by mobs, having their belongings confiscated, or being refused services such as healthcare and public transportation.

President Saied’s comments were met with sharp backlash from within the country and from the international community. More than 40 civil society groups and activists, including the FTDES and the Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH), formed the Anti-Fascist Front to denounce his fascist and racist rhetoric and called for large-scale protests. The African Union (AU) condemned the “racialized hate speech” which it stated went “against the letter and spirit of the organization.” Some AU member states offered voluntary repatriation for their citizens in Tunisia in light of the increasing “hate crimes.” The newly-appointed Foreign Minister Nabil Ammar defended the President’s statements, noting the distinction between legal and illegal migrants.

President Saied’s speech, which echoes populist “replacement theory” tropes, has stoked longstanding racial tensions and will shift the blame for Tunisia’s socioeconomic problems away from his own policies to the migrants. This will invigorate his support from a portion of the population. However, this strategy poses two major risks:

- It will motivate opposition political parties and advocacy groups to unite, which would present a greater threat to his presidency.
- It may isolate Tunisia politically from its African neighbors which would diminish support for President Saied from his regional counterparts.

PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATES

- Morocco ends state of health emergency

UPCOMING REGIONAL EVENTS

Country	Event	Date(s)	Remarks
Libya	African Union Reconciliation Conference on Libya	TBD	Calls from African nations for elections.

