



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

WEST ASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from West Asia

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Joint Extraordinary Arab and Islamic Summit held in Riyadh

A joint extraordinary Summit of the leaders from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League was held in Riyadh on 11 November 2023 to discuss the ongoing Israel-Hamas War and the situation in the Gaza Strip. The resolution expressed support for the Palestinian struggle to liberate occupied territories and called for an end to Israeli aggression. It condemned the Israeli military aggression, war crimes and illegal measures violating freedom of worship in Al Quds and emphasised that Israel and regional states won't experience peace without Palestinian rights. It outlined political, legal and humanitarian steps, including breaking the Gaza siege and mobilising aid efforts. The resolution mandated immediate international action to halt the Gaza war and demanded a halt to the supply of weapons to Israel.

Israel and Hamas agree on a temporary ceasefire deal

Israel and Hamas have reached a deal for a ceasefire in the ongoing war in exchange for the release of Israeli hostages in Gaza and Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. After the initial four-day pause in fighting, the ceasefire is extended every day resulting in the exchange of captives and humanitarian aid trucks allowed to enter Gaza from Egypt. The US, Qatar and Egypt have facilitated the ceasefire deal which has unfolded amid growing pressure for humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Houthis seize cargo ships in the Red Sea

Yemen's Houthi rebels seized an Israeli cargo ship in the Red Sea on 19 November

2023, warning that any vessel linked to Israel will be "legitimate targets." A video released by the Houthis shows armed men boarding the ship from a helicopter. The incident is condemned by Israel as an "Iranian act of terrorism", while Iran dismisses the accusations. The Houthis had previously threatened to attack the Israeli vessels since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas War. Japan has appealed to the Houthis to release the ship and has urged the support of regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Oman and Iran to work toward the swift release of the vessel and its 25 crew members. Again on 26 November, an Israel-linked tanker was seized in the Red Sea. The US Navy responded to the distress call and captured five attackers.

Arab Islamic Ministerial Committee visits major powers

Arab Islamic Ministerial Committee, headed by Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, visited China, Russia, the UK, France and Spain to gather support for Palestine. Conveying decisions made at the joint Arab-Islamic Summit in Riyadh, the Ministerial Committee emphasised on the urgent requirement for United Nations Security Council members and the global community to implement a complete ceasefire in Gaza. Urging countries to adopt a balanced role in accordance with international law, the Committee called for immediate ceasefire measures in line with international resolutions. They have also urged the countries to revive the peace process, emphasising the importance of a just and lasting two-state solution. The Committee discussed the necessity of secure corridors for humanitarian aid delivery and enabling international organisations to operate in Gaza.

India provides US\$ 2.5 million aid to UNRWA

On 20 November 2023, India reaffirmed its commitment to Palestine by providing US\$ 2.5 million humanitarian assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). It underscores India's continued support for the UNRWA, which has been operational since 1950. This aid, part of India's annual commitment of US\$ 5 million for 2023-24, aims to bolster UNRWA's core programs, including education, healthcare and relief services for Palestinian refugees. On 19 November, India delivered 32 tonnes of humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine via the El Arish Airport in Egypt. India has consistently supported UNRWA, with a total contribution of US\$ 27.5 million since 2018.

Turkiye and the UK sign a statement of intent on defence cooperation

On 23 November 2023, Turkiye's National Defense Minister Yasar Guler and British Secretary of State for Defence Grant Shapps met in Ankara, signing a statement of intent on defence cooperation. Guler emphasised the UK's significance as an ally and a strategic partner. The meeting focused on bilateral and regional security issues, with both leaders expressing their commitment to strengthen military cooperation. The agreement aims to realise closer collaboration between both countries' defence industries, identify possible joint training exercises in the Mediterranean Sea and explore security support around the Middle East and North Africa. Guler highlighted collaboration in areas like national combat aircraft KAAAN and potential ventures with Eurofighter

Typhoon fighter jets. Guler sought the UK's support in Turkiye's fight against the FETO terror group.

Attack on US military bases in Iraq and Syria

In a continuing surge of attacks, terrorists targeted several American military bases in Iraq and Syria. The Al Harir air base and Al Asad air base in Iraq and Tall Baydar in Syria were targeted by drones causing minor injuries to the US forces. According to the US officials, Iran-backed groups have been orchestrating daily assaults since a Gaza hospital blast on 17 October. In response, the US is conducting precision strikes against Iran-backed groups in Syria. There are roughly 2,500 American troops in Iraq and some 900 in Syria as part of their efforts to prevent a resurgence of ISIS.

Iran's Foreign Minister meets Hezbollah Chief

On 23 November 2023, Iran's Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, met with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah to discuss the Israel-Hamas conflict in an undisclosed location in Lebanon. The meeting focused on efforts to end the war in Gaza. Hezbollah has fired rockets towards an Israeli military base near Safed and conducted at least ten other attacks along the border. Israel has responded by striking Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah has claimed responsibility for the attacks on Israel's northern border. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Hezbollah against escalating attacks, stating that any aggression would be met with stronger force. The Israel-Hamas war has heightened tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, sparking fears of a broader regional conflict.