



Weekly



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MENA Weekly Summary - April 7-14, 2026

Highlights of the Week

This report reviews notable events in the Middle East and North Africa this week. These include the prospects for new US-**Iran** negotiations amid Washington’s naval blockade on Iran, a suicide bombing in **Algeria’s** Blida, the election of a new President in **Iraq**, unprecedented direct negotiations between Israeli and **Lebanese** officials in Washington, the deployment of a Pakistani military contingent to **Saudi Arabia**, and the arrest of a Hezbollah-linked cell that planted in IED in **Syria’s** Damascus.

MENA

Current Situation

1. On April 11, the US and Iran held direct negotiations in Pakistan's Islamabad.
2. In a subsequent press conference, Vice President (VP) JD Vance stated that despite "substantive discussions," the US and Iran have not reached an agreement.
3. Starting on April 13, the US imposed a naval blockade on Iran in the Strait of Hormuz.
4. On April 14, US President Donald Trump stated that US-Iran peace talks could resume in Islamabad over the next two days, allegedly setting two preconditions: the full reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and assurances that the Iranian delegation has binding authority, including backing from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Assessments & Forecast: The negotiations marked the highest-level direct engagement between the two countries since 1979, underscoring mutual interest in avoiding a return to full-scale hostilities. However, the lack of an agreement was expected given entrenched differences, particularly over Iran's nuclear enrichment and broader program, where both sides remain uncompromising. In this context, Washington's reported shift toward a naval blockade reflects an effort to increase pressure on Iran and shape the negotiating environment. Despite this, President Donald Trump's April 14 remarks indicate continued intent to re-engage diplomatically, which, alongside Iran's broad adherence to the ceasefire, suggests a shared interest in preserving space for talks. At the same time, reported US conditions highlight structural constraints. The demand to reopen the Strait of Hormuz points to a requirement for tangible de-escalation, while the insistence on Iranian negotiators having backing from the IRGC reflects concerns over internal decision-making coherence. Washington thus appears to be seeking not just a diplomatic commitment, but one that is enforceable within Iran's political-military system. In the near term, diplomacy is likely to remain the primary focus, with a second round of talks likely. However, progress is likely to be uneven and incremental, rather than leading to a comprehensive breakthrough. In parallel, the risk of escalation, including in the maritime domain, will persist.

Source: [VP Vance's statements](#)

Algeria

Current Situation

1. During the afternoon hours (local time) of April 13, reports indicate that two suicide bombers detonated explosives in Algeria's Blida. Reports stated that the first explosion targeted a police station in the city centre, wounding at least one security person, while the second explosion occurred near a food industry company in Blida.
2. An unconfirmed April 13 report stated that police personnel shot the two suicide bombers before they approached their targets, after which the attackers detonated themselves.
3. Algerian authorities have not confirmed the incident and have not released any details, including the identities of the perpetrators, the scale of damage, or any other related information.

Assessment & Forecast: The reported attacks in Blida Province, approximately 40km southwest of Algiers, coincided with the visit of Pope Leo XIV, suggesting a likely attempt

to exploit a high-visibility international event to maximize psychological impact and undermine Algeria's security posture. Although militant activity in Algeria has declined due to sustained counterterrorism efforts, jihadist groups likely continue to pose a residual risk. The limited scale of the blasts and absence of mass casualties suggest the perpetrators had constrained capabilities, potentially due to limited expertise or access to high-grade explosives. If unconfirmed reports that police shot the attackers are accurate, this indicates authorities identified and attempted to intercept the threat in its final stage. While the perpetrators were not identified, the use of suicide tactics likely reflects a jihadist modus operandi, though involvement of smaller or self-radicalized actors remains plausible. In the near term, authorities are likely to bolster security measures, particularly around key sites, and intensify counterterrorism operations, with the risk of low-scale or copycat attacks not ruled out.

Source: [Le Point](#) ; [al-Hadat24](#)

Iraq

Current Situation

1. On April 11, lawmakers elected the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) candidate Nizar Amedi as Iraq's new President. Some political factions, including the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law Coalition, boycotted the session.
2. Having planned to meet on April 13 to finalize the nomination of a Prime Minister (PM) candidate, the Shiite Coordination Framework (CF) postponed the meeting to April 15, citing disagreements between leaders of the CF's constituent parties.

Assessments & Forecast: The successful election of a President constitutes a milestone in Iraq's government formation process. Following the November 2025 elections, this process experienced a protracted deadlock fueled by disputes between the KDP and the PUK over the Presidential nomination. However, Parliament's election of Amedi will reinvigorate government formation efforts. This is because the President must be in place before a PM candidate from the largest political faction, namely the CF, is tasked with forming a Cabinet within 15 days. That said, the CF's meeting to finalize the nomination of its PM designate suggests that it will withdraw its earlier nomination of Nouri al-Maliki. This is likely due to Washington's repeated warnings against al-Maliki becoming PM over his ties to Iran. These concerns have likely intensified in the current US-Iran war as Iraq emerged as a primary arena in the regional spillover amid the significant influence wielded by Iran-backed Iraqi militias. The decision by several factions of the CF to boycott the meeting, leading to its deferral to April 15, highlights that significant challenges will persist to reaching a new consensus candidate. This will increase the risk of protracted negotiations that are liable to extend beyond the 15-day deadline.

Source: [INA](#)

Israel & Lebanon

Current Situation

1. On April 14, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio hosted the first direct talks between Israel and Lebanon in Washington. Prior to their commencement, Rubio described this as a “historic opportunity” to bring about a “permanent end to 20 or 30 years of Hezbollah’s influence,” not just a ceasefire.
2. The US State Department subsequently stated that all sides agreed to launch direct negotiations at a mutually agreed time and venue.
3. The Israeli Ambassador to the US stated that the parties discovered that “they are on the same side of the equation” and are both committed to “liberating Lebanon” from Iran and Hezbollah.
4. Hezbollah reportedly launched approximately 40 rockets toward northern Israel in multiple barrages in the morning hours (local time) on April 15.

Assessments & Forecast: These constitute the first direct talks between Israeli and Lebanese officials since 1993, functioning as a preliminary meeting ahead of future negotiations to reach a long-term framework. Despite the positive affirmations that common ground had been reached, reports indicated discrepancies in the scope of discussions the Israeli and Lebanese Ambassadors were permitted to undertake. This underscores significant challenges that persist in advancing the negotiations, which is similarly reflected by Hezbollah’s opposition to the process, which was demonstrated by an uptick in attacks toward Israel around the talks on April 14-15. Hezbollah’s opposition will prove particularly challenging for the Lebanese government, given the influence it continues to wield among broad segments of Lebanon’s Shiite society, which it could weaponize to foment protests and unrest. Therefore, despite the historic meeting, the negotiation process is likely to be protracted. Dynamics on the ground are thus unlikely to change in the short-term, at least, with intensified fighting expected to persist in southern Lebanon.

Source: [US State Department](#)

Saudi Arabia

Current Situation

1. On April 11, the Saudi Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced that a Pakistani military contingent has arrived at King Abdulaziz Air Base in Dhahran in the Eastern Province.
2. Per the announcement, the deployment falls under a joint strategic defense agreement between

Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and includes fighter and support aircraft from the Pakistan Air Force, aimed at strengthening military coordination and enhancing operational readiness between the two armed forces.

Assessments & Forecast: This forms part of the Saudi-Pakistan Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement (SMDA) signed in September 2025, which commits both sides to enhanced military coordination and mutual deterrence. This builds on earlier reports suggesting a Pakistani military presence in the Kingdom as early as March 3, namely the deployment of air defense assets under the SMDA framework. These were said to include LY-80 (HQ-16) medium-range systems, FM-90 short-range air defense systems, and Anza Mk-III man-portable air defense systems. Early-stage deployment of these capabilities at the onset of the conflict indicates Riyadh's intent to rapidly strengthen its air defense architecture, potentially reflecting concerns over limited US provision of direct aerial cover at the start of the conflict. This may have also contributed to Saudi Arabia's broad interception effectiveness since the hostilities began. Taken together with the reported deployment of fighter and support aircraft in the latest announcement, this would likely enhance integrated air defense coverage and aerial patrol capacity over Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, a critical hub for major oil infrastructure and desalination facilities. Overall, these developments point to a continuation of Saudi efforts to strengthen its defensive posture amid persistent regional tensions.

Source: [Saudi MoD](#)

Syria

Current Situation

1. On April 11, authorities arrested a five-member militant cell plotting an attack in Damascus, identifying a female member who attempted to plant an IED in front of the residence of a religious figure near the Mariamite Cathedral in the Bab Touma area.
2. The cell was affiliated with Hezbollah in Lebanon, and its members had received specialized military training abroad, including in planting explosive devices.
3. Subsequent reports indicated that the intended target was Rabbi Michael Houry, a Jewish rabbi of Syrian descent.
4. Hezbollah reportedly denied any involvement, calling on Syrian authorities to "conduct a thorough investigation before making accusations without evidence."

Assessments & Forecast: Syrian authorities have occasionally dismantled terrorist cells associated with Hezbollah and the Islamic State (IS). In the latest case, the perpetrators may not have been formal Hezbollah operatives but rather local recruits. This is supported by the nature of the explosive device recovered, which appeared improvised and not military-grade, suggesting it could have been easily assembled by locals. The intended target, Rabbi Michael Houry, reportedly resides in Israel and has traveled to Syria several times in recent months, rendering the plot particularly notable as it appears to have relied

on time-sensitive intelligence to target an individual not permanently based in Damascus. This may have been facilitated by a misperception among some foreign religious figures and organizations that Syria's security landscape is stable enough to welcome their activities without exposing them to significant risks of terrorism that persist in the country. Overall, the incident highlights sustained vulnerabilities in Syria's security environment, which militant groups are likely to continue exploiting, undergirding the terrorist threat in the country.



Source: [Syrian Ministry of Interior](#)

Other Developments

- **Egypt & Morocco:** On April 6, Cairo and Rabat signed a series of agreements and memoranda of understanding to boost industrial and investment cooperation within the framework of a comprehensive partnership.
- **Iran:** On April 7, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that two French nationals, detained in Iran for over three and a half years on espionage charges and released from prison in November 2025, were now free and en route to France.
- **Iraq & Kuwait:** On April 7, protesters stormed the Kuwaiti consulate in Basra to denounce a rocket attack allegedly originating from the direction of Kuwait. It impacted a house in the Khor al-Zubair area. The demonstrators briefly entered the compound before security forces dispersed the crowd.
- **Kuwait:** Authorities on April 11 announced the arrest of 24 citizens suspected of terror financing and money laundering. Security forces recovered large amounts of foreign currency, and pictures of former Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Iranian Ayatollahs Ruhollah Khomeini and Ali Khamenei.
- **Morocco:** On April 7, authorities announced the dismantling of a six-member terrorist cell, with suspects arrested in Kenitra, Casablanca, and parts of Sidi Kacem province on suspicion of carrying out criminal activities with extremist backgrounds and motives. Authorities seized extremist books and manuscripts, bladed weapons, and funds.
- **Saudi Arabia:** On April 11, Saudi Arabia's Defense Ministry announced that Pakistan had sent fighter jets and military personnel to the kingdom as part of a joint defense agreement.
- **Saudi Arabia:** On April 12, the Ministry of Energy announced that the East-West oil pipeline had been restored to full operational capacity following Iranian attacks on the country's energy infrastructure.
- **Turkey:** On April 8, Turkish Justice Minister Akin Gurlek announced that, following an Islamic State

(IS)-linked attack at Istanbul's Israeli Consulate on April 7, authorities conducted an anti-IS operation across 34 provinces, detaining 198 suspects.

The Upcoming Week

- **April 17:** The 15th International Jerusalem Marathon is slated to occur in Israel's Jerusalem. Details on the race course are available [here](#).
- **April 17:** Syria will celebrate Independence Day. This public holiday commemorates the country's independence from France in 1946.
- **April 19:** The 21st Istanbul Half Marathon will take place in Turkey's Istanbul. Details on the race course can be accessed [here](#).
- **April 20-21:** Israel will observe Yom HaZikaron (Memorial Day) to commemorate fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism. Most businesses and entertainment venues will be closed from the evening of April 20, and a one-minute siren will be sounded at 20:00 (local time). An additional two-minute siren will be sounded at 11:00 on April 21.
- **April 21-22:** Yom Ha'atzmaut (Independence Day) will be observed in Israel. Celebrations will commence during the evening of April 21 (with the conclusion of Memorial Day). April 22 is a public holiday.