

# Chronology of Major Conflicts and Political Events

## January 2017

*In France, Benoît Hamon is elected as the socialist candidate for the presidency of the Republic. François Fillon, the candidate for the conservative party The Republicans (LR), comes under investigation for misuse of public funds. In Italy, the Constitutional Court vetoes two of the main electoral law reforms. Malta assumes the EU Presidency. Slovenia approves the possibility of closing its borders to guarantee national security. The Republika Srpska suspends contact with the High Representative of the International Community. In FYROM, Nikola Gruevski is unable to form a government. Tensions mount between Belgrade and Pristina and between Athens and Ankara. In Turkey, there is a Daesh terrorist attack in Istanbul, the purge sparked by the attempted coup in July 2016 continues and the Parliament approves the constitutional reform to transform Turkey's government system into a presidential one. Indirect negotiations are held in Astana between the Syrian government and seven opposition groups and Russia proposes a draft constitution for Syria. In Jordan, several reformist leaders are arrested. In Egypt, new sentences are handed down to members of the Muslim Brotherhood and the High Administrative Court blocks the ruling to transfer the Islands of Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia. In Libya, the eastern armed forces expel the Islamist militias from practically all of Benghazi. In Tunisia, there is unrest in Ben Gardane. Algeria announces a state of emergency on its borders. Morocco rejoins the African Union (AU).*

### Portugal

- On 7 January the founder of the Socialist Party and former Prime Minister Mário Soares dies.
- On 10 January Portugal presents a formal complaint to the EU over Spain's decision to build a nuclear waste storage facility at the Almaraz Nuclear Plant, close to the Portuguese border.

### Spain

- On 1 January around a thousand Sub-Saharan immigrants attempt to jump the Melilla border fence.

### France

- On 1 January the new employment law comes into force which obliges companies to respect the right of their workers to disconnect from technology outside of working hours.
- On 29 January Benoît Hamon is elected as the candidate to dispute the presidency of the Republic for the Socialist Party (PS). 17 deputies from the more liberal wing of the PS announce that they will not support Hamon unless he moderates his programme, which they consider to be too close to the radical leftism of Jean-Luc Melenchon.
- On 30 January François Fillon, the LR candidate to the presidency, and his wife Penelope, are interrogated by police as part of the investigation into the latter's alleged fictitious employment, uncovered by the weekly newspaper *Le Canard Enchaîné*.

### Italy

- On 6 January the European Commission urges Italy to accelerate the depor-

tation of people without right to asylum faced with the increase in arrivals through the central Mediterranean, which reached 181,000 in 2016, almost 20% more than in 2015.

- On 13 January around 550 immigrants are rescued in the Strait of Sicily.
- On 25 January the Constitutional Court issues a ruling on the electoral law approved by parliament in May 2015, bringing into force the possibility of calling elections in 2017. However, the court rejected two of its main points: the possibility of a second round between the two most voted candidates if none win 40% in the first round, and the possibility of the candidates heading the lists to run in up to 10 constituencies.

### Malta

- On 1 January Malta assumes the EU Presidency with the priorities of tackling the migration crisis, further developing the single market, strengthening security and improving social inclusion.

### Slovenia

- On 26 January the Parliament approves modifications in the migration laws that will allow borders to be closed to guarantee national security.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 12 January the Republika Srpska suspends contact with the High Representative of the International Community Valentin Inzko for having compared the Bosnian Serb national holiday of 9 January with a Nazi celebration. The holiday goes ahead despite the Constitutional Court's ban, describing it as discriminatory.

*Serbia*

- On 12 January Doctor without Borders (MSF) reports that it has already registered deaths from freezing among the 2,000 migrants trapped in Belgrade.

*Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244*

- On 4 January the former Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj is arrested in the EuroAirport Basel Mulhouse Freiburg by the French authorities acting on a Serbian arrest warrant for war crimes as commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK). On 6 January Kosovo announces a "revision" of its relations with Serbia. On 12 January Haradinaj is released on bail by a French court causing Belgrade to threaten France that it will not extradite anyone under a french request if Haradinaj is not extradited to Serbia.
- On 27 January the intelligence chief Agron Selimaj resigns citing personal reasons, amid rising tensions with Belgrade over a train travelling from Serbia that was stopped from crossing the border into Kosovo on 14 January because it was painted with the colours of Serbia's national flag and the slogan "Kosovo is Serbia."
- On 11 January a grenade is thrown at a government building in Mitrovica which was recently opened by the Kosovo authorities as part of efforts to consolidate their power over the Kosovo Serb territories.
- On 24 January the Prime Minister Isa Mustafa appoints the commission charged with officially mapping the Kosovo territory for the first time since its self-proclaimed independence and despite the Parliament not yet ratifying the border agreement with Montenegro.

*FYROM*

- On 30 January Nikola Gruevski, leader of the conservative Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) that won the early elections held in December 2016, fails to achieve the parliamentary majority needed to form a government.

*Albania*

- On 17 January Bleta Shqiptare (Albanian Bee) is launched, a citizen movement founded by Shenasi Rama, Grid Rroji and Valentina Karanxha, with a view to forming a party and seeking alternatives to the two main parties, the Socialist Party (PS) and the Democratic Party (PDS). This is the third movement to appear before the legislative elections in June, along with Libra, a centre-left party founded in November 2016 by former PS members Ben Blushi and Mimoza Hafizi; and the centrist Sfida (Challenge), created in January 2017 by Gjergj Bojaxhi, former head of the country's energy company.

*Greece*

- On 16 January the Court of Auditors approves the sale of the Greek railway operator Trainose to the Italian group Ferrovie dello Stato for 5.8 billion euros.
- On 28 January the Supreme Court rules against an extradition request from Turkey for eight soldiers who fled to Greece after the attempted coup in 2016, where they are under arrest for illegal entry and are awaiting a decision from Athens regarding their asylum request. Turkey threatens to revise its migration agreement with the EU if the soldiers are not returned.
- On 31 January the Moria refugee camp in Lesbos is partially dismantled following the confirmation that a third migrant has died due to the facility's poor conditions.

*Turkey*

- On 1 January at least 39 people are killed by gunfire in a Daesh attack at the Reina nightclub in Istanbul.
- On 3 January the government decides to extend the state of emergency by three months, declared after the attempted coup in 2016.
- On 5 January the provincial government of Diyarbakir imposes a curfew in 16 villages, due to clashes between the army and the terrorist organization the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).
- On 6 January the Gendarmerie publishes a report that points to links between the Hizmet (Service) movement of

Fethullah Gülen with the PKK and Daesh during the attempted coup in 2016.

- On 8 January the leader of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party Senar Yesilirmak is arrested, accused of having links with the PKK.
- On 17 January after a tense week of parliamentary clashes, the constitutional reform to transform Turkey into a presidential state is approved in its totality.
- On 18 January Istanbul's public prosecutor orders the arrest of 243 members of the army in relation with the attempted coup in 2016.
- On 28 January some 40 Turkish soldiers serving in NATO bases in Germany request political asylum faced with the purge in Turkey following the failed coup attempt in 2016.

*Cyprus*

- On 12 January the year's first meeting of reunification talks concludes without an agreement despite the advances made in 2016. The presence of 30,000 Turkish troops in the north of the island, which Turkey says it will not withdraw is one of the key sticking points.

*Syria*

- On 1 January the regime's air force resumes its offensive on the rebel-controlled Barada valley. The offensive continues with further advances for the regime throughout January.
- On 6 January Turkey reports that 32 Daesh members have been killed in al-Bab, in 119 attacks. More deaths are reported during the rest of the month as a result of the Turkish offensive.
- On 6 January Russia withdraws part of its troops in Syria after the regime's recent retaking of Aleppo.
- On 6 January the Fateh al-Sham Front reports the death of a member of one of its advisers, Younes Shaib, in an attack by the US-led coalition.
- On 20 January images are released showing Daesh's destruction of part of the Roman Theatre and the Tetrapylon of Palmyra.
- On 22 January the army ousts Daesh from four villages near to al-Bab.
- On 23 - 24 January indirect negotiations are held in Astana, under the auspices of Russia, Turkey and Iran, between

the Syrian government and seven opposition groups to consolidate the ceasefire of 30 December 2016. The regime's priorities are to set the terms for the end of hostilities, separate the 'terrorists' from the rebel groups participating in the meeting and agree on a common approach for fighting Daesh and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham together. The head of the rebel delegation Mohammed Al-loush doubts Moscow's mediating role in the talks considering it an "occupying" country.

- On 24 January Russia presents the Syrian rebels with a draft constitution for Syria.

#### Lebanon

- On 4 January the President Michel Aoun accuses Israel's Mossad of the murder of Lebanese businessman Amine Bakri in Luanda in December 2016.

#### Jordan

- On 12 January the General Intelligence Directorate arrests the former government advisor Husam al-Abdallat, former general Mohamad al-Otoom, the colonel and former deputy Wasfi Rawashdeh and brigadier-general Omar Os-oofi after a meeting held the same day and attended by the four men to discuss ways to promote reform and transparency in the country.

#### Egypt

- On 3 January 148 members of the Muslim Brotherhood are given life sentences for participating in the violence in Matai in Minya, after the dispersal of the Islamist sit-ins in Cairo in August 2013.
- On 16 January the Supreme Administrative Court blocks the ruling to transfer the islands of Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia, agreed with Riyadh in April 2016 and approved in December 2016 by the government.

#### Libya

- On 2 January the commander of the National Libyan Army Khalifa Haftar says he controls up to 80% of Libyan territory and affirms that he will not enter into dialogue with the Presidential Council

(Government of National Accord) until the terrorist presence is eradicated throughout Libya.

- On 12 January armed men loyal to the former Prime Minister of the General National Congress -the previous Libyan Islamist government-, Khalifa Ghweil, who does not recognize the Presidential Council, are unsuccessful in their attempts to take control of various ministerial offices in Tripoli.

- On 13 January Khalifa Haftar's forces take control of the Abu Sneib district, in Benghazi, after several days of fighting with Islamist militias based in the area since 2014.

#### Tunisia

- On 10 January the authorities dismantle a Takfiri terrorist cell in Monastir.

- On 11 - 12 January clashes break out in Ben Guerdane over the lack of socioeconomic improvements and customs regulations at the Ras Ajdir border crossing with Libya.

- On 31 January the Parliament approves the right to vote in municipal elections and referendums for members of the army and security forces.

#### Algeria

- On 11 January two suspected terrorists are killed in an operation in Buduja, Skikda. A further two people are arrested in Boumerdès. On 19 January, two more people are arrested in Azazga, Tizi Ouzou.

- On 18 January the blogger Merzoug Touati is arrested in Bejaia for "cooperating with a foreign power" when he posted a video in which he interviews an Israeli official who says there is an unofficial Israeli embassy in operation in Algiers.

- On 24 January the army is put on high alert on the Libyan and Malian borders and steps up its presence on the Tunisian border.

#### Morocco

- On 5 January Morocco shuts down the schools of the Mohamed al-Fatih group, suspected of having links with Fethullah Gülen's organization, accused by Turkey of being behind the coup attempt in 2016.

- On 16 January the deputy secretary general of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), Habib el-Malki, is elected president of the House of Representatives (lower chamber).

- On 18 January Mohammed VI appoints the general Abdel Fattah Warraqas as second in command of the army.

- On 30 January Morocco rejoins the AU, the organization it left in 1984 in protest against the recognition by its forerunner, the Organization of African Union, of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).

#### Mauritania

- On 31 January the Supreme Court orders the retrial of the blogger Mohamed Ould Mkhaitir, jailed on 2 January and sentenced death by the first instance court for apostasy.

#### EU

- On 18 January the former European commissioner and MEP of the European People's party (EPP) Antonio Tajani assumes the presidency of the European Parliament to replace the German President Martin Schulz.

- On 28 January Lisbon hosts the 2nd summit for southern EU countries -Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Greece and Cyprus- to join forces in the demands of Mediterranean Europe and form a common front in defence of the European project, currently facing a surge in ultranationalism and populism.

### February 2017

*In Spain, the People's Party and Podemos hold their respective party conferences. Unrest and protests break out in Paris. In Italy, Matteo Renzi resigns as secretary of the Democratic Party. Russia denies orchestrating a coup attempt in Montenegro. In Kosovo, government appointments are made. In FYROM, Zoran Zaev is elected by the social democrats to form a government. In Albania, the opposition protests against the government's politics. Greece and its international lenders come closer to reaching a deal. In Turkey, the arrests*

continue of people accused of having links with Daesh, the PKK or the attempted coup in 2016. Geneva hosts a fourth conference on Syria. In Jordan, anti-government demonstrations break out. In Egypt, Copts flee Sinai. The US vetoes the appointment of the new UN envoy to Libya. Morocco threatens to cut its ties with the EU.

#### Spain

- On 2 February Jose Antonio Alonso, the former Interior and Defence Minister of the socialist government of Jose Luis Rodríguez Zapatero dies.
- On 10 February Francisco Correa, Pablo Crespo and Alvaro Perez are sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment in the Gürtel corruption case. The men are considered as the plot's leaders in a case which has so far seen 11 people sentenced to prison. With ramifications in various autonomous communities, the scandal has mainly affected former members of the People's Party (PP, conservative).
- On 12 February the left-wing party Podemos holds its 2nd party congress in which after months of debate, the secretary general Pablo Iglesias wins against the party's number two Íñigo Errejón, revalidating his position and holding onto the party's leadership.
- On 12 February the former Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy is reelected with 95.65% of the votes as president of the PP in the party's 18th congress.
- On 17 and 20 February 700 immigrants enter Ceuta after jumping the fence along the border with Morocco.
- On 18 February Princess Cristina de Borbon is found not guilty of tax fraud in the Noos corruption scandal, although she is ordered to pay a fine of 265,000 euros. Her husband, Iñaki Urdangarin, and his partner, are sentenced to six and eight years in prison respectively.

#### France

- On 1 February the European Parliament decided to dock part of the MEP's salary of the leader of the ultra-right-wing National Front (FN) Marine Le Pen, until it recoups the 340,000 euros demanded for fraudulent use of European funds.

- On 5 February Marine Le Pen issues a 144-point plan for her candidacy for the presidency which include a referendum on Brexit, -France's departure from the EU-, leaving NATO and a break with global liberalism, multiculturalism and immigration.
- On 7 February the former President Nicolas Sarkozy is ordered to stand trial in the investigation into the expenses of the 2012 electoral campaign and the false invoices issued by the company Bygmalion.
- On 7 February 17 arrests are made on the outskirts of Paris in the fourth day of unrest over the accusations against the police for raping a young man of African origin with a baton during a police check on 2 February. The unrest continues throughout the month and demonstrations of support for the man are staged on 19 February throughout France.

#### Italy

- On 12 February the government appeals against a law approved in December 2016 by the regional council (Parliament) of Veneto, under which the region declared itself to be a "national minority" to achieve greater autonomy.
- On 19 February the former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi resigns as secretary of the Democratic Party (PD, centre-left), which is facing a split due to disagreements between centrists and leftists. Renzi also announces that he will run as a candidate again to lead the party.

#### Malta

- On 3 February the government announces the possibility not to declare gender on ID cards and passports.

#### Slovenia

- On 23 February the Parliament approves a law giving same-sex couples the same rights as heterosexuals, although not allowing them to adopt children.

#### Croatia

- On 12 February two people are injured in a homophobic attack on a club

in Zagreb. The LGBT associations accuse the government of failing to act in the face of a rise in this kind of violence.

#### Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 19 February Stolac holds municipal elections. Stjepan Boskovic, from the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ, conservative) wins with 49% of the votes against the Bosniak coalition Initiative for Stolac. The elections are a repetition of those held on 2 October 2016, during which clashes broke out over Bosnian claims of irregularities.
- On 28 February the month ends with the European accession process on halt over the lack of consensus among the country's entities in responding to the questionnaire sent out in December by the EU to assess the country's membership application.

#### Montenegro

- On 20 February Russia denies accusations made by the Montenegrin public prosecutor that the country orchestrated an attempted coup on 16 October 2016, as well as the possible assassination of the Prime Minister Milo Đukanovic, to stop Montenegro joining NATO.

#### Serbia

- On 7 February the ombudsman Sasa Jankovic resigns and presents his candidacy for the presidential elections in April.
- On 10 February the Serbian judiciary refuses to extradite the Serb citizens Predrag Bogicevic and Nemanja Ristic, demanded by Montenegro to stand trial for their alleged involvement in a plot to overthrow the Montenegrin government.
- On 15 February thousands of demonstrators from the movement Ne Davimo Beograd (Don't drown Belgrade) call for the resignation of the mayor of the capital Sinisa Mali, over the urban development project Waterfront, financed by the United Arab Emirates.
- On 27 February Serbia successfully closes the chapter on Education and Culture in its European accession negotiations.

### *Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244*

- On 1 February there is a new round of negotiations to normalize relations between Serbia and Kosovo. No advances are made due to Pristina's difficulty to form the Association of Serb Municipalities in Kosovo and Metohija, which should give autonomy to the three Serb-majority municipalities, faced with fierce opposition from the Albanian nationalist party Vetevëndosje (Self-Determination).
- On 7 February the EU approves the appointment of the 19 judges that will comprise the new Special Court for Kosovo, based in The Hague and charged with trying crimes of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK), under the direction of the Bulgarian lawyer Ekaterina Trendafilova.
- On 8 February Ridvan Haqifi, the former imam of Gjilane is killed in Syria, where he was found fighting for Daesh.
- On 8 February Driton Gashi is appointed director of the intelligence agency after, on 3 February, the public prosecutor withdraws an accusation against him for abuse of office when he was the general secretary at the Interior Ministry.
- On 13 February the Prime Minister Hashim Thaci initiates consultations to establish the new Truth and Reconciliation Commission to foster integration between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs and put an end to the aftershocks of the Kosovo conflict.
- On 14 February Kosovo's ambassador to Slovenia Mimoza Ahmetaj is appointed Minister of European Integration.
- On 27 February the public prosecutor brings charges against the imam of Pristina's main imam Shefqet Krasniqi for terrorist activity.
- On 27 February Bangladesh recognizes Kosovo's independence.

### *FYROM*

- On 25 February the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) chooses Zoran Zaev as its candidate to form a government following the unfruitful attempts of VMRO-DPMNE, winner of the December 2016 elections and whose supporters protest on 27 February against Zaev's intention to govern in coalition with three Albanian Macedonian

parties in exchange for upgrading Albanians' status in the country.

### *Albania*

- On 18 February the Democratic Party (PDS, centre-right) leads an anti-government demonstration against high unemployment rates, the lack of socio-economic improvements and failure to take action against organized crime.

### *Greece*

- On 1 February Greece reports at least 138 incursions by Turkish military aircraft in its airspace.
- On 20 February the eurozone's Finance Ministry celebrates the convergence of positions between Greece and its creditors to unblock the third economic adjustment programme.

### *Turkey*

- On 5 February around 450 people are arrested in a large-scale raid against Daesh.
- On 21 February the Parliament expels the deputy of the pro-Kurdish HDP Figen Yuksekdag, who, together with the other party co-leader, Selahattin Demirtas, has been under arrest since November 2016 for spreading "terrorist propaganda."
- On 27 February the Turkish-German journalist Deniz Yücel is remanded in custody accused of spreading terrorist propaganda.
- On 27 February the Interior Ministry reports the death of at least 18 PKK terrorists between 20 and 27 February.

### *Cyprus*

- On 10 February the Parliament votes in favour of introducing the commemoration of the 1950 referendum into schools in which 96% of Greek Cypriot participants voted in favour of Enosis (union with Greece), in a decision that the Prime Minister of northern Cyprus Huseyin Ozgurgun describes as a threat to reunification.

### *Syria*

- On 7 February Amnesty International condemns the Syrian government's cam-

paign of extrajudicial executions by hanging in the Saydnaya prison, where at least 13,000 people have died.

- On 7 February at least 15 people are killed in Idlib, in one of the army's most intense attacks in months.
- On 12 February Turkey announces the entry of its troops into the centre of al-Bab, as part of Operation Euphrates Shield.
- On 17 February the second round of negotiations fails in Astana between the Syrian regime and the opposition to consolidate the ceasefire in Syria. The talks do lead to a mechanism for exchanging hostages.
- On 23 February new peace negotiations begin in Geneva between the opposition and the regime, brokered by the UN. Geneva IV is based on Resolution 2254 of the UN Security Council, which foresees an "inclusive and non-sectarian" government, a new constitution and the holding of elections.
- On 24 February two Daesh attacks kill 61 people at a checkpoint of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in Susyan.
- On 26 February Abu al-Jair al-Masri, al-Qaeda's number two and Osama Bin Laden's son-in-law is killed in a US airstrike in Idlib.

### *Lebanon*

- On 7 February security forces thwart a Daesh terrorist attack in Beirut.
- On 20 February Lebanon asks the international community for 9.445 billion euros to alleviate the strain of hosting so many Syrian refugees.

### *Jordan*

- On 18 February demonstrations in several cities call for the resignation of the Prime Minister Hani Mulki over the tax hikes on food included in the budget unveiled on 23 January 2017.

### *Egypt*

- On 9 February the authorities shut down the Cairo offices of the NGO El Nadeem Centre, which offers psychological support to victims of violence in Egyptian jails.
- On 16 February the President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi designates five new gov-

errors, which include Nadia Ahmed Abdou Saleh –the first woman to occupy such a post- in Beheira.

- On 20 February the Supreme Court upholds the death sentences handed down to 10 men charged with the deaths at the Port Said Football Stadium in 2012.

#### Libya

- On 3 February Russia announces a visit to Moscow from the Prime Minister of the Presidential Council (Government of National Accord), Fayez al-Sarraj, in an effort to put an end to the division in Libya. The commander of Libya's Armed Forces Khalifa Haftar already visited the Russian capital in November 2016 and in December a delegation of deputies from Tobruk did the same.

- On 8 February the Tobruk Parliament declares that the deal reached on 2 February between the Presidential Council and Italy to fight against irregular immigration is not valid.

- On 10 February the US vetoes the appointment of the former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad as the UN envoy to Libya.

- On 15 February Fayez al-Sarraj, and Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, head of the armed forces loyal to the Tobruk Parliament, meet in Cairo to negotiate the end of the division between the two parallel powers directly.

- On 16 February NATO announces the Presidential Council's request for help from the Atlantic Alliance in defence and security.

- On 21 February the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) consider that the trial against Saif al-Islam Gaddafi and a further 36 senior officials from the Muammar al-Gaddafi regime did meet international standards for a fair trial.

#### Tunisia

- On 9 February the former dictator Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and his wife Leïla Trabelsi are sentenced in absentia to 10 years' imprisonment for corruption. On 24 February Ben Ali is sentenced to a further eight years in prison for a property corruption case for which his son-

in-law, Sakher el-Materi –exiled in the Seychelles-, is sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

- On 11 February a terrorist cell formed by six members with links to Daesh is dismantled in Monastir.

#### Algeria

- On 7 February the activist Kamel Ed-dine Fekhar enters his 36th day of hunger strike in protest against his imprisonment 18 months ago, accused of undermining state security.

#### Morocco

- On 5 February there is new unrest in Alhucemas following protests condemning police abuse, part of a protest movement which began in October 2016 with the death of the fish seller Mouhcine Fikri.

- On 6 February Morocco warns that it will suspend economic cooperation with the EU after the European Court of Justice ruled in December 2016 that the agricultural and fishing agreements between the EU and Morocco are not applicable to the Western Sahara.

- On 24 February Morocco requests membership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

#### EU

- On 3 February the EU heads of state and government gathered in Malta approve 10 immediate measures for collaborating with the southern members in the area of migration.

### March 2017

*In France, there is a terrorist attack at the Paris-Orly Airport, the Interior Minister resigns and new information emerges which affects the chances of several presidential candidates. In Bosnia the Deputy Defence Minister is sacked. Anti-government protests continue in Montenegro and Albania. Kosovo's President submits a draft law to create its own regular army. Tensions rise in FYROM over the formation of a coalition government. Turkey enters a diplomatic crisis with several European states. In*

*Syria, the offensive begins on Raqqa. In Lebanon, there are anti-government protests. Jordan hosts the Arab League Summit. In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak is acquitted. In Libya, there is fighting for the control of key oil facilities. In Tunisia, Khalil Ghariani declines his appointment as minister. In Morocco, Saad Eddine el-Othmani is appointed Prime Minister.*

#### Portugal

- On 24 March it is reported that Portugal ended 2016 with a budget deficit of 3.807 billion euros -2.1% of the GDP- the lowest since 1974.

#### Spain

- On 13 March the High Court of Justice of Catalonia (TSJC) bans the former Catalan President Artur Mas and two of his ministers from holding public office for two years for organizing the independence referendum in November 2014, despite this being prohibited by the Constitutional Court.

#### France

- On 6 March Alain Juppe, mayor of Bordeaux, confirms that he will not be a presidential candidate for LR, believing he does not embody the renovation that the French people are demanding. In contrast, François Fillon faces pressure from his own party, where there are resignations over his running for the presidency, which is supported by a rally in Paris.

- On 7 March the weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné* reveals that François Fillon received an undeclared loan of 50,000 euros from businessman Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière. On 14 March Fillon is charged for the misuse of public funds and the fictitious employment of his wife as a parliamentary assistant. Together with Fillon, a further two candidates to the presidency, the leader of the Republic on the Move (LREM, social liberal), Emmanuel Macron, and the leader of the far-right National Front Marine Le Pen, are also involved in court investigations for alleged financial crimes.

- On 18 March a man is shot down by police in the Paris-Orly Airport after he opens fire on soldiers in the name of Allah.

- On 21 March the Interior Minister Bruno Le Roux resigns after being accused of offering his teenage children jobs as “parliamentary assistants.”
- On 27 March a demonstration staged by the Chinese community in Paris over the death of a man of Chinese origin at the hands of the police ends in violent unrest.
- On 27 March a general strike in Guiana demands that Paris make improvements in security and public services and denounces the high costs of living.

#### *Italy*

- On 9 March the Parliament approves an anti-poverty programme faced with the growing number of citizens affected by the economic slowdown and unemployment.
- On 23 March 80% of taxi drivers support a national strike demanding the regulation of ride-sharing transport services like Uber.
- On 30 March four Kosovo citizens are arrested in Venice accused of planning a terrorist attack on the Rialto Bridge.
- On 31 March the International Organization for Migration reports that the mass rescues in March brings the total number of rescues so far this year to 23,125, with 655 people dying in the attempts.

#### *Malta*

- On 28 March Tanya Borg Cardona, chairwoman of the Broadcasting Authority, resigns amid protests from employees at the body accusing her of “bullying tactics.”

#### *Bosnia and Herzegovina*

- On 9 March the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) rejects the request filed by the lawyer Sakib Softic to reverse the 2007 ruling which cleared Serbia of genocide in the Yugoslav Wars, as the appeal has not been made by the competent Bosnian authorities.
- On 16 March the European Commission encourages the creation of a common market in the Western Bal-

kans during the regional summit in Sarajevo.

- On 22 March Bosnia reaches an agreement with Russia for the latter to pay 125.2 million dollars to clear the outstanding debt that the USSR owed Yugoslavia.
- On 23 March the Parliament sacks the Deputy Defence Minister Sead Jusic for allowing the presence of the Bosnian army at the anniversary of the establishment of the Republika Srpska, despite its prohibition by the Constitutional Court.

#### *Montenegro*

- On 12 March amid opposition protests, Niksic holds municipal elections with just two candidates: the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) and Social Democratic Party (SDP), because of the opposition boycott against the national Parliament's decision -also boycotted by the opposition- to lift the parliamentary immunity of the deputies Andrija Mandic and Milan Knezevic from the Democratic Front (DF, right-wing), accused of planning a coup in October 2016.
- On 21 March after months of disputes, Andrijana Kadija is appointed director of the Radio and Television of Montenegro (RTCG) to replace Radojka Rutovic, whose replacement was one of the opposition's conditions for holding early elections in October 2016.

#### *Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244*

- On 7 March the President Hashim Thaçi submits a draft law to the Parliament to transform Kosovo's security forces into a regular army.
- On 13 March the former leader of the Yugoslav Communist Youth and League of Communists of Kosovo Azem Vllasi is shot and wounded in Pristina by a former member of the UÇK.

#### *FYROM*

- On 2 March the President Gjorge Ivanov rejects the offer of the social democrat leader Zoran Zaev to form a coalition government with the Albanian nationalists. Albania and Kosovo criticize the presidential decision while tensions

rise among the gatherings of supporters of VMRO-DPMNE and Albanian Macedonians and Zaev's followers.

#### *Albania*

- On 12 March the Prime Minister Edi Rama announces a cabinet shuffle coinciding with the protests led by the opposition Democratic Party (PD, conservative) whose leader, Lulzim Basha, calls for the formation of a caretaker government until the elections on 18 June and accuses the government of fraud in the last elections and of colluding with growers and traffickers of cannabis in Albania.

#### *Greece*

- On 7 March the ombudsman Andreas Pottakis presents his annual report to the Parliament, which underlines the worrying increase in the number of people affected by the economic crisis.

#### *Turkey*

- On 2 March the Prime Minister Mevlüt Cavusoglu summons the German ambassador following Berlin's decision to ban a Turkish minister from holding a rally as part of the campaign for the referendum on Turkey's constitutional reform. Tensions also rise for the same reason in Austria; the Netherlands, whose security forces stop a rally from taking place in Rotterdam; Denmark, whose Prime Minister declares that Turkish democracy is “under great pressure”; Norway, which grants asylum to five former Turkish military officers involved in the attempted coup in 2016; and Switzerland, where a demonstration is held in Bern against the Turkish President. On 15 March Cavusoglu threatens the EU that he will cancel the migrant readmission agreement.
- On 27 March a report by the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP, social democratic) sets the number of university teachers dismissed by the government in relation to the attempted coup in 2016 at 4,800.

#### *Cyprus*

- On 1 March the Criminal Court in Nicosia sentences the former deputy at-

torney general Rikkos Erotokritou to a total of five years in prison for accepting bribes and abuse of power. In the same case, the lawyers Andreas Kyprizoglou and Panayiotis Neocleous are sentenced to two and a half years in prison for bribery and one and a half years in prison for conspiracy to defraud, respectively.

- On 17 March the government appoints Maria Stylianou Lottidis as the new ombudsman.

#### *Syria*

- On 3 March the army once again takes control of Palmyra from Daesh.

- On 3 March at least five fighters are killed in fighting between the Kurdish peshmerga and the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), linked with the PKK in Khanasur, amid tensions between the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria (KDPS), -supported by Iraqi Kurdistan- and the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the main Kurdish party in Syria.

- On 11 March Tahrir al-Sham claims responsibility for twin bombings in Damascus in which at least 74 Shia pilgrims are killed.

- On 15 March the third round of negotiations begin in Astana on the ceasefire in Syria without making any significant progress.

- On 15 March twin bombings carried out by Tahrir al-Sham, a coalition led by Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, on the Palace of Justice and a restaurant in al-Ruiba, in Damascus, leave more than 40 people dead.

- On 19 March fighting breaks out in Damascus after an assault led by Jabhat Fateh al-Sham on government offices.

- On 20 March the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) take control of Karama from Daesh.

- On 20 March at least 33 people are killed in an airstrike on a school sheltering displaced people in al-Mansoura, Raqqa, and which the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights attributes to the international coalition.

- On 23 March the fifth round of UN-mediated peace talks on Syria begin in Geneva, which come to a close without any relevant advances.

- On 27 March the SDF announces that Raqqa will form part of its autonomous territory. The city is still surrounded

by the SDF, which joins with the Kurdish PYD, which hopes to take Raqqa before the regime forces or Turkish-supported rebels arrive.

#### *Lebanon*

- On 19 March thousands of people demonstrate in Beirut against the mismanagement, corruption and tax hikes.

#### *Jordan*

- On 20 March citing the lack of a bilateral extradition treaty, the Supreme Court of Cassation rejects the US request to extradite Ahlam al-Tamimi, a Jordanian woman involved in a terrorist attack in Jerusalem in 2001, which left 15 dead.

#### *Egypt*

- On 2 March the Court of Cassation clears the former President Hosni Mubarak of the death of protesters during the Egyptian Revolution.

- On 23 March the army reports that 10 soldiers have been killed in fighting with jihadists in Sinai.

- On 25 March the former head of the Press Syndicate Yehia Kalash is sentenced to a year in prison for harbouring two journalists wanted by the police in May 2016.

- On 26 March 56 people are sentenced to between seven and 10 years in prison related to the shipwreck of a boat carrying migrants in which at least 202 people died in September 2016.

#### *Libya*

- On 14 March Libya's eastern forces commanded by Khalifa Haftar take back control of the oil facilities of Sirte and Ras Lanuf, captured on 2 March by the Islamist Benghazi Defence Brigades.

- On 15 March the eastern Libyan government announces that it has reached an agreement with Russia for military assistance.

#### *Tunisia*

- On 2 March Khalil Ghariani turns down his appointment as Tunisia's Public Service Minister amid "the political and social tensions" arising after his elec-

tion to replace Abid Briki, member of the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT).

- On 3 March the former President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, exiled in Saudi Arabia, is sentenced to a further six years in prison, this time for the misuse of social funds raised in 2006 at two Mariah Carey concerts.

- On 29 March the former Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa announces the launch of his new party al-Badil Ettounsi (Tunisian Alternative).

#### *Algeria*

- On 13 March the EU and Algeria adopt shared priorities strengthened during the Association Council.

- On 20 March Abdelmoumen Ould Kaddour replaces Amine Mazouzi at the head of the state-owned hydrocarbon company, Sonatrach.

#### *Morocco*

- On 7 March the Constitutional Union deputy between 2003 and 2009 Abdelatif Merdas is shot dead in Casablanca, in what the public prosecutor describes as a criminally motivated attack.

- On 17 March Mohammed VI appoints the number two of the Justice and Development Party (PJD), Saadeddine Othmani, as the Prime Minister, charged with forming a government after five months of unsuccessful negotiations led by Abdelilah Benkirane. On 25 March Othmani announces an agreement with the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) to form a government.

#### *EU*

- On 2 March the European Commission presents an action plan to accelerate the return of immigrants who have been denied asylum to their countries of origin.

- On 3 March the EU presents the White Paper on the Future of Europe, arising from the Summit of Heads of State and Government in Malta on 3 February and which contemplates five post-Brexit scenarios: carrying on; nothing but the single market; various speeds of integration; restricting community action to fewer areas; or advancing towards a Federal Union.



- On 9 March the Polish President of the European Council Donald Tusk is reelected to the position with only Poland voting against him.
- On 25 March in the Italian capital the EU holds its 60th anniversary of the 1957 Treaty of Rome with all states -except the United Kingdom- signing a declaration endorsing the Union's validity as a guarantor of an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity.
- On 29 March the United Kingdom activates article 50 of the Treaty on European Union thereby initiating 18 months of complex negotiations for Britain's departure from the EU; a scenario that increases tensions with Scotland and Northern Ireland, who voted to remain in the referendum in June 2016.

#### Arab League

- On 29 March the Arab League holds its 28th summit in Sweimeh, Jordan, in which it unanimously condemns the foreign interference in the region -in reference to Iran-. Jordan and Lebanon reiterate the need for international aid to cope with the growing refugee population.

#### April 2017

*Spain hosts the third meeting of the EUMed group. The terrorist organization Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) hands over its weapons to France. France holds the first round of presidential elections. In Italy, the Democratic Party (PD) holds primary elections. In Croatia, the Most party leaves the government coalition. Serbia holds presidential elections. Political tension continues in FYROM and Albania. Turkey holds a referendum on its constitutional reform. In Syria, tensions rise between the US and Russia following a chemical attack in Khan Sheikhun. In Lebanon, Michel Aoun suspends parliamentary activity to force an agreement on the new electoral law. In Egypt, further attacks are carried out on the Coptic community. The Libyan Government of National Accord reaches a deal with the southern tribes on their integration into the border security forces. In Tunisia, there are protests in Tataouine and Kef. In Mo-*

*rocco, Mohammed VI appoints the members of the Constitutional Court, the Prime Minister unveils his new government and instability continues in the Rif.*

#### Portugal

- On 4 April the Prime Minister Antonio Costa rules out holding early elections and decides to continue with the governing left-wing coalition.
- On 29 April Spain and Portugal reach an EC-mediated agreement on waste storage at Spain's Almaraz nuclear plant.

#### Spain

- On 4 April the regional president of Murcia Pedro Antonio Sanchez (PP) resigns, embroiled in a corruption probe. On 29 April Fernando Lopez Miras (PP) is elected regional president.
- On 9 April Carme Chacon, the former Defence Minister during the government of Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero and first woman to hold the post in Spain, dies.
- On 10 April Madrid hosts the third meeting of the EUMed group -Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Greece and Cyprus- to reinforce a common stance on Brexit.
- On 21 April the former president of the Community of Madrid Ignacio Gonzalez (PP) goes to prison over his involvement in the 'Lezo' corruption scandal.

#### France

- On 8 April ETA hands over a major weapons arsenal to the French authorities, in an act that, theoretically, represents the terrorist organization surrendering arms.
- On 23 April Emmanuel Macron (LREM), and Marine Le Pen (FN) are the most voted candidates in the first round of the presidential elections with 24.01% and 21.30% of the votes respectively.
- On 28 April the FN president Jean-François Jalkh steps down over his alleged Holocaust denial. The mayor of Henin-Beaumont, Steeve Briois, will succeed Jalkh, who was appointed as interim President after Marine Le Pen stepped down to focus on her presidential candidacy.

#### Italy

- On 18 April there are more mass migrant arrivals by boat in Sicily, with 8,500 people rescued in the last three days in 55 operations led by the EU's migrant rescue service and different NGOs.
- On 30 April the former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi beats the party secretary in the Democratic Party (PD) primaries with over 70% of the votes and relaunches his career, despite the criminal investigation involving his father, Tiziano.

#### Malta

- On 10 April the Nationalist and Democratic parties announce their intention to form the Coalition for Change ahead of the elections in June.

#### Croatia

- On 11 April the Commercial Court in Zagreb begins the extraordinary administrative procedure of Agrokor to avoid the major Croatian holding going bankrupt.
- On 28 April the Most party (centre-right) leaves the coalition government a day after the Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic approves the dismissal of three of the party's ministers, who supported the request for the dismissal of the Finance Minister Zdravko Maric, put forward by the opposition.

#### Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 25 April Bosniak and Bosnian Croat war veterans block several entry points to the Bosniak-Croat entity demanding improvements in their benefits and a revision of the registry of beneficiaries.

#### Serbia

- On 2 April the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic (SNS) wins the presidential elections with 55.06% of the votes. Protests are organized during the days that follow the elections against the result, denouncing irregularities in the voting.
- On 25 April thousands of Serbs protest against the Waterfront urban development project backed by the government and financed by the UAE.

*Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244*

- On 21 April a court in Kosovo orders the arrest of the former Vetëvendosje leader Albin Kurti, after he fails to appear for the trial against him for throwing a smoke bomb in the Parliament in 2016.
- On 21 April the Kosovo government abstains from responding to the EU's request to uphold Kosovo's Constitutional Court ruling in May 2016, which is unpopular among most Kosovo Albanians and attributes the ownership of disputed territories to the Serbian orthodox monastery of Decan.
- On 25 April the opposition groups Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) and Nisma announce that they will run together in the next elections and with the AKK leader Ramush Haradinaj as joint candidate for the post of Prime Minister.
- On 27 April a French court rejects an appeal to extradite the former commander of the UÇK and former Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj, demanded by Serbia to stand trial for war crimes.

*FYROM*

- On 4 April FYROM accuses Albania of interfering in its internal affairs and influencing the country's Albanian community, during the political stalemate to form a coalition government, in which the Albanian parties, which want more concessions, are a key piece.
- On 27 April more than 100 people are injured when national demonstrators burst into the Parliament to protest against the election of an Albanian, Talat Xhaferi, as speaker of the Parliament, thanks to an agreement between the SDSM and the Albanian parties, which has sparked two months of protests.

*Albania*

- On 24 April thousands of centre-right opposition supporters block five major roads demanding the creation of a technocratic caretaker government until the elections on 18 June.
- On 28 April the former Prime Minister Ilir Meta is elected President with the support of the centre-left parliamentary majority, despite the opposition boycott.

*Greece*

- On 4 April thousands of pensioners demonstrate in Athens against the 12th pension cut in seven years, fruit of the negotiations between the government and international creditors to keep the 86-billion-euro bailout corresponding to 2017.

*Turkey*

- On 6 April around 550 former MPs from 16 parties, including the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP), launch a *no* campaign in the constitutional referendum of 16 April.
- On 16 April Turkey holds its referendum on its constitutional reform to establish a presidential republic which increases the President powers and terms of office. 51.41% vote 'yes' against 48.59% who vote against the change.
- On 25 April the Council of State rejects the appeal filed by the main opposition party, CHP, against the High Electoral Board for not declaring numerous unstamped votes from the constitutional referendum.
- On 26 April the government suspends 9,103 police officers for alleged links with the Islamist preacher Fethullah Gülen, accused of organizing the attempted coup in 2016. On the same day, more than a thousand people are arrested in 72 provinces in the country, suspected of having links with the coup.

*Syria*

- On 7 April the US launches missiles at the Shayrat military base in Homs, from where Washington believes that the Syrian army carried out a chemical attack on 4 April on Khan Shijun, Idlib, in which at least 80 people were killed. For the first time, Washington orders military action to be taken against Syrian government forces. Russia, Iran and Hezbollah describe the strikes as aggression against a sovereign state and, on 10 April, threaten to respond "with force" to any "aggressor."
- On 12 April, in the UN Security Council, Russia vetoes a resolution presented by the US, France and the United Kingdom condemning the chemical attack on 4 April in Khan Shijun.
- On 15 April at least 126 people are killed close to Aleppo by the explosion

of a vehicle which hit the convoy carrying out the pactevacuation of 30,000 civilians and fighters from Foah and Ke-fraya -Shia towns under siege by rebel forces- and Zabadani and Madaya -under siege by the Syrian army-. On 21 April the evacuation is completed.

- On 25 April at least 11 civilians are killed trying to leave Tabqa, Raqqa, from an airstrike attributed to the US-led international coalition. The area is the stage for fighting for control between the SDF and Daesh.
- On 26 April Turkey announces the death of 70 PKK members during an airstrike in northeastern Syria and the Iraqi region of Sinjar.

*Lebanon*

- On 11 April the death toll following four days of fighting in the Palestinian refugee camp Ain al-Hilweh, in Sidon, rises to eight in clashes that began on 7 April during the deployment of soldiers from the Palestinian Joint Security Forces, who were attacked by members of the radical Bilal Badr organization. On 12 April, the Palestinian security forces burst into Ain al-Hilweh to put an end to the fighting.
- On 12 April the President Michel Aoun suspends parliamentary activity for a month temporarily preventing the approval of an extension to the mandate of the current deputies. With the suspension, Aoun hopes to give more time to the deputies to reach some kind of agreement on a new electoral law before the extension of their mandate, scheduled for 13 April, - which began in 2009- to 2018.
- On 24 April the army announces the death of around 20 Daesh members in an artillery attack in the Baalbek region.
- On 24 and 26 April four members of Daesh preparing terrorist attacks in Lebanon are arrested by security forces.

*Egypt*

- On 2 April a court for urgent matters nullifies the Supreme Administrative Court's ruling in January which cancelled the agreement to transfer the islands of Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia, saying that the court did not have the necessary jurisdiction.

- On 5 April the Minister of Supply Ali al-Meselhi announces that the reform of the food subsidy system will mean a 10% decrease in the current beneficiaries.
- On 9 April an explosion during the Palm Sunday service in the Coptic church of Saint George in Tanta leaves at least 27 dead. Two hours later, a second explosion is reported in Saint Mark's Cathedral in Alexandria, which leaves at least 18 dead. Daesh claims responsibility for both attacks. On 13 April the Coptic Orthodox Church is forced to cancel Easter celebrations due to the risk of another attack.
- On 19 April Daesh claims responsibility for a gun attack on a military checkpoint next to the Saint Catalina Christian monastery, in southern Sinai, which leaves at least one dead.

#### Libya

- On 2 April the Italian Interior Minister Marco Minniti announces the signing in Rome, on 31 March and by around 60 southern Libyan tribes, of a peace deal with the Government of National Accord (Presidential Council). The agreement foresees the tribes forming part of the government's security forces along the 5,000 km of the country's southern border where migrant and arms traffickers operate.
- On 10 April the G7, gathered in Lucca, express their support for the unity government led by Fayez Sarraj and for Libyan unity.

#### Tunisia

- On 4 April two government delegations travel to Tataouine and Kef after several days of major demonstrations supported by the UGTT against the high unemployment and poverty in both governorates.
- On 14 April the student union UGET leads a general strike against police violence on 11 April during a student demonstration in the capital in which 43 students are injured. The student mobilizations come in relation to the ministerial decree in March 2017 modifying the access conditions to the entrance call for the Magistrates Training Institute (MTI) restricting it to students who have a master's degree in legal sciences.
- On 20 April a large demonstration in

Kef protests against the lack of government measures to improve the region's economic situation.

#### Morocco

- On 4 April Mohammed VI appoints the members of the Constitutional Court, whose president will be Said Ibrai.
- On 5 April the Prime Minister Saad Eddine El Othmani unveils his new government led by the Islamist PJD and which includes the National Rally of Independents (RNI), the Constitutional Union (UC), the Popular Movement (MP), the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) and the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS).
- On 10 April the new Interior Minister Abdelouafi Laftit travels to Al Hoceima to meet with citizen representatives, where there have been months of demonstrations since the death in October 2016 of the fish seller Mouhcine Fikri as a consequence of an act of police abuse.
- On 13 April clashes break out in Fez between security forces and leftist students, following an attempt by police to disperse student demonstrations in support of two students who are to stand trial for the death of an Islamist student in April 2014.
- On 27 April seven people are sentenced to between five and eight months in prison for the death in October 2016 of Mouhcine Fikri in Al Hoceima.

#### EU

- On 1 April a well-attended rally in Gendarmenmarkt Square in Berlin calls for greater effort to drive the European project towards a stronger union.
- On 29 April the 27 Member States agree to include a reference to a unified Ireland -as part of the EU- at a summit in which European leaders approve directives on the Brexit negotiations.

#### May 2017

*In Spain, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) holds primary elections. France holds the second round of its presidential elections and unveils a new government. Mass migrant ar-*

*rivals continue in Italy. Malta and Albania call for early legislative elections. In Kosovo, the coalition government breaks up. In FYROM, the Parliament endorses the government of the new Prime Minister Zoran Zaev. Greece experiences a national strike day, in the month that Athens and its international creditors reach an agreement on the reform package required for the release of the next bailout tranche. In Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan is pronounced leader of the AKP. In Syria, the regime takes complete control of Homs and makes major advances on the eastern and southern borders. In Egypt, the Coptic community is the target of a new attack and new sentences are issued to the Muslim Brotherhood's supreme guide. In Libya, an agreement is reached to hold elections in 2018. In Tunisia and Morocco, anti-government protests continue. Algeria holds legislative elections.*

#### Portugal

- On 15 May data on the Portuguese economy for the first quarter of 2017 reveal an interannual growth in GDP of 2.8%, the fastest expansion since the end of 2007.

#### Spain

- On 21 May the former PSOE secretary-general Pedro Sánchez wins the party's primaries against the Andalusian president Susana Díaz and the former Basque president Patxi López, with the support of 50.26% of party members.

#### France

- On 7 May with a turnout of 74.56%, Emmanuel Macron (LREM) wins with 66.1% of the vote against Marine Le Pen (FN, 33.9%) in the second round of the presidential elections.
- On 17 May Emmanuel Macron announces the composition of the government of his Prime Minister Edouard Philippe. Its members include Gerard Collomb (PS) as Interior Minister; Richard Ferrand, as LREM general secretary and Minister of Territorial Development; the environmentalist Nicolas Hulot as Minister of the Eco-

logical and Inclusive Transition; François Bayrou, leader of the Democratic Movement (MoDem, centrist), as Justice Minister; Jean-Yves Le Drian (PS), as Foreign Minister; Bruno Le Maire (LR) as Minister of the Economy; and Sylvie Goulard (MoDem) as Minister of the Armed Forces (previously the Defence Ministry).

- On 30 May the former Prime Minister Edouard Balladur is charged in a case involving the illegal financing of his presidential campaign in 1995, linked with an arms contract with Pakistan.

#### *Italy*

- On 14 May Matteo Salvini confirms his position as leader of the Northern League (Padanian separatist) with 82.7% of the votes in the party's primary elections.

- On 15 May 68 members of the 'Ndrangheta Calabrian mafia, are arrested for their infiltration into migrant aid organizations.

- On 18 May three people are stabbed at Milan's main train station by an Italian-Tunisian Daesh supporter.

- On 18 May Italia begins the process of finding a buyer for Alitalia, currently under extraordinary administration.

- On 19 May Italy approves a law on compulsory vaccinations for children.

- On 20 May the former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi gives his full support to the Animalist Movement, a new party led by Michela Vittoria Brambilla, an MP from his party, Forza Italia.

- On 26 May Taormina hosts the G7 summit focused on climate change, international terrorism and the refugee crisis. During the summit, the thousands of rescued migrants are to be taken to a location away from Sicily.

- On 27 - 28 May six people are killed in Naples in crimes related with the Camorra, violence the likes of which has not been seen since the last *faida* -war between mafia families- in 2004.

- On 30 May a total of 60,000 people have crossed the Mediterranean headed for Italy since the beginning of 2017. A further 1,720 have died in the attempt, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

#### *Malta*

- On 2 May Joseph Muscat, the Labour Prime Minister, calls early legislative elections for 3 June, faced with growing allegations that connects members of his family and the Labour Party with the international corruption scandal *Panamagate*.

#### *Slovenia*

- On 5 May the EC opens an infringement procedure against Slovenia for the seizure by the country's police force of confidential information of the European Central Bank in a raid in 2016 of the Central Bank of Slovenia as part of an investigation into the 2013 rescue of the bank.

#### *Croatia*

- On 22 May the EC recommends that Croatia and Portugal exit the excessive deficit procedure.

#### *Bosnia and Herzegovina*

- On 25 May police in Trebinje file charges against the former Bosnian general Jovan Divjak for war crimes against Bosnian Serbs in Konjic during the Bosnian War.

#### *Montenegro*

- On 24 May the pro-Serbian Nova party launches an initiative to achieve greater autonomy for the Bay of Kotor.

#### *Serbia*

- On 23 May Bratislav Gasic, the former Defence Minister who was sacked in 2016 for making sexist remarks, is appointed head of the Security Information Agency (BIA).

- On 31 May Aleksandar Vucic is sworn in as President while clashes break out between his supporters and opposition protesters.

#### *Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244*

- On 10 May the breakup of the coalition government over the failure to reach an agreement regarding border demar-

cation with Montenegro, a condition to obtain visa-free travel in the EU, brings about the fall of the government after a no-confidence vote in the Parliament.

- On 25 May the Supreme Court acquits the former UÇK commander and former Transport Minister Fatmir Limaj of charges of war crimes committed in Klecka in 1999.

#### *FYROM*

- On 17 May the President Gjorge Ivanov tasks the social democrat Zoran Zaev, who came second in the early elections held in December 2016 with the formation of a new government, after receiving a guarantee that his coalition with the Albanian nationalists will not undermine the country's constitutional order or sovereignty.

- On 22 May the special state prosecutor for war crimes opens three new investigations, two of which affect the former Prime Minister and VMRO-DPMNE leader Nikola Gruevski.

- On 31 May the Parliament approves the government of Zoran Zaev which it is hoped will put an end to two years of political crisis and make progress in the EU and NATO accession negotiations and the naming dispute with Greece. Seven of the 25 ministers belong to the Albanian minority, which represents a third of the country's population.

#### *Albania*

- On 18 May the socialist Prime Minister Edi Rama and leader of the Democratic Party (PD, conservative) Lulzim Basha agree to hold parliamentary elections on 25 June.

- On 23 May the Parliament approves the composition of the new caretaker government agreed upon between the government and the opposition, which entails the replacement of the Deputy Prime Minister and six other ministers with members of the opposition.

#### *Greece*

- On 16 May figures published by Eurostat reveal that at the end of the third quarter of 2016 the Greek economy entered a recession for the third time since 2010.

- On 18 May a day after the one-day general protest strike, the Parliament approves a new package of austerity measures, agreed upon on 2 May between the government and international creditors and which includes pension cuts, tax hikes and reforms in the energy sector in exchange for a new tranche of the financial bailout.
- On 25 May the former Prime Minister Lucas Papademos is wounded in Athens by a letter bomb for which no one claims responsibility.

#### Turkey

- On 16 and 24 May arrest orders are issued for at least 224 civil servants and workers over their links with Fethullah Gülen and the attempted coup in 2016.
- On 21 May Recep Tayyip Erdogan is named the AKP leader, thereby becoming the first Turkish head of state to preside over a political party under the constitutional reforms approved in April.
- On 26 May security forces kill 29 members of the PKK terrorist organization in an operation in Agri and Van.

#### Syria

- On 15 May around 2,300 people, including more than a thousand rebels, are evacuated from Qaboun, Damascus, control of which was taken two days before by the army.
- On 15 May Daesh carries out intensive bombing of Deir ez-Zor.
- On 21 May the Syrian regime declares Homs as "liberated" following the departure of 989 fighters and civilians from al-Waer heading for Jarabulus, in Aleppo.
- On 21 May at least 23 people are killed in a twin bomb attack on a security base in Ahrar al-Sham in Tell Toqan, Idlib.
- On 25 May at least 35 civilians, including relatives of Daesh militiamen, are killed in an airstrike on al-Mayadin, Deir ez-Zor.
- On 30 May the US begins sending arms to the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG).

#### Lebanon

- On 17 May Lebanon becomes the first Arab country to hold Gay Pride celebrations.

- On 26 May at least six soldiers are injured in an attack during an anti-terror raid in Nabi Osman.

#### Jordan

- On 4 May the EU and Jordan strengthen their collaboration to foster possibilities of developing trade, business and investment in Jordan.

#### Egypt

- On 7 May the eight members of a cell linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, among them its leader Helmi Saad Masri, are killed in clashes with security forces in Upper Egypt.
- On 8 May the Giza Criminal Court hands down a life sentence to the supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood Mohammed Badie, in the repetition of a trial in which originally –in April 2015– he had been sentenced to death for inciting violence. On 9 May Egypt's Court of Cassation order the retrial of Badie and a further 49 who were also convicted in April 2015 and given death sentences over the attack on a police station in Port Said in 2013.
- On 16 May the Sawarka tribe becomes the second in Sinai to declare war on Daesh, after the al-Tarabin tribe did the same days before, when, on 11 May, Daesh killed 15 al-Tarabin tribesmen in el-Perz.
- On 17 May the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi promises tax exemptions to alleviate the widespread price increases.
- On 24 May Egypt blocks 21 news websites, including al-Jazeera and Huffpost Arabi, for "inciting terrorism and spreading lies."
- On 26 May at least 28 Coptic Christians are killed in a Daesh attack in Menia. On 28 May, the government fires the security chief in Menia, Faisal Doweidar.

#### Libya

- On 1 May the International Criminal Court issues an arrest warrant for Al-Tuhamy Khaled, the former security chief under Muammar Gaddafi for war crimes and crimes against humanity in 2011.
- On 2 May the head of Libya's eastern armed forces Khalifa Haftar and the head of the Government of National Accord

(Presidential Council) Fayez al-Sarraj agree to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in 2018.

- On 21 May the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Filippo Grandi demands the release of the refugees held in 30 Libyan detention centres.
- On 26 and 29 May the Egyptian Air Force attacks jihadist targets in Derna in response to the murder of 27 Egyptian Coptic pilgrims.
- On 27 May Ansar al-Sharia, linked to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), announces its dissolution.

#### Tunisia

- On 1 May the former President Moncef Marzouki is elected secretary-general of al-Irada (The Will) in the first conference of the party, of which Marzouki is a founding member.
- On 8 May demonstrators, who have been protesting since March in the south of the country demanding better salaries and working conditions, interrupt the production of crude oil in Kamur. On 10 May the army is deployed to protect production.
- On 24 May the businessmen Chafik Jarraya and Yassine Chennoufi are arrested for links with protests which took place in Tataouine and under corruption charges, respectively.
- On 31 May the army clashes with terrorists in Mount Samama, Kasserine, days after a senior figure in the AQIM-affiliated Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade is killed in the same province.

#### Algeria

- On 4 May Algeria holds parliamentary elections. The National Liberation Front of Djamel Ould Abbas wins (25.99% of the votes) obtaining 164 seats, 44 less than in the previous elections. In second place (with 14.91%), the National Rally for Democracy takes 100 seats, 32 more than in the previous elections.
- On 20 May around 100 demonstrators are arrested in Bouira during a march of the Movement for the Autonomy of Kabylie (MAK).
- On 24 May the President Abdelaziz Bouteflika appoints the hitherto Housing Minister Abdelmadjid Tebboune, as

Prime Minister to replace Abdelmalek Sellal.

- On 28 May Abdelaziz Bouteflika fires the Minister of Tourism and member of the Algerian Popular Movement (MPA) Messaoud Benagoun, three days after his appointment.

#### Morocco

- On 20 May after dismantling more than 270 terrorist cells since 2002, the Moroccan intelligence services warns of the need to increase information exchange to halt the growing threat of terrorism in the Sahel and Maghreb.
- On 29 May Nasser Zafzafi is arrested, one of the leaders of the anti-government protests carried out in recent weeks in Al Hoceima.

#### EU

- On 16 May the President of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker announces the appointment of the Euro MP Mariya Gabriel, the candidate proposed by Bulgaria on 10 May, as member of the EC following the resignation at the end of 2016 of Kristalina Georgieva.
- On 17 May the EC opens another procedure against Hungary, the first of which was opened in December 2015, for breaching European asylum rules.
- On 22 May the EU receives Michel Barnier's mandate as chief negotiator for Brexit.
- On 28 May, after the NATO summit in Brussels and the G7 summit in Taormina, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel calls on the EU to "take fate into its own hands" after Brexit, the changing politics in Russia and Turkey and the election of Donald Trump in the US.

### June 2017

*In France, parliamentary elections are held and there are four resignations in the government. Italy holds local elections and the mass migrant arrivals continue. Malta, Kosovo and Albania hold parliamentary elections. In Croatia, the Parliament approves a government reshuffle. Montenegro joins NATO. Serbia appoints a new Prime Minister. In FYROM new charges are brought against*

*former senior government officials. In Turkey, an opposition leader is convicted of spying. In Cyprus, the reunification negotiations are resumed. In Syria the offensive begins to oust Daesh from Raqqa. Lebanon passes an electoral law based on proportional representation. The Egyptian President ratifies the transfer of Tiran and Sanafir in the same month that Egypt and Mauritania break ties with Qatar. In Libya, the former Lebanese Minister of Culture Ghassan Salame is appointed as the UN's Special Representative. In Morocco, the protests grow in Rif.*

#### Portugal

- On 17 June a deliberately-started fire in the Leiria district, the largest in the country's history, leave 64 dead.

#### Spain

- On 1 June the anti-corruption prosecutor Manuel Moix resigns after his involvement is reported in a family business based in Panama.
- On 9 June the Catalan President Carles Puigdemont announces that a referendum on independence will be held on 1 October.
- On 14 June the Congress of Deputies (lower house) rejects the motion of no confidence presented by Unidos Podemos ('Together We Can' - leftist) against the government of Mariano Rajoy (PP).
- On 23 June the Civil Guard arrests a Moroccan man with Danish nationality in Melilla who, through an extensive business network, laundered money to finance Daesh and al-Qaeda.

#### France

- On 11 and 18 June France holds parliamentary elections. LREM wins an absolute majority taking 350 of the 577 seats in the National Assembly, although there is a record abstention rate of 57.36%.
- On 18 June the leader of the Socialist Party (PS) Jean-Christophe Cambadélis resigns after the party's historic defeat in the parliamentary elections.
- On 20 - 21 June Richard Ferrand, the Territorial Cohesion Minister; Sylvie Gou-

lard, the Army Minister; François Bayrou, the Justice Minister; and Marielle de Sarnez, the European Affairs Minister, resign over their involvement in court investigations. They are replaced by Florence Parly -Defence-, Nicole Belloubet -Justice-, Nathalie Loiseau -European Affairs- and Jacques Mezard -Territorial Cohesion-, the latter, in turn, being replaced as Agriculture Minister by Stéphane Travert.

- On 21 June forty of the 112 LR deputies splinter from the parliamentary group to form their own party close to the President Emmanuel Macron.

- On 30 June Marine Le Pen (FN) is charged in the investigation into fictitious contracts to pay her party assistants with funds from the European Parliament.

#### Italy

- On 11 and 25 June Italy holds local elections in around a thousand town councils with a turnout of below 50% and in which the centre right gains a major victory which contrasts with the fall of the centre left and the Five Star Movement (M5S).

- On 25 June the EC authorizes the Italian bailout of the banks Popolare di Vicenza and Veneto Banca.

- On 28 June the government announces the possibility of closing its ports to NGO migrant delivery boats due to the unsustainable situation caused by migrants arriving in their thousands and coinciding with the landing in the last 48 hours alone of 12,000 refugees.

#### Malta

- On 3 June Malta holds early parliamentary elections with a turnout of 92.1%. The Labour Party wins with 55.04% (37 seats). National Force, a right-wing coalition of the Nationalist Party and the Democratic Party win 43.68% of the vote (30 seats).

#### Slovenia

- On 29 June the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague rules in favour of Slovenia in the border dispute with Croatia over the maritime border in Piran Bay, granting Slovenia access to international waters.

### *Croatia*

- On 9 June the Parliament approves the government reshuffle following the breakup in April of the government coalition. The new coalition is formed by conservatives from HDZ, liberals from HNS and other minor parties.
- On 12 June the Foreign Minister Davor Ivo Stier resigns to focus on his position as political secretary of HDZ.

### *Bosnia and Herzegovina*

- On 6 June the President of the Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik reiterates his decision not to authorize the history textbooks approved by the Federal Government or the Bosniak-Croat Entity because they reflect a “distorted” view of events such as the Srebrenica massacre or the siege of Sarajevo.
- On 20 June the student protests against ethnic segregation in education centres intensify.
- On 27 June a Dutch court rules that the Dutch UN peacekeepers were partly liable for the massacre of 300 Bosniaks in Srebrenica at the hands of Bosnian Serb troops.

### *Montenegro*

- On 5 June Montenegro joins NATO.
- On 20 June Montenegro opens chapters on the free movement of goods and regional policy and closes the chapter on external relations in its accession negotiations.

### *Serbia*

- On 15 June the President Aleksandar Vucic gives the task of forming a government to the current Public Administration Minister Ana Brnabic, Serbia's first woman Prime Minister.
- On 15 June Serbia introduces sanctions and incentives in favour of the Cyrillic alphabet.
- On 20 June Serbia opens chapters on customs unions and intellectual property in its accession negotiations.

### *Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244*

- On 11 June Kosovo holds early parliamentary elections. The coalition led by

PKD wins (33.92% of the votes) and there is a surprising increase in the separatist Vetëvendosje party who came second (27.16%) ahead of the LDK-led coalition (25.79%).

- On 28 June the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) warns of the sharp rise in the influence of extremist groups during the last two decades in Kosovo.

### *FYROM*

- On 29 June the special prosecutor Katica Janeva announces charges against more than 90 senior officials over the illegal wiretaps carried out by the previous VMRO-DPMNE government. In parallel to this, she orders the arrest of the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and the Interior and Transport Ministers Gordana Jankuloska and Mile Janakieski, among others, within the investigation into the alleged electoral fraud of VMRO-DPMNE in 2013. The announcement comes a day before the 18-month deadline for pressing charges before the special prosecutor, which has been serving a five-year mandate since its creation in 2015.

### *Albania*

- On 25 June Albania holds early parliamentary elections in which the Socialist Party wins with 48.52% of the vote, followed by the Democratic Party of Albania (PDS, conservative) -29.05%- and the Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI) -14.42%-.
- On 29 June the LSI leader Petrit Vasil announces his resignation and proposes his wife Monika Kryemadhi as his successor.

### *Greece*

- On 2 June police begin to clear the refugee camp at the old Athens airport in Elliniko.
- On 15 June the IMF and the eurozone agree on a new tranche of 8.5 billion euros of the Greek bailout to allow the country to meet its imminent payments.
- On 23 June according to official data, on the islands of Lesbos, Chios and Samos alone a total of 1,038 people have arrived in 20 days.

### *Turkey*

- On 15 June Enis Berberoglu, from the opposition CHP party, is sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment for spying, charged with leaking information to the media about an alleged Turkish arms shipment to Syria in 2014.
- On 16 June Turkey summons the US ambassador to demand explanations over the US decision to issue an arrest warrant on 12 of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's bodyguards, who were involved in clashes against demonstrators protesting Erdogan's politics during an official visit to Washington in May.
- On 22 June the Education Minister removes the theory of evolution from the last draft of the education programme for secondary education centres.
- On 25 June for the third consecutive year, the authorities stop Gay Pride celebrations in Istanbul.

### *Cyprus*

- On 13 June the President Nicos Anastasiades declares that he is ready to help Lebanon in its dispute with Israel over the demarcation of its maritime border where there are major hydrocarbon deposits.
- On 28 June the UN-brokered Cypriot reunification negotiations are resumed in Crans-Montana, Switzerland.

### *Syria*

- On 6 June the FSA begins its offensive to liberate Raqqqa from Daesh.
- On 10 June the advance of the Syrian army on Daesh positions reaches 50 kilometres from the strategic al-Tanf area.
- On 19 June Russia announces that it has killed the Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, close to Raqqqa in an airstrike on 28 May.
- On 18 June the Iranian Revolutionary Guard fires missiles at Daesh's Deir ez-Zor bases, which Iran considers responsible for two terrorist attacks in Tehran, on 7 June, that left 18 people dead.
- On 19 June the Syrian regime condemns the downing in al-Rasafa, Raqqqa, of one of its jets by the US-led coalition. Washington confirms the downing of the plane claiming the aircraft had dropped bombs on FSA soldiers in Tabqa.

- On 20 June the Syrian army resumes its shelling on Dera, after a 48-hour cease-fire comes to an end, coinciding with US and Russian talks in Amman to create a “de-escalation zone” in southern Syria.
- On 26 June fighting intensifies between regime forces and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and other rebel groups in Quneitra.
- On 30 June a report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons confirms that the civilian deaths in Khan Shijun in April 2017 were the result of the use of chemical weapons.

#### Lebanon

- On 14 June the government approves for the first time in the country's history an electoral law based on proportional representation, overcoming the last sticking point for holding the first parliamentary elections since 2009. The new system establishes elections on a single day throughout the country, in which, as of 2022, the diaspora will have six seats.

#### Egypt

- On 17 June 30 people are sentenced to death for the murder of the chief public prosecutor Hisham Barakat, in June 2015.
- On 20 June the government announces the death of three members of the armed Hasm group in an operation in Alexandria.
- On 22 June the government approves the three-month extension of the state of emergency declared in April.
- On 24 June the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi ratifies the agreement to transfer Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia, after the Parliament gives its approval on 13 June and despite the temporary suspension issued by the Constitutional Court on 21 June and the citizen protests which end with several arrests in 11 governorates.

#### Libya

- On 6 June Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia agree to push for political dialogue for Libya, rejecting foreign interference in the country.
- On 10 June the militia Abu Bakr al-Siddiq says it has freed Saif al-Islam

Gaddafi after holding him for more than six years in Zintan.

- On 20 June the United Nations Security Council appoints the former Lebanese Minister Ghassan Salame as the new UN envoy to Libya to replace the German envoy Martin Kobler.

#### Tunisia

- On 21 June Rachid Ghannouchi, president of the Islamist Ennahda party, announces a dispute with Sky News Arabia after the Emirate news channel broadcast a report accusing him of being involved in the assassination of his political opponent Chokri Belaïd in 2013.
- On 28 June the authorities announce they have frozen the assets of the magnet and former presidential candidate Slim Riahi suspected of corruption.

#### Algeria

- On 2 June an AQIM attack leaves two soldiers dead in Tebessa.
- On 18 June three suspected terrorists are killed and a further three captured after seven days of military operations in Skikda and Constantine.

#### Morocco

- On 2 June an anti-government demonstration in Imzouren ends with clashes between demonstrators from the al-Harak Popular Movement from the Rif and police, amid tensions in the Rif which began with the protests in October 2016 in Al Hoceïma. The protests and arrests continue throughout June. On 11 June large-scale march in Rabat calls for the release of around a hundred al-Hirak activists.
- On 6 June the ECOWAS announces an agreement in principle for Morocco's entry into the organization.

#### Mauritania

- On 6 June Mauritania breaks diplomatic ties with Qatar, accusing it of “supporting terrorist organizations” and joining the decision taken the previous day by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt to cut diplomatic ties with Doha and begin a blockade on the emirate.

#### EU

- On 1 June the EU warns the US that the Paris Agreement on climate change is neither reversible nor renegotiable, after Donald Trump's announcement of his intention to withdraw the US from the deal.
- On 7 June the EC sets the European Defence Fund in motion, which will mobilize 5.5 billion euros a year for stepping up the EU's defensive capacity.
- On 13 June the EC announces infringement procedures against Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic for non-compliance with their obligations on migration.
- On 16 June Helmut Kohl dies, the German Chancellor between 1982 and 1998 and a great driver of German reunification and the construction of Europe.
- On 19 June negotiations begin on the United Kingdom's exit from the EU, 11 days after the British elections in which the Prime Minister Theresa May loses the conservative party's absolute majority.
- On 21 June the EU is awarded the Princess of Asturias Award for Concord for its unique model of supranational integration.
- On 23 June the European Council describes the British proposal to recognize the right of residence of EU citizens who have been living in the United Kingdom from five years after Brexit as insufficient. Parallel to this, the meeting is the stage for the relaunch of the Franco-German Axis by Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron.
- On 27 June Google is given the largest anti-monopoly fine ever imposed by the EU - 2.424 billion euros-.

#### July 2017

*In Spain, the Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy testifies in the trial for the Gürtel corruption scandal. France approves radical reforms in public administration. Italy, France and Germany agree to accelerate the refugee relocation programme. Ministers resign in Italy and Croatia. In Bosnia, the Constitutional Court orders the modification of the Electoral Law. The Montenegrin Parliament withdraws immunity from four MPs.*



*The former Serbian Environmental Protection Minister is convicted of corruption. Greece access a new aid tranche from the European Financial Stability Mechanism. In Turkey, new operations are carried out against the PKK, groups linked with Fethullah Gülen and Daesh. The negotiations for Cypriot reunification in Crans-Montana end without an agreement. In Syria, a ceasefire comes into force in Daraa, Suweida and Quneitra, announced by the Syrian army. Hezbollah announces a ceasefire in Aarsal. In Egypt, eight people are sentenced to death for storming a police station in Helwan in 2013. In Libya, the liberation of Benghazi is announced and the head of the forces loyal to the Tobruk Parliament meets with the president of the Presidential Council to arrange elections. Tunisia approves laws against gender-based violence and corruption. In Morocco, the protests in Rif continue. Mauritania reaches an agreement with Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Chad on a joint defence force.*

#### Portugal

- On 2 July the President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa demands a full investigation into the theft of weapons detected on 30 June from an army weapons arsenal.

#### Spain

- On 4 July the Catalan President Carles Puigdemont fires his Business Minister Jordi Baiget for expressing doubts over the independence referendum scheduled for 1 October.
- On 26 July the Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy testifies before the National Court in the trial for the Gürtel corruption scandal, which mainly affects the PP, becoming the first serving President of a Spanish government to declare before a court.
- On 31 July around 400 irregular migrants attempt to jump the border fence between Morocco and Melilla.

#### France

- On 1 July the socialist candidate for the presidential elections in May, Benoît Hamon, presents his new 1 July Movement after leaving a Socialist Party suffering the worst crisis in its history.

- On 3 July, speaking at Versailles, the President Emmanuel Macron sets a deadline for the members of the Congress of the French Parliament -the National Assembly and the Senate- to carry out a radical institutional transformation. On 4 July the Prime Minister Edouard Philippe wins parliamentary backing for the proposed reforms: to reduce the public debt, the number of civil servants and tax burdens; liberalize services; balance the social security accounts; labour reform and the war on tobacco.
- On 6 July France announces compulsory vaccinations for children as of 2018.
- On 7 July more than 2,000 refugees are cleared from a camp at Porte de La Chapelle, in Paris.
- On 12 July the government announces the creation of 7,500 places in reception centres for asylum seekers between 2018 and 2019, but also an increase in the expulsion of irregular migrants.
- On 19 July the head of the armed forces, General Pierre de Villiers, resigns following a dispute with Emmanuel Macron over the President's decision to cut the defence budget by 2.6%.

#### Italy

- On 2 July Italy, France and Germany agree to accelerate the refugee relocation programme and draft a code of conduct for NGOs involved in migrant rescue operations in the Mediterranean, after Italy warns of the possibility of closing its ports to new arrivals if it does not receive more support.
- On 4 July more than 1,000 police officers participate in an operation against the 'Ndrangheta after arrests are ordered of 116 members of the Calabrian mafia.
- On 6 July the Parliament approves including torture in the Criminal Code, 29 years after the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Torture.
- On 19 July the Regional Affairs Minister Enrico Costa resigns over his disagreement with the government majority regarding measures like the approval of the law that grants citizenship to children of immigrants residing in Italy.
- On 20 July Massimo Carminati and Salvatore Buzzi, leaders of the Capitale Mafia, are sentenced to 20 and 19 years in prison, respectively.

#### Malta

- On 12 July the Parliament approves same-sex marriage.

#### Slovenia

- On 26 July the EU Court of Justice gives Slovenia and Austria authorization to send asylum seekers back to Croatia, where they entered from.

#### Croatia

- On 18 July the Defence Minister Damir Krsticevic hands in his resignation, which is rejected by the Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, after the President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic criticizes the army for not reacting quickly enough to the serious fires around Split.

#### Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 6 July the Constitutional Court orders the modification of the electoral law by the Parliament to bring it into line with the constitution, in response to a demand made by the Bosnian Croat politician Bozo Ljubic. In another ruling, on the same day, the high court rejects the appeal filed by various Bosnian Serb deputies from the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska in which they argue that the celebrations of Independence Day (1 March) and Statehood Day (25 November) are unconstitutional as they are not recognized by the Bosnian Serb entity.

#### Montenegro

- On 19 July the High Court of Podgorica opens and postpones the awaited trial of 14 people -nine Serbs and three Montenegrins of the pro-Russian DF and two Russian citizens- over their involvement in a failed plan to lead a coup in Montenegro on 16 October 2016, during the parliamentary elections.
- On 26 July the Parliament strips four DF MPs of their immunity for inciting the violence in February in the Parliament and plotting to carry out a coup and prevent the country from joining NATO.

*Serbia*

- On 12 July the former Environmental Protection Minister Oliver Dulic is sentenced to three and a half years in jail for corruption.

*Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244*

- On 7 July the President Hashim Thaçi tasks Ramush Haradinaj, the PDK leader, with forming a government.

*FYROM*

- On 4 July a court in Skopje orders the passports of the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and four other members of VMRO-DPMNE to be seized, in connection with the investigation into the illegal wiretapping of the previous government.
- On 18 July the EU asks the new FYROM government to make progress on necessary reforms and resolve the naming dispute with Greece to be able to advance in the accession process, during the bilateral Association Council meeting.

*Greece*

- On 7 July the European Financial Stability Mechanism approves Greece's third tranche of 8.5 billion euros in financial aid.

*Turkey*

- On 9 July a large demonstration against the politics of Recep Tayyip Erdogan reaches Istanbul after a 25-day march from Ankara, headed by the leader of the social democratic CHP, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu.
- On 15 July on the first anniversary since the attempted coup in 2016, tens of thousands take to the streets in different cities in support of the government.
- On 15 July a total of 7,563 public workers are fired for having "links with terrorist organizations." The decision also includes stripping 343 retired members of the armed forces of their rank. Among those who are sacked is Hüyesin Avni Mutlu, the former Istanbul governor responsible for the harsh police response

during the Gezi Park protests in 2013.

- On 17 July at least 17 soldiers are injured in a PKK attack in Yuksekova.
- On 27 July the Parliament expels Tugba Hezer Öztürk and Faysal Sariyildiz, members of the opposition and pro-Kurdish HDP for whom arrest warrants were issued in November 2016. This brings the number of lawmakers from the HDP who have been dispossessed of the seat to four, including their co-president Figen Yüksekdağ.
- On 29 July hundreds of women march in Istanbul in protest against attempts to control how they dress.
- On 30 July the army reports the death of 12 PKK members in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq.
- On 31 July the Interior Minister reports that 1,098 people have been arrested for terrorism in the last week.

*Cyprus*

- On 7 July the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres announces the end of reunification talks in Crans-Montana without an agreement being reached. The Turkish demands to withhold its right to intervene unilaterally in the island and station troops there continues to be the main stumbling block.

*Syria*

- On 4 July a unilateral ceasefire enters into effect announced by the Syrian army in Daraa, Sweida and Quneitra, in force until 13 July as part of the Astana negotiations to achieve a stable ceasefire in Syria.
- On 4 July the FSA enters Raqqa's old city.
- On 7 July in the context of the G20 summit in Hamburg, the US and Russia announce their agreement for a ceasefire in southeastern Syria.
- On 15 July the seventh round of talks between the Syrian regime and opposition forces, which began on 10 July, comes to an end without any progress being made.
- On 22 July the Syrian government announces a ceasefire in various places in Eastern Ghouta, coinciding with Russia's announcement of the creation of a "de-escalation zone" and a pact with rebel forces. In recent days, clashes have

broken out between rebel factions in favour of and against the agreement.

- On 30 July the Syrian army and its allies reach the outskirts of al-Sukhna, the last bastion of Daesh in Homs.

*Lebanon*

- On 27 July Hezbollah announces a ceasefire in Aarsal where it launched a military offensive on 23 July to oust Syrian jihadist groups from the area. The announcement comes hours after the leader of the Shia party-militia Hassan Nasrallah says that Hezbollah has begun a round of talks with Jabhat Fateh al-Sham.

*Jordan*

- On 21 July thousands of Jordanians demonstrate against Israel and the occupation of the Palestinian territories. On 24 July at least two Jordanians are killed in gunfire outside the Israeli embassy in Amman, related with the spiralling violence unleashed in Israel and Palestine following Israel's decision to restrict access to the Temple Mount.

*Egypt*

- On 2 July Ola al-Qaradawi and Hosam Jalaf, daughter and son-in-law of Yusuf al-Qaradawi, considered the spiritual guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, are arrested.
- On 7 July between 10 and 26 soldiers and 40 members of Wilayat Sinai, the local branch of Daesh, are killed in a car bomb attack and subsequent gunfight in el-Barth, northern Sinai.
- On 26 July Abdel Fattah al-Sisi issues a decree for the creation of the National Council to Combat Terrorism and Extremism.
- On 28 July the Criminal Court in Cairo sentences eight people to death over the storming of a police station in Helwan on 14 August 2013, which resulted in several deaths, following the violent dispersal of the Islamist sit-in, in protest against the ousting of Mohamed Morsi.

*Libya*

- On 6 July the general Khalifa Haftar announces the liberation of Benghazi.

- On 16 July Fayeze al-Sarraj, chairman of the Presidential Council, announces that parliamentary and presidential elections will be held throughout the country in 2018.
- On 25 July the chairman of the Presidential Council Fayeze al-Sarraj and the marshal of the country's eastern Libyan National Army (LNA), Khalifa Haftar meet in Paris and agree on a ceasefire and commit to holding elections "as soon as possible."
- On 28 July the European Commission announces aid to the value of 46 million euros for Libyan border and coast guards and to enhance their capacity.
- On 29 July the committee tasked by Libya's eastern authorities with drafting a new constitution approves the final draft to be put to a referendum.

#### Tunisia

- On 11 July the trial begins against the nearly 50 people accused of the Bardo Museum terrorist attack in 2015 in Tunis.
- On 19 July the Parliament approves the new "Law on Good Governance and Fight Against Corruption" with 116 votes in favour, 10 against and 5 null votes, thereby establishing the creation of the institution for the fight against corruption.
- On 27 July the 146 members of the Parliament unanimously vote in favour of the law on violence against women and gender equality.

#### Algeria

- On 12 July Hassan Mermouri is appointed Minister of Tourism and Handicrafts to replace Messaoud Benagoun, who was sacked on 28 May.
- On 31 July the army reports the death of six terrorist during an operation which began on 27 July in Guraya, Tipasa.

#### Morocco

- On 17 July the Moroccan authorities prohibit a demonstration organized for 20 July in Al Hoceima to demand socioeconomic improvements in the Rif region.
- On 21 July the protests reignite in Al Hoceima with a new mass demonstration, which marks nine months of mobilizations.

- On 30 July for Throne Day Mohamed VI pardons or commutes sentences for 58 people arrested during the protests in Al Hoceima and the Rif region.

#### Mauritania

- On 1 - 2 July the countries of the G5 Sahel -Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Chad- agree to form a joint force of 5,000 men to aid the United Nations Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the French military operation in Mali.
- On 15 July thousands of people demonstrate in Nouakchott against the constitutional referendum on 5 August and accuse the President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz of a "serious authoritarian drift" in the country.
- On 17 July employees of the French oil company Total in Mauritania have been striking for five days, demanding salary increases and overtime payment.

#### EU

- On 1 July Estonia assumes the six-month EU Presidency with the priorities of safeguarding European unity and its balance, fostering innovation, the digital agenda and the free circulation of data, promoting social inclusion and sustainability and increasing internal and border security.
- On 4 July the Parliament approves the appointment of Mariya Gabriel as the Bulgarian member of the Commission, in charge of the Digital Economy and Society.

#### August 2017

*Portugal and Greece suffer serious wildfires. In Spain, Daesh carries out an attack in Barcelona and Cambrils. In France, the Parliament approves legislation on corruption and transparency in public life. In Montenegro, the assets of the former Yugoslav President Svetozar Marovic are seized. FYROM's support of Kosovo's entry into UNESCO sparks a diplomatic crisis with Serbia in the same month that Belgrade and Pristina reach an agreement related to justice. Albania and Tunisia unveil new governments. There are further dismissals and arrests in Turkey in connection with the coup*

*attempt in July 2016. In Syria, the Syrian regime's forces win decisive victories in Homs, the area around the Jordanian border and Damascus. Jordan holds local elections. In Egypt, there are fresh attacks in northern Sinai and the US freezes two major financial aid packages. In Libya, there are more blocks on oil production. In Algeria, the Prime Minister Abdelmadjid Tebboune is fired. Mauritania holds its constitutional reform referendum.*

#### Portugal

- On 17 August the EC releases 45 million euros from the Cohesion Fund for Portugal's central region, to mitigate the damages caused by the wave of wildfires affecting the country.

#### Spain

- On 17 August a van bursts onto the promenade of the Ramblas in Barcelona and drives into pedestrians, killing 15 and leaving 131 injured. Hours later another connected ramming is carried out in Cambrils, Tarragona, where the five terrorists are shot down after driving through a police check and running down six more people, one of whom is killed. After the attacks, four people are arrested in Ripoll, in Girona, and another in Alcanar, Tarragona. In this latter town, the previous day, there was a huge gas explosion related with the Barcelona and Cambrils attacks and in which two of the members of the jihadist cell were killed, one of them the imam of Ripoll.

#### France

- On 9 August six soldiers are injured in a vehicle ramming in Levallois-Perret, Hauts-de-Seine, carried out by an Algerian man, who is arrested later near Calais. The incident takes place three days after a Mauritanian man, suspected of having links with Daesh, attempts an attack on soldiers at the Eiffel Tower in Paris.
- On 9 August the government announces the closure of the Pontourny "deradicalization" centre for jihadists in Beaumont-en-Veron, just a year after its opening and due to its failure to achieve results.

- On 9 August the National Assembly gives its definitive approval of the so-called Law on Moralization of Public Life, presented by the President Emmanuel Macron, which proposes measures to step up the fight against corruption and improve transparency in public institutions.
- On 25 August the Paris public prosecutor launches an investigation into François Thierry, the former head of OCRTIS, France's anti-drugs agency, who is suspected of aiding certain drug traffickers and of complicity in their activities.
- On 31 August the first secretary of the Socialist Party Federation of French Abroad Boris Faure undergoes emergency surgery after being assaulted by the LREM MP M'Jid el-Guerrab with a motorbike helmet, during a heated argument between the two men.

#### Italy

- On 13 August the police and some hundred immigrants and refugees clash in Rome after the police cleared a camp in Independence Square.
- On 28 August the police arrest the leader of the Neapolitan Camorra's Polverino clan Giuseppe Simioli, alias Peruciolo, who has been wanted since 2010.

#### Croatia

- On 11 August the government goes back on its decision to increase taxes on specific agricultural imports, faced with warnings from Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and FYROM that they would adopt similar countermeasures.

#### Montenegro

- On 18 August the High Court of Montenegro seizes the property of the former President of Serbia and Montenegro Svetozar Marovic and his family, in a corruption investigation.

#### Serbia

- On 28 August the Parliament approves an amendment to the Law on Agricultural Land to allow EU citizens to buy arable land in Serbia.

#### Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 21 August Serbia recalls its diplomatic staff in FYROM in protest against Skopje's support of Kosovo's initiative to join the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- On 21 August Kosovo's former Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi dies in a Turkish hospital.
- On 31 August the Serbian and Kosovo Presidents agree in Brussels on the final steps of the bilateral Justice Agreement, for its full implementation on 17 October.

#### Albania

- On 27 August the Prime Minister Edi Rama announces the composition of the new government, formed entirely by socialists, with a reduction in ministerial posts from 13 to 9 and equal numbers of men and women.

#### Greece

- On 3 August the ECB lowers the cap on emergency funding for Greek banks by 1.6 billion euros, requested by the Bank of Greece.
- On 4 August the EC announces 9.3 million euros in additional emergency assistance to provide support for the refugees and migrants in Greece.
- On 4 August the government announces the creation of the Hellenic Development Bank to fund infrastructure projects, startups and small businesses and export-oriented companies.
- On 22 August Greece declares a state of emergency in the area of Kalamos, north of Athens, due to a serious wildfire which scorches thousands of hectares. The fire, one of 90 declared throughout the country, moves the opposition to criticize the government, accusing it of incompetence. The Justice Minister Stavros Kontonis says the fires are part of a plan to increase social discontent.

#### Turkey

- On 4 August Turkey includes the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) on

its list of terrorist organizations in the context of increased cooperation between China and Turkey on security.

- On 4 August a court in Istanbul releases four suspects in the murder of the Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in 2007 due to a lack of evidence.
- On 10 August Turkey issues arrest warrants on 35 journalists for their alleged connection with the preacher Fethullah Gülen.
- On 14 August a police officer is stabbed to death in Istanbul by a man being taken to a police station after being arrested for planning a bomb attack in the name of Daesh.
- On 25 August the government publishes two decrees in which it sacks 928 civil servants, closes two pro-Kurdish newspapers and creates an intelligence coordination board under the control of the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The measures are ordered under the state of emergency established after the attempted coup in July 2016.
- On 31 August the Interior Ministry announces the death of four members of the PKK terrorist organization in an operation in Oglu, Hakkari.

#### Cyprus

- On 3 August the UN's special envoy to Cyprus Espen Barth Eide urges the population to get more involved in the peace process and to "stand up and demand a change."

#### Syria

- On 3 August the Syrian regime confirms, five years after his arrest, that the Palestinian-Syrian open software developer and activist Bassel Khartabil was executed in prison.
- On 6 August Syria condemns the use by the US-led coalition of white phosphorus bombs in Raqqa before the United Nations.
- On 10 August the Syrian army recovers all border checkpoints in the province of Sweida, on the border with Jordan, which, until now, were in rebel hands.
- On 14 August the Syrian army takes various villages and towns close to al-Kum, Homs, in an advance that aims to circulate the Daesh positions in the centre of the country.

- On 19 August the Syrian army attacks rebel positions in east Damascus.
- On 20 August at least six people are killed by a mortar bomb fired from Eastern Ghouta at the Damascus International Fair.
- On 21 August the Russian air force attacks Daesh targets in Deir ez-Zor, killing at least 200 fighters.
- On 22 August the number of civilian deaths rises to around a hundred in recent days in Raqqa, the last major Daesh-held Syrian town, due to airstrikes attributed by various media outlets to the US-led coalition, which supports the advance of the Syrian-Kurdish forces.
- On 31 August at least 13 FSA members are killed in clashes with Daesh on the outskirts of Raqqa and the Hasaka province.

#### *Lebanon*

- On 14 August a convoy of 40 buses with dozens of members of Saraya Ahl al-Sham –part of the FSA- leaves Aarsal heading to the Syrian province of eastern Qalamoun. The move comes as part of an agreement reached by Hezbollah with the rebels following a major offensive to clear Aarsal.
- On 20 August the Lebanese army launches an offensive to oust Daesh from the Syrian border. On 28 August Lebanon calls a temporary ceasefire to negotiate with Daesh.
- On 23 August at least two Fatah members are killed in clashes with Islamist groups in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain el-Hilweh, bringing the number of deaths to six in almost a week of disputes, which began on 17 August after the leader of an armed group connected with the Islamist Badr Organization was expelled on the headquarters of the camp's security force.
- On 30 August the United Nations Security Council approves a one-year extension for the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
- On 31 August the Lebanese army announces the arrest in Aarsal of the Syrian Daesh commander Bassel Mohammed Abdel Qader.

#### *Jordan*

- On 15 August Jordan holds local elections to elect members of the municipal and local councils. For the first time in the country's history, Jordanians also vote for the members of the governorate councils.
- On 22 August Jordan opens its first job centre in the Zaatari refugee camp, the biggest in the world.

#### *Egypt*

- On 3 August the Interior Ministry reports that at least two people have been killed in an attack on police officers in Esna.
- On 8 August a member of the security forces is killed in clashes with militants connected with Daesh in Qena.
- On 22 August the US denies Egypt 96 million dollars in aid and delays a further 195 million dollars earmarked for the Egyptian army, citing the continued violations of human rights and the country's ties with North Korea.
- On 28 August Germany and Egypt sign an agreement to cooperate in the fight against irregular migration to Europe.
- On 30 August the press reports the government's initiative to launch an education and family planning programme in rural areas to slow down the population growth, which the country's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi considers a threat to national development.

#### *Libya*

- On 15 August the International Criminal Court issues an arrest warrant for Mahmoud Mustafa Busayf al-Werfalli, commander of the al-Saiqa militia, for war crimes in Benghazi.
- On 21 August the International Organization for Migration reports a fall in the number of migrant arrivals from Libya due to the action of an armed group in Sabratha comprising civilians, police and soldiers, which is preventing them from leaving.
- On 23 August at least two civilians and nine members of the Libyan National Army are killed in a Daesh attack in al-Fogha, Jufra.
- On 27 August the oil pipelines blockaded by armed Libyan militants demand-

ing better economic conditions causes the closure of two oil fields –el Feel and Hamada- and forces the state-owned company NOC to declare force majeure in various places in the country. These closures add to that of the Sharara field, in the previous week.

- On 31 August a Daesh attack on a military checkpoint manned by the Libyan National Army of Khalifa Haftar in Nawfiliya, leaves four soldiers dead.

#### *Tunisia*

- On 18 August the acting Finance Minister Fadhel Abdelkefi resigns after being convicted in a conflicts of interest trial.
- On 27 August the Assembly of the Representatives of the People approves the new unity government presented by the Prime Minister Youssef Chahed.

#### *Algeria*

- On 15 August the President Abdelaziz Bouteflika fires the Prime Minister Abdelmadjid Tebboune after just three months in the position and appoints as government chief the former Prime Minister and cabinet director of the presidency Ahmed Ouyahia.
- On 31 August two police officers are killed in a Daesh suicide bomb attack in Tiaret.

#### *Morocco*

- On 7 August the secretary general of the Authenticity and Modernity Party Ilyas el-Omari resigns.
- On 20 August Mohammed VI pardons a group of Salafists convicted of terrorism and who had voiced "their rejection of extremism," as part of the 415 pardons granted to mark the anniversary of the Revolution of the King and the People.

#### *Mauritania*

- On 5 August Mauritania holds its constitutional reform referendum which proposes changes in the national anthem and flag, bringing together in a single body -the Supreme Council of the Fatwa- the High Court, the Islamic Council and the Ombudsman, and removing the

Senate. The reform is approved with 85% of votes in favour.

#### EU

- On 12 August the United Kingdom confirms its exit from the EU, as well as the Single Market and the Customs Union in 2019, although London tells Brussels it will seek a “temporary” customs union to favour a “soft” transition.

#### September 2017

*In Spain, the government suspends the independence referendum called by the Catalan government. In France, there is a one-day national strike against the labour reform and LR wins in the partial senatorial elections. In Italy, the Parliament passes a law banning fascist propaganda and the former Minister Altero Matteoli is convicted of corruption. In Malta, Adrian Delia is elected leader of the Nationalist Party. In Kosovo, an agreement is reached on the formation of a coalition government. The EU announces the end of the excessive deficit procedure for Greece. In Syria, the FSA ousts Daesh from most of Raqqa. In Egypt, the Court of Cassation upholds the life sentence handed down to the former President Mohamed Morsi for spying. The UN special envoy to Libya proposes a roadmap for the country's transition. Tunisia unveils a new government and its parliament approves the administrative reconciliation law. In Morocco, the trial begins of 21 leaders of the Hirak Movement and clashes break out at the congress of the Istiqlal Party.*

#### Spain

- On 7 September the Catalan Parliament passes the law on Legal Transitoriness, the second to be approved by the autonomous parliament with the votes of the pro-independence parties, which contemplates Catalonia breaking away from the rest of Spain. The law regulates how Catalonia will operate during the first months following a win for the yes camp in the independence referendum scheduled for 1 October. On 8 September the Constitutional Court suspends

the referendum upholding the appeal filed by the Spanish government. On 15 September the government takes control of the Catalan budget to avoid funds being used for the referendum.

- On 11 September, Catalonia's national holiday, hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets of Barcelona for the sixth consecutive year to call for a referendum on Catalan independence.

#### France

- On 5 September the President Emmanuel Macron announces he will fight against illegal immigration and completely reform asylum policy, allowing France to deport illegal immigrants with greater speed.
- On 12 September the General Confederation of Labour leads the first national strike of Emmanuel Macron's presidency, in protest against the reform of labour rules.
- On 13 September Paris is chosen as the host of the 2024 Summer Olympic Games.
- On 21 September Florian Philippot, considered to be Marine Le Pen's closest adviser, announces he is leaving the FN amid internal tension in the party, following its defeat in May's presidential elections.
- On 24 September LR wins with a comfortable majority in the partial elections to renew the Senate. LREM, the President's party, takes fewer than 30 seats.
- On 28 September thousands of pensioners demonstrate throughout France against Emmanuel Macron's fiscal policy, fearing a significant fall in their purchasing power due to the announcement of a 1.7% increase in social security contributions.

#### Italy

- On 12 September faced with signs that fascism is on the rise, the Chamber of Deputies approves a law that bans any kind of propaganda of Italy's fascist regime or the German Nazi party or which makes direct reference to Benito Mussolini or Adolf Hitler.
- On 14 September the former Infrastructure and Transport Minister of the

government of Silvio Berlusconi, Altero Matteoli, is sentenced to four years in prison and ordered to pay a fine of over 9 million euros for corruption during the MOSE project construction works to protect Venice from flooding.

- On 23 September the M5S elects the Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies Luigi Di Maio as candidate for Prime Minister to run in the next general election.
- On 28 September the public prosecutor asks for the mayoress of Rome Virginia Raggi, from the M5S, to be put on trial for corruption, accused of making a false statement in the appointment of the Head of Tourism of the Italian capital's town hall.

#### Malta

- On 17 September Adrian Delia is elected leader of the Nationalist Party, replacing Simon Busuttil, who resigned on 5 June after losing the parliamentary elections.

#### Slovenia

- On 22 September the Slovenian Prime Minister Miro Cerar cancels his visit to Zagreb scheduled for 27 September after the Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic reiterates before the United Nations General Assembly that Croatia does not accept the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the Bay of Piran border dispute.

#### Croatia

- On 26 September a Croatian court sentences the former Serb paramilitary commander Dragan Vasiljkovic to 15 years in prison for torturing and killing numerous soldiers and civilians in Knin, Glina and Benkovac between 1991 and 1993.

#### Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 22 September 86 skulls are taken from a mass grave, belonging to Bosniak and Bosnian Croat victims of the Korićani Cliffs massacre, for which the ICTY has already sentenced 11 former Bosnian Serb police officers.

### Serbia

- On 17 September hundreds of people participate in the gay pride parade in Belgrade. The march is attended by Ana Brnabic, the first woman and the first homosexual to hold the position of Prime Minister in Serbia.

### *Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244*

- On 4 September the nationalist alliance led by the Democratic Party of Kosovo agrees to form a coalition government with the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR), of the magnate Behgjet Pacolli. On 9 September, the new government wins a parliamentary confidence vote.
- On 7 September Kadri Veseli is elected as parliament speaker thanks to an agreement reached between the coalition government and Lista Srpska, the main Kosovo Serb party, which, in exchange, is given the ministries of Agriculture, Local Government and Returnees.
- On 13 September the Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj replaces members of the state commission that negotiated the border agreement with Montenegro in 2015, which is yet to be ratified by the Kosovo Parliament.
- On 13 September the police carry out raids on premises used by the Serbian Red Cross in Kosovska Mitrovica, suspected of being used to organize an illegal population census in North Kosovo, which has a Serb majority.

### Greece

- On 25 September the EU announces the end of the excessive deficit procedure imposed on Greece since 2009.

### Turkey

- On 5 September the Interior Ministry reports that 185 suspected PKK members were arrested the previous week in Turkey.
- On 7 September the federal attorney of the Southern District of New York accuses the former Finance Minister Zafer Caglayan and former chairman of the state bank Halkbank Süleyman Aslan of conspiring to carry out transactions on

behalf of Iran, which have been barred by the US.

- On 12 September the authorities announce the arrest of 63 people, among them several former intelligence agency personnel, suspected of having ties with Fethullah Gülen.
- On 12 September the authorities announce the arrest of 25 people suspected of belonging to Daesh in Istanbul.
- On 13 September Turkey confirms the deal to purchase Russian S-400 surface-to-air missiles despite their incompatibility with NATO radars.
- On 15 September Celal Çelik, the lawyer of CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu, is arrested at his home in Ankara accused of having ties with the network of Fethullah Gülen and the attempted coup in 2016.
- On 18 September the armed forces initiate military manoeuvres on the Iraqi border a week before the independence referendum is held, called in Iraqi Kurdistan, and which Turkey opposes.
- On 29 September the public prosecutor issues arrest warrants on 117 soldiers over their alleged ties with Fethullah Gülen.

### Cyprus

- On 9 September two boats carrying 305 Syrian refugees arrive in Cyprus in one of the largest landings on the island since the beginning of the Syrian conflict.

### Syria

- On 5 September the Syrian army announces it has broken Daesh's three-year siege on Deir ez-Zor.
- On 6 September five months after the bombing of Khan Sheikhoun, Idlib, the United Nations publishes a report in which it refutes Russia's official version and directly blames the Syrian government for using chemical weapons on the civilian population.
- On 8 September the Russian Defence Ministry reports that it has killed Gulmurod Khalimov in Deir ez-Zor, considered to be Daesh's "War Minister."
- On 15 September Russia, Iran and Turkey agree to deploy observers in the de-escalation zone set up in Idlib, a region mostly under the control of Islamist groups.

- On 20 September the FSA says it controls 80% of Raqqa.
- On 21 September the army and its allies launch various attacks against rebel forces north of Hama, after taking back control of various towns and villages in the area.
- On 26 September the former Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem says that the Syrian government would be ready to negotiate with the Syrian Kurds for an autonomous regime within Syrian borders and sovereignty.
- On 30 September Hezbollah announces a further advances of Syrian government troops, which have taken nine Daesh-held positions on the Jordanian border.

### Lebanon

- On 9 September the police arrest Ali al-Hujeir, the former mayor of Arsal, accused of collaborating with Jabhat Fateh al-Sham.
- On 28 September a military court hands a death sentence to the Salafi preacher Ahmed al-Assir, considered as Daesh's emir in Lebanon, for forming terrorist cells in Sidon.

### Egypt

- On 10 September 10 suspected members of Daesh in Egypt are killed during a raid by security forces in Cairo.
- On 11 September at least 18 police officers are killed in a Daesh attack on a military convoy on the road between al-Qantara and al-Arish, Sinai.
- On 16 September seven people are sentenced to death for belonging to Daesh and their involvement in the beheading of 21 Christians in Libya in February 2015.
- On 16 September the Court of Cassation upholds the life sentence handed to the former President Mohamed Morsi for spying for Qatar.

### Libya

- On 15 September the United Nations Security Council approves a one-year extension of the mandate of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).
- On 20 September the UN envoy to

Libya Ghassan Salame presents his roadmap in New York, which defines different stages prior to the organization of parliamentary elections and which must lead to the drafting and approval of a new constitution within a year.

- On 26 September the US Air Force carries out two airstrikes in the southeast of Sirte killing several members of Daesh.
- On 29 September Abdallah Nattat and Khamis Isbaga, two leaders of the Werfallah tribe, which was allied with Muammar Gaddafi, are assassinated in Bani Walid on their return from a tribal reconciliation meeting in Mizda.

#### Tunisia

- On 10 September Khalil Zaouia is elected the new secretary general of the Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties (Ettakotol) to replace the party's founder Mustapha Ben Jafar.
- On 14 September the new cabinet ministers are sworn in after a major reshuffle undertaken by the Prime Minister Youssef Chahed. Among them is Mohamed Ridha Chelghoum –Finance-; Abdelkarim Zribi –Defence-; and Hatem Ben Salem –Education- who were ministers during the Ben Ali regime.
- On 14 September the Parliament approves, with a Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda majority, the controversial “administrative reconciliation law” which will allow court trials against civil servants for crimes of corruption committed before the 2011 revolution to be closed if the offence was not for their own benefit.
- On 14 September the Parliament abolishes the 1973 law that banned Muslim women from marrying non-Muslim men.
- On 30 September bread makers go on strike to demand an increase in their profit margins and the closure of illegal bakeries.

#### Morocco

- On 12 September the trial begins in Casablanca of 21 leaders of the protests which, for several months, have shaken Al Hoceima and other places in the Rif region.
- On 27 September the Moroccan Prisons Observatory NGO reports that 37 people arrested for their involvement

in the Rif protest movement Hirak have been on hunger strike for the last two weeks to demand their release, a figure that the prison authorities reduces to just three detainees.

- On 29 September clashes break out during the congress of the Istiqlal Party between supporters of the candidates for secretary general Hamid Chabat and Nizar Baraka. The incidents lead to the congress being suspended until 7 October.

#### EU

- On 1 September the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement comes into force.
- On 9 September thousands demonstrate in London against Brexit, two days before the British Parliament votes in favour of the law which revokes European legislation in the United Kingdom.
- On 26 September the French President Emmanuel Macron proposes a stronger Franco-German axis to which other Member States can join in order to build a kind of European United States as an alternative to the current rise in nationalist movements. The project would include a single budget for the eurozone, a European Finance Minister, a single taxation system, a European military body, a European border agency, a European university network and a far-reaching institutional reform of the Union.
- On 27 September the Commission proposes the possibility of extending the temporary checks on the internal borders of the Schengen area by three years, if there is a threat to internal security.

#### Arab League

- On 29 September the secretary general of the Arab League Ahmed Abul Gheit offers Iraq his assistance to keep the country together following an independence referendum held on 25 September in Iraqi Kurdistan, in which the 'yes' vote wins by 93%.

### October 2017

*Portugal suffers a wave of wildfires that leads to a ministerial resignation and a parliamentary no-confidence vote, which the government survives. In Spain, Gali-*

*cia and Asturias are also affected by the severe fires and in Catalonia a referendum is held on independence, which is declared as unconstitutional and leads to the dissolution of the autonomous government. In France, the National Assembly approves an anti-terror law and there is a national strike. In Italy, the new electoral law is approved and Veneto and Lombardy hold referendums for greater autonomy. In Malta, the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia is murdered. Slovenia holds the first round of presidential elections. Croatia announces its intention to adopt the euro within the next eight years. The agreement between Kosovo and Serbia enters into force to unify the Kosovo legal system. In Siria, Raqqa is liberated from Daesh. In Jordan, the National Current Party announces its dissolution. In Libya, Benghazi port resumes activity. In Algeria, the Parliament authorizes the Central Bank to lend directly to the Public Treasury. In Morocco, Mohammed VI fires four ministers.*

#### Portugal

- On 1 October Portugal holds municipal elections. In Lisbon and Porto, the socialist Fernando Medina and independent Rui Moreira win respectively. In light of the poor results obtained by the Social Democratic Party (PSD, conservative), on 3 October Pedro Passos-Coelho announces that he will not run for reelection as president of the party.
- On 11 October after three years of investigation, the public prosecutor indicts the former socialist Prime Minister Jose Socrates on charges of 31 counts of passive corruption, 16 counts of money laundering, nine counts of document forgery and three counts of tax fraud. Together with Socrates, 19 people and nine companies are charged in the so-called 'Operation Marquis.'
- On 16 October Portugal declares a state of catastrophe over the more than 500 wildfires raging through the northern half of the country, in which at least 38 people have lost their lives. On 18 October the Internal Administration Minister Constança Urbano de Sousa resigns, criticized for her management in putting out the fires. She is replaced by Eduardo Cabrita.



- On 24 October the Prime Minister Antonio Costa survives a no-confidence vote tabled by the Social Democratic Centre - People's Party (CDS-PP) over the management of the wildfires.

#### *Spain*

- On 1 October the independence referendum is held, called by the Catalan government, despite being outlawed by the Constitutional Court and the government's actions to prevent it from taking place. The actions taken by the national police and civil guard against citizens trying to participate in the referendum leaves 800 injured. The referendum organizers announce that more than two million people have voted with 90% of the votes in favour of independence.
- On 3 October a general strike and a large-scale march called by the Catalan government protests against the actions taken by the authorities to stop the referendum on 1 October.
- On 8 October hundreds of thousands of people demonstrate in Barcelona in favour of Spanish unity.
- On 16 October the National Court orders the heads of the pro-independence platforms Omnium Cultural and the Catalan National Assembly to be held without bail for sedition.
- On 16 October 150 fires have been declared in Galicia and Asturias in recent days.
- On 17 October Spain is elected member of the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2018-2020.
- On 20 October a large demonstration demands the release of the leaders of the pro-independence platforms Omnium Cultural and the Catalan National Assembly.
- On 27 October the Catalan Parliament declares unilateral independence, which it then suspends in the hopes of mediation with the central government. The Spanish Senate authorizes the immediate activation of the constitution's Article 155, which foresees the temporary seizure of the Catalan government, early elections to be held in Catalonia, the dissolution of the regional government for sedition and gives the central government the capacity to veto any anti-constitutional

initiative of the Catalan Parliament.

- On 29 October a demonstration in Barcelona calls for Spanish unity and denounces Catalonia's unilateral declaration of independence.
- On 30 October the former Catalan President travels to Belgium faced with the Spanish public prosecutor's imminent charges of sedition and rebellion.

#### *France*

- On 1 October a man with links to Daesh kills two women in Marseille, crying out "Allah is the greatest," after which he is shot dead by a military patrol.
- On 3 October the National Assembly approves the counter-terrorism bill which will end the state of emergency in force since November 2015, authorizes the police to carry out searches without judicial oversight, creates designated areas where citizens can be asked for identification and authorizes the government to limit the free movement of suspects.
- On 10 October civil servants go on strike against the government's planned salary freezes and staff cuts.
- On 27 October Emmanuel Macron visits Guiana amid demonstrations and violent clashes in Cayenne, led by the social movement Pou Lagwiyann Dékolé (PLD) which is calling for socioeconomic improvements.

#### *Italy*

- On 12 October the Chamber of Deputies approves the new electoral law that introduces a mix of proportional representation and first-past-the-post voting, despite opposition from M5S, Italy's thriving second political party, which will be negatively affected by the new law that favours the formation of coalitions, a practice that M5S opposes. On 26 October the law is definitively approved by the Senate.
- On 22 October Veneto and Lombardy each hold non-binding referendums to ask for greater autonomy, particularly fiscal autonomy, within Italy. The 'yes' vote wins in Veneto with 98.1% of the vote and a 57.2% turnout

and also in Lombardy with 95.29% of the vote and a 38.26% turnout.

#### *Malta*

- On 6 October Adrian Delia becomes the new leader of the parliamentary opposition weeks after being appointed leader of the Nationalist Party on 17 September. Delia replaces Simon Busuttil in both positions, who resigned after the party's poor electoral result in June.
- On 16 October the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia is killed by the blast from a bomb planted in her car. Caruana Galizia had a famous blog in which she denounced cases of corruption in the upper echelons of national politics. On 22 October thousands of Maltese demonstrate as a sign of unity following the journalist's assassination. After the demonstration, the President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca receives the organizers, who call for the dismissal of the police commissioner and public prosecutor.

#### *Slovenia*

- On 22 October Slovenia holds the first round of presidential elections. The outgoing President Borut Pahor and the mayor of Kamnik Marjan Sarec go through to the second round, which will be held in November.

#### *Croatia*

- On 16 October the police arrest Ivan Crnjac, former vice-chairman of Agrokor, together with other senior figures of the processed food holding, currently being bailed out by the State, faced with bankruptcy and serious irregularities in its accounts.
- On 18 October the President Kolinđa Grabar-Kitarović travels to Russia to present the Three Seas Initiative to Vladimir Putin and negotiate the payment of a debt incurred by Agrokor with the Russian state-owned bank Sberbank and VTB Bank, which is over a billion euros.
- On 30 October the Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic announces that his intention is for Croatia to adopt the euro within the next eight years.

*Bosnia and Herzegovina*

- On 9 October Naser Oric, the Bosnian army commander in Srebrenica during the Bosnian War is cleared of committing war crimes against Serbs.
- On 18 October the Bosnian Serb Parliament proclaims the military neutrality of the Republika Srpska, looking to contravene the moves taken by the federal government to request Bosnia's entry into NATO.

*Serbia*

- On 3 October Greece, Romania and Bulgaria express their support for Serbia's candidacy for European accession.

*Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244*

- On 19 October the agreement between Serbia and Kosovo enters into force to unify the justice system in Kosovo.
- On 27 October Surinam informs Kosovo of the withdrawal of its recognition of Kosovo's independence.

*FYROM*

- On 15 and 29 October the first and second rounds of local elections are held. VMRO-DPMNE goes from holding 56 municipalities to just seven. SDSM wins in 57 municipalities.

*Albania*

- On 7 October the Prime Minister Edi Rama unveils the 33 deputy ministers of this government, which include four Kosovars; a gesture interpreted as a declaration of intent from Tirana to increase its regional influence.
- On 25 October the Parliament blocks the public prosecutor's request to lift the parliamentary immunity of the former Interior Minister Saimir Tahiri to proceed with his arrest for suspected drug smuggling.
- On 30 October the intelligence chief Visho Ajazi Lika resigns, appointed in 2012 by the former Prime Minister Sali Berisha and the target of accusations made by the Socialist Party of practices against the current socialist government.

*Greece*

- On 10 October the Parliament passes a new law allowing people to change their gender on official documents.

*Turkey*

- On 4 October 34 people are sentenced to life imprisonment for planning to assassinate the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during the attempted coup in 2016.
- On 5 October the government orders the arrest of 133 civil servants for their involvement in the attempted coup in 2016.
- On 23 October Melih Gökçek, the mayor of Ankara since 1994, announces his resignation in light of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's bid to renew the AKP's longest-serving mayors.
- On 25 October the former Interior Minister Meral Akşener presents her new centre-right political party İyi Parti (Good Party), formed by dissidents of the nationalist MHP.
- On 26 October 10 human rights activists accused of collaboration with armed groups are released on bail, among them the local director of Amnesty International Idil Eser.
- On 26 October the police begin operations to arrest 121 former civil servants of the Foreign Ministry for ties with Fethullah Gülen.
- On 28 October the police arrest more than 60 people suspected of having ties with Daesh.

*Cyprus*

- On 26 October the Cypriot MP Stella Kyriakides is appointed president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council, replacing the Spaniard Pedro Agramunt, who resigned on 6 October after the crisis sparked by his visit to Syria with Russian MPs, during which they met with Bashar al-Assad days before the chemical attack on Khan Sheikhoun on 6 April.

*Syria*

- On 2 October two terrorists blow themselves up in a police station in al-Midan, Damascus, killing 17 people.

- On 8 October al-Mayadin, currently Daesh's main base in Syria, is surrounded by government troops.
- On 7 October Turkey initiates a military operation to support FSA in the province of Idlib, which is mostly controlled by the Syrian division of al-Qaeda.
- On 18 October the complete fall of Raqqa, the last jihadist stronghold in Syria, is confirmed, faced with the advance of government troops and the FSA.
- On 24 October in the United Nations Security Council Russia vetoes the extension of the UN's Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPAQ). On 27 October the JIM concludes in its last report that the Syrian regime used chemical weapons in Khan Sheikhoun claiming 86 lives.
- On 30 - 31 October Astana hosts the seventh round of Syrian peace talks mediated by Russia, Iran and Turkey.

*Lebanon*

- On 20 October the Judicial Council sentences in absentia Habib Chartuni and Nabil al-Alam to death for their involvement in the 1982 assassination of the President Bashir Gemayel.

*Jordan*

- On 2 October Human Rights Watch accuses Jordan of summary group deportations of Syrian refugees.
- On 17 October the reformist National Current Party, Jordan's strongest centrist party, announces its dissolution.

*Egypt*

- On 1 October the Supreme Council for Media Regulation orders a ban on any kind of support of the LGBT community saying that homosexuality is a "shameful disease."
- On 13 October six soldiers are killed in a Daesh attack in al-Arish, northern Sinai.
- On 15 October at least six soldiers and 24 jihadists are killed in a terrorist attack in the northeast of al-Arish.
- On 20 October at least 58 police officers are killed in an anti-terror raid in Bahariya.

## Libya

- On 1 October Benghazi port reopens after being closed for three years because of fighting in the city.
- On 7 October more than 3,000 migrants are arrested close to Sabrata.
- On 22 October a new round of negotiations comes to a close without an agreement in Tunisia, between the Tripoli and Tobruk authorities. The biggest obstacle is the constitution of a unified army.
- On 31 October at least 17 people are killed in an airstrike on Derna, a city controlled by Islamist militias which has been under siege for over a year by Khalifa Haftar's forces.

## Tunisia

- On 3 October the former Prime Minister Ali Larayedh is cleared of responsibility in the police intervention during a strike in Siliana in 2012 when he was Interior Minister.
- On 8 October the Health Minister Slim Chaker dies of a heart attack.

## Algeria

- On 8 October the Parliament authorizes the Central Bank to lend directly to the Public Treasury to contain the country's economic crisis.

## Morocco

- On 7 October the Court of Cassation assumes control of the public prosecution office, until now controlled by the Ministry of Justice.
- On 8 October Nizar Baraka is elected secretary general of Istiqlal, to replace Hamid Chabat.
- On 14 October a Daesh cell is dismantled in Fez, which was planning attacks in Morocco.
- 22 October Ilyas el-Omari, returns to the head of the PAM, after having announced his resignation on 7 August.
- On 24 October Mohammed VI fires the Ministers of Education; Housing and Territorial Management; and Health over delays in development programmes in Al Hoceima.

## EU

- On 5 October the European Parliament approves the creation of a European public prosecutor to fight fraud.

## November 2017

*In Spain, the National Court sends eight ministers of the Catalan government to prison without bail. In France, there is a government reshuffle. In Italy, elections are held in Sicily and Ostia. Slovenia holds the second round of presidential elections. The ICTY hands life sentences to the former Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladic. Serbia and Albania receive positive assessments from the EC in their accession process. In Kosovo, local elections are held. In FYROM, two deputies are arrested for the clashes in April in the Parliament. In Greece, a new centre-left alliance is created. In Syria, the army declares Deir ez-Zor as fully liberated and announces a ceasefire in Eastern Ghouta. The Lebanese Prime Minister announces his resignation, which is then put on hold. In Egypt, the succession of terrorist attacks in Sinai reaches horrific heights with the Bir al-Abed massacre. In Libya, footage is released of mass sales of migrants as slaves. Algeria holds local elections. In Morocco, there are new dismissals.*

## Portugal

- On 17 November Portugal announces a new early repayment of 2.78 billion euros of the financial aid received from the IMF in 2011, which was to expire in 2020 and 2021. Portugal has already paid back 76% of the total 26 billion euros it received.

## Spain

- On 2 November the National Court sends eight former Catalan government ministers to jail without bail after they make a statement in favour of Catalonia's pro-independence process. The court also orders the extradition of the former Catalan President Carles Puigdemont and a further four

ministers, who have travelled to Brussels, and who appear voluntarily before a Belgian court.

- On 11 November hundreds of thousands demonstrate in Barcelona to call for the release of the presidents of the pro-independence platforms and the Catalan government ministers, who remain in custody.

## France

- On 3 November France and New Caledonia agree to hold a referendum on New Caledonian independence within the next year.
- On 8 November the National Assembly lifts the parliamentary immunity of Marine Le Pen for the court investigations into the FN leader's social media posts in 2015 of images of executions carried out by Daesh.
- On 24 November the President Emmanuel Macron reshuffles the government. Christophe Castaner, named as the new LREM leader, will continue as Secretary of State for Parliamentary Relations but is replaced as government spokesman by Benjamin Griveaux. The socialist MP Olivier Dussopt takes over as Secretary of State of Public Action and Delphine Gény-Stephann Secretary of State of Economy and Finance.

## Italy

- On 5 November the candidate from the coalition between Forza Italia, Diverterà Bellissima, Liga Norte and Brothers of Italy, Nello Musumeci, wins the Sicilian elections (39.85%). The M5S is the single most voted party (34.65%). The governing Democratic Party (PD), wins barely over 18%.
- On 17 November Salvatore 'Totò' Riina, the Sicilian mafia's main boss between 1974 and 1993, dies of natural causes in a prison in Parma, where he was serving 26 life sentences.
- On 19 November Giuliana di Pillo (M5S) wins the Ostia municipal elections, whose government was dissolved due to mafia infiltration in 2015.
- On 24 November the EC announces the release of an additional 39.92 million euros in emergency assistance for Italy to control the mass migrant arrivals.

*Slovenia*

- On 12 November Borut Pahor (52.93%) beats Marjan Sarec (47.07%) in the second round of the presidential elections.

*Croatia*

- On 7 November Ivica Todoric, founder of Agrokor, hands himself into the British authorities in London, who proceed with his arrest on a international arrest warrant issued by Croatia.

*Bosnia and Herzegovina*

- On 7 November the United Nations Security Council extends its EU mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Eufor Althea, for another year.
- On 10 November the Republika Srpska and Serbia sign a "Declaration on the survival of the Serbian nation." On 21 November, the Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic explicitly reminds the Bosnian Serb entity that under no circumstances is Belgrade seeking an annexation.
- On 22 November the former Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladic is given a life sentence by the ICTY for crimes of war in the siege of Sarajevo and genocide in the Srebrenica massacre.
- On 29 November during the ruling against six Bosnian Croats for crimes of war, one of them, Slobodan Praljak, protests his sentence by lethally poisoning himself in front of the disconcerted court.

*Montenegro*

- On 1 November Russia rejects Montenegro's extradition request for Ananije Nikic, accused of conspiring to overthrow the government and to whom Moscow has granted refugee status.

*Serbia*

- On 16 November the EU-Serbia Stabilization and Association Council highlights the progress made by Serbia for accession to the Union, especially regarding the presidential elections held in April and the opening of an internal dialogue on Kosovo.

*Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244*

- On 17 November a court in Pristina sentences the Vetëvendosje MP Frasher Krasniqi to eight years in prison for launching a grenade at the Parliament building in August 2016.
- On 19 November after the second round of local elections, Vetëvendosje takes Pristina, Prizren and Kamenica. There are also good results for LDK, which wins eight municipalities, and the governing AAK, which increases the number of municipalities it controls from three to seven. The PDK, however, drops from 10 to five municipalities.
- On 21 November Guinea-Bissau revokes its recognition of Kosovo's independence.
- On 23 November Kosovo's President declares the 28 November a holiday, Independence Day in neighbouring Albania.
- On 24 November Madagascar recognizes Kosovo's independence.

*FYROM*

- On 15 November the Parliament approves a draft law making Albanian the second official language, despite opposition from VMRO-DPMNE.
- On 28 November VMRO-DPMNE supporters protest outside the Skopje Criminal Court against the arrest of three of its MPs, as well that of the former police chief and several officers sacked on 11 November for their inaction or responsibility in the violence in the Parliament on 27 April.

*Albania*

- On 15 November the EU-Albanian Stabilization and Association Council recognizes Albania's progress and encourages Tirana to continue to apply the reform of its judicial system.

*Greece*

- On 13 November the Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras announces 1.4 billion euros in aid for the "people who need it most."
- On 19 November the Greek centrists elect Fofi Gennimata to lead the centre-

left alliance, which includes PASOK, led by Gennimata, the Democratic Socialist Movement, Democratic Left and To Potami, to win back voters who switched to Syriza.

*Turkey*

- On 2 November eight members of the security forces and five PKK terrorists are killed in fighting in Hakkari.
- On 9 November the police arrest 101 people in Ankara suspected of having links with Daesh.
- On 18 November all public film screenings, events or exhibitions related with LGBT issues are banned in Ankara to protect "public security."
- On 29 November the public prosecutor issues arrest warrants on 360 suspects thought to be supporting the Fethullah Gülen network from within the army.

*Cyprus*

- On 3 November around 175 migrants are rescued off the Cypriot coast.

*Syria*

- On 3 November the Syrian army retakes the last Daesh controlled sectors of Deir ez-Zor with Russian support.
- On 4 November at least 75 people are killed in a Daesh attack in an area between the Koniko gas fields and al-Jafra where people displaced by fighting in Deir ez-Zor are camped.
- On 8 November the Syrian army takes Albu Kamal, close to Iraq and Daesh's last bastion in Syria.
- On 15 November the Syrian army, with Russian support, begins several days of bombing on Eastern Ghouta, controlled by armed opposition Islamist groups.
- On 21 November Bashar al-Assad meets in Moscow with his counterpart Vladimir Putin, who congratulates him on his "achievements in the fight against terrorism" and predicts a quick end to the armed conflict in Syria, paving the way to a "political solution."
- On 22 November during the opening session of a conference in Riyadh between representatives of the Syrian opposition in preparation for the next round

of peace talks in Geneva, the Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir assures that his country will back the Syrian opposition in unifying against the Syrian regime.

- On 22 November the Syrian government celebrates the final declaration of the trilateral Sochi summit between Russia, Turkey and Iran, where it is agreed to launch a new peace process in Syria which respects the country's sovereignty, independence and integrity.
- On 26 November at least 53 civilians are killed in Russian airstrikes in al-Shafa, a Daesh-held town in Deir ez-Zor.
- On 28 November the United Nations special envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura announces an agreement for a ceasefire in Eastern Ghouta.
- On 28 November the eighth round of talks begins in Geneva between the Syrian government and the opposition. The role of the President Bashar al-Assad in the future is still the main sticking point in the negotiations.
- On 28 November Jabhat Fateh al-Sham announces the detention in Syria of several senior figures from factions loyal to al-Qaeda's Ayman Zawahiri, Bin Laden's successor, and that the detainees will appear before an Islamic court.

#### *Lebanon*

- On 2 November the Prime Minister Saad Hariri appoints the first Lebanese ambassador to Syria since 2011, in a decision criticized by his own government, believing it legitimizes the Syrian regime.
- On 4 November Saad Hariri announces, from Riyadh, his intention to resign citing fears of a plot to kill him. Hariri points to Iran and Hezbollah and their ambitions to control Lebanon. On 22 November after a tour to Paris, Cairo and Nicosia, Hariri announces in Beirut that he will not resign, as requested by the President Michel Aoun, who accuses Saudi Arabia of pressuring Hariri to step down and holding him in Riyadh, an accusation also made by Hezbollah. Hariri asks all political powers to stay out of regional conflicts.

#### *Jordan*

- On 13 November UNHCR reports that Jordan has begun operation of the

world's largest solar plant to provide power for the Zaatari refugee camp.

#### *Egypt*

- On 6 November the security forces raid the printing house where material was prepared for the candidacy of left-wing lawyer Khaled Ali for the 2018 presidential elections.
- On 8 November the Court of Cassation upholds the full five-year jail sentence for Alaa Abdel Fattah, one of the leaders of the 2011 revolution.
- On 24 November a group of men carry out an attack on the al-Rawda Sufi mosque in Bir al-Abed. The attack, attributed to Daesh, leaves at least 311 people dead, practically all of the village's male inhabitants. On 29 November, the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi orders the army to use "all force necessary" to guarantee security throughout Sinai in the next three months.
- On 28 November a military court sentences 11 members of Daesh in Sinai for various attacks in 2014 and 2015.

#### *Libya*

- On 30 November the African Union assures that it will take immediate action to repatriate 3,800 immigrants in Libya because of the inhumane conditions they are subjected to, after, on 21 November, footage is released proving the existence of slave markets in the country.

#### *Tunisia*

- On 1 November two police officers are stabbed outside the Parliament by a man identified as a Salafist by the authorities, who is arrested after the assault.

#### *Algeria*

- On 23 November Algeria holds local and regional elections with a low turnout of 34% and which are won by the National Liberation Front.
- On 26 November the Parliament approves the 2018 budgets which foresee a 7.9% increase in social spending, a decision that contradicts the agreement between the government and the Parliament to reduce the budget deficit during

the three-year period of 2016-2019. Only article 12 of the text, which provided for a wealth tax, is removed. A tax on oil products is approved as well as a 1% tax on imports.

#### *Morocco*

- On 7 November Morocco launches its first satellite, Mohammed VI-A, from the European spaceport in Kourou.
- On 13 November seven secretary generals are fired by Mohammed VI for their responsibility in the delays of development programmes in the Rif region.
- On 26 November the PJD National Assembly votes against Abdelilah Benkirane running for reelection as secretary general.

#### *Mauritania*

- On 2 November the G5-Sahel's anti-terror security force begins operations.
- On 8 November there are demonstrations calling for the execution of the blogger Mohamed Ould Mjeitir, sentenced in 2014 for apostasy.

#### *EU*

- On 12 November 23 Member States agree to create a European defence force.
- On 20 November as a consequence of Brexit, it is announced that the European Medicines Agency and the European Banking Authority will relocate from London to Amsterdam and Paris respectively.
- On 23 November the EC announces its plan to enhance the European capacities to react to natural disasters, following the wave of wildfires in Portugal.
- On 28 November the United Kingdom and the EU reach an agreement on the amount that London must pay to leave the EU, which will be somewhere between 45 and 55 billion euros.

#### *Arab League*

- On 19 November the Arab League warns that it will denounce Iran's interference in the internal politics of various Arab states to the UN and declares Hezbollah a terrorist organization.

## December 2017

*In Spain, Catalonia holds early elections in the context of the independence crisis. In France, Corsica holds elections and LR elect a new leader. The ruling of the Court of Arbitration of The Hague on the border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia comes into force. Serbia and Montenegro open new chapters in their European accession negotiations. New efforts are made in the negotiations between Greece and FYROM to resolve the naming dispute. In FYROM, the main opposition party elects a new president. In Greece, there is a national strike against the austerity measures. Russia begins the withdrawal of its forces in Syria, while the regime forces consolidate their progress. Lebanon call parliamentary elections for 2018. In Egypt, the former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafik is deported from the United Arab Emirates and Daesh carries out an attack on the Mar Mina Coptic church. In Libya, the mayor of Misrata is assassinated and Khalifa Haftar declares that the mandate of the interim unity government has expired. In Tunisia, the coalition government crisis worsens.*

### Portugal

- On 28 December Portugal approves raising the minimum salary to 580 euros, a 4.12% increase.

### Spain

- On 4 December the Supreme Court decides to keep the former Catalan Vice-President Oriol Junqueras, the former Interior Minister Joaquim Forn and the leaders of the pro-independence associations ANC and Omnium Cultural in prison, without bail. The other six former Catalan ministers can be released on a bail of 100,000 for each.
- On 5 December the Supreme Court withdraws its European arrest warrant on the former Catalan President Carles Puigdemont and former ministers, who travelled to Belgium, fearing that the Belgian courts could limit the charges Spain is pressing against them.
- On 11 December Julian Sanchez Melgar is appointed state prosecutor following the sudden death of his prede-

cessor Jose Manuel Maza in Buenos Aires on 19 November.

- On 21 December Catalonia holds early regional elections, called by the central government and following the unilateral declaration of independence, which enjoy a historic turnout of 81.94%. Citizens (unionist) wins with 25.37% of the votes and 37 seats, 12 more than in the previous elections. However, the total number of seats of the three pro-independence parties -Together for Catalonia (21.65%, 34 seats), the Republican Left of Catalonia (21.39%, 32 seats) and Popular Unity Candidacy (4.45%, 4 seats)- gives this block a parliamentary majority.

### France

- On 3 and 10 December Corsica holds regional elections, which gives an absolute majority to Gilles Simeoni's nationalist coalition Pè a Corsica which wins 41 of the 63 seats in the regional assembly.
- On 4 December a court in Paris announces the trial of the heads, between 2011 and 2014, of the Franco-Swiss group LafargeHolcim, the world's largest producer of construction materials, accused of financing Daesh and buying oil from the organization to keep their cement factory in Jalabiya in operation, despite the EU embargo.
- On 10 December the regional President of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Laurent Wauquiez, is elected president of LR with 74.64% of the vote.

### Italy

- On 5 December 25 people are arrested in Palermo for belonging to Cosa Nostra, including Maria Angela Di Trapani, who, according to the authorities, was trying to reorganize the leadership of the Sicilian mafia after the death of Toto Riina.
- On 14 December after eight months of political tension, Italy approves the "living will," a law that regulates assisted death for the terminally ill, and which Italians have been call for for some time, particularly following the case of the DJ Fabiano Antoniani, who ended his life in March in a Zurich clinic through euthanasia.

- On 20 December the FPÖ, a far-right partner in the government of the Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, announces its intention to grant Austrian citizenship to the German-speaking inhabitants of the Italian region of South Tyrol, a territory which until the end of World War I belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- On 23 December the Senate gives its final approval for the 2018 budget, which foresees incentives for companies to hire young staff and the renovation of civil servant agreements.

### Slovenia

- On 30 December Slovenia officially begins exercising its sovereignty over the areas of the Bay of Piran that it was attributed in June under a ruling of the Court of Arbitration of the Hague on the border dispute with Croatia. There are no major incidents despite Zagreb's request to Ljubljana not to apply any measure unilaterally which changes the pre-ruling status quo, due to Croatia's rejection of the court's decision.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 21 December after 24 years of activity, more than 10,000 days of trials, 161 indictments and thousands of witnesses of the Yugoslav War, the ICTY closes its doors considering its work to be completed.

### Montenegro

- On 11 December the EU and Montenegro open chapters 2 and 3 on the freedom of movement for workers and the right to establish and freedom to provide services in its accession negotiations.

### Serbia

- On 11 December the EU and Serbia open chapters 6 and 30 on company law and economic relations with foreign countries, in its accession negotiations.

### FYROM

- On 11 December the DF, the main opposition party, announces that it is

resuming parliamentary activity after a year's boycott in protest against the results of the 2016 October elections and the trial underway against some of its members suspected of participating in an attempted coup during said election.

- On 11 - 12 December Greece and FYROM resume negotiations in Brussels to resolve the naming dispute.
- On 19 December the special anti-corruption prosecutor presses charges against 17 former senior officials for abuse of power, influence peddling and fraud. Parallel to this, the special prosecutor Katica Janeva requests that the mandate of the special prosecutor be extended beyond 2020 due to the magnitude and amount of cases to be investigated.
- On 23 December VMRO-DPMNE appoints Hristijan Mickovski president of the party to replace Nikola Gruevski, who resigned on 11 December.

#### *Albania*

- On 18 December a parliamentary majority elects Arta Marku as public prosecutor to replace Adriatik Llalla, whose mandate expired in December, amid smoke bombs thrown by opposition MPs and clashes between police and protesters against the election taking place before the formation of the High Prosecutorial Council, the body, according to the constitution, which should be charged with said appointment.

#### *Greece*

- On 14 December trade unions lead a general strike against the parliamentary approval of the 2018 budget, which foresees major cuts in social spending and tax hikes, which are approved by a Syriza and Independent Greeks majority.

#### *Turkey*

- On 1 December security forces report that nearly 100 PKK members have been killed between 24 and 30 November. Throughout December there are fresh operations against the terrorist organization in different parts of the country.

- On 13 December a total of 64 people are given prison sentences -18 of them life sentences- for their alleged ties with Fethullah Gülen.

- On 17 December the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that Turkey will open an embassy in East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state, as recognized by Ankara.

- On 28 December 46 suspected Daesh members are arrested in various operations in Bursa and Konya.

- On 27 December 170 people are arrested in 29 provinces for their links with the Fethullah Gülen network and involvement in the attempted coup in 2016. More than 50,000 people have been arrested and around 150,000 public workers sacked under these charges since July 2016.

#### *Syria*

- On 2 December several Arab media outlets report an attack on Syrian army targets close to Damascus by Israeli jets from Lebanese airspace, whose main target is actually an Iranian military base close to al-Qiswa.

- On 4 December Israeli warplanes attack areas of Jamaraya, close to Damascus, including a research centre and weapons storage facility of the regime and its allies.

- On 11 December the Russian President Vladimir Putin arrives in Syria on an official visit and orders the withdrawal of Russian forces deployed in the country.

- On 14 December the chief negotiator of the Syrian government Bashar al-Jafari accuses the opposition and its international partners, including Saudi Arabia, of sabotaging the UN-led peace talks in Geneva, which end without results.

- On 22 December in the context of the Astana talks, Russia, Iran and Turkey agree on the creation of a working group for prisoner exchange in Syria.

- On 27 December after advancing on Beit Yin, the Syrian army gives rebels on the outskirts of Mount Hermon, close to the border with Israel and Lebanon, an ultimatum to surrender.

- On 30 December the FSA expel Daesh from Gharanij, Kashkia and Abu Hamam, in the Deir ez-Zor governorate.

#### *Lebanon*

- On 15 December the Interior Minister signs the decree that sets the next parliamentary elections for 6 May 2018.

- On 28 December the Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil sparks a political storm in his country by stating in an interview that Israel has the right to exist as a state.

#### *Jordan*

- On 26 December Abdallah II announces that his brothers –Prince Ali and Prince Faisal– and his cousin –Prince Talal–, all high-ranking officials in the military, will retiring from the armed forces, according to the King, as part of a plan to restructure the army to reduce costs and create a more effective force to fight against terrorism.

#### *Egypt*

- On 2 December the former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafik, the last in Hosni Mubarak's regime, is arrested in the United Arab Emirates and deported to Egypt after announcing his intention to run in the presidential elections.

- On 13 December a court in Cairo sentences the Egyptian singer Shaima Ahmed to two years in prison for sexually explicit content in a music video.

- On 29 December at least nine people are killed in a Daesh attack on the Mar Mina Coptic church, in Helwan.

- On 29 December a Daesh attack on a bank in el-Arish, in northern Sinai, leaves two people dead. Throughout December, there are various attacks in Sinai against the armed forces, as well as several anti-jihadist military operations.

- On 30 December a court in Cairo sentences the former President Mohamed Morsi again to three years in prison, this time for insulting the judiciary.

#### *Libya*

- On 12 December Amnesty International accuses European governments of complicity in the arrests of migrants in Libya, denouncing the European assistance to the country's coastguards involved, according to the NGO, in human trafficking.

- On 17 December the marshal Khalifa Haftar declares that the UN-backed interim unity government has expired, after the period stipulated in the agreement signed in Morocco in December 2015, which facilitated its creation, comes to an end. Haftar also insinuates that he might run in the elections scheduled for 2018.
- On 17 December Mohamad Eshtewi, the mayor of Misrata, is kidnapped and murdered by an unknown assailant.
- On 26 December armed men blow up an oil pipeline transporting crude oil to the port of Sidra, reducing Libya's daily production by around 100,000 barrels.
- On 26 December the unity government announces that the displaced people of Tawergha, a city that was looted in 2011 by rebel forces in retaliation for the support it gave to the Gaddafi regime, will finally be able to return to their homes.

#### *Tunisia*

- On 16 December the Independent High Authority for the Elections once again postpones the municipal elections scheduled for March until May 2018, at the request of the main parties.
- On 16 December Afek Tounes announces its withdrawal from the government coalition in protest against the 2018 national budget, adopted by the Parliament on 10 December. The leadership of the party, which was formed in 2011 and which is undergoing an internal crisis, also announces its withdrawal from the Carthage Agreement, the roadmap of the current unity government.
- On 24 December two alleged members of the terrorist group Jund al-Khalifa -with links to Daesh- are arrested in Kasserine. A further nine are made in the same governorate on 26 December.

#### *Algeria*

- On 11 December a week of large-scale protests begins in Kabylie against the Parliament's rejection of a legal amendment that sought to finance Berber language teaching.
- On 25 December the Interior Ministry reports the deportation of 10,000 Sub-Saharan immigrants in operations coordinated with their countries of ori-

gin, without specifying the dates when said deportations were carried out.

#### *Mauritania*

- On 21 December five people are handed a three-month suspended prison sentence after participating in a protest march against the constitutional reforms.
- On 18 December Action against Hunger warns that more than a million people will be in danger of suffering from a food crisis in 2018 in Mauritania and Senegal because of the severe drought of recent months.

#### *EU*

- On 4 December pressure from the Northern Ireland unionists from the DUP, government partners with the British Conservative Party, prevents an agreement being reached with Brussels on the terms of the United Kingdom's exit from the Union, because of their opposition to a special regime for Northern Ireland to alleviate the effects of reestablishing the border between the two Irelands after Brexit.
- On 7 December the Commission decides to bring Hungary before the European Court of Justice for non-compliance of its obligations on migration, as well as for laws on NGOs and higher education.
- On 13 December the British Parliament approves an amendment that allows it to veto the final agreement on Brexit.
- On 14 December, in Brussels, the European Council confirms the ineffectiveness of mandatory quotas for receiving refugees faced with the lack of an agreement and pressure from the Visegrad Group.
- On 15 December the EU heads of state and government approve the agreement of 8 December, which sets the conditions for Brexit: after the British exit, on 29 March 2019, the country will remain in the customs union and the single market for two more years; EU citizens who have been residing in the United Kingdom since before Brexit will withhold their rights; London will pay up to 60 billion euros for leaving the Union; and the European Court of Justice will

continue to have jurisdiction over the country until 2027. The parties can, therefore, begin the second phase of the negotiations on the kind of relations that the EU and the United Kingdom will have after the divorce.

- On 21 December, after numerous warnings, the European Commission, for the first time, triggers article 7 from the Treaty on the EU to sanction Poland for violating democratic principles and the rule of law. Its activation is counteracted, however, by Hungary's decision to block it.

#### *Arab League*

- On 10 December the Arab League agrees to call on the US President Donald Trump to revoke his decision to recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.

#### *Gibraltar*

- On 28 March the EU rejects Gibraltar's request for a special status in the EU after Brexit.
- On 31 March the President of the European Council Donald Tusk announces that once Brexit has been finalized, no agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom will apply to Gibraltar without Spain's consent.
- On 13 June the European Court of Justice rules in favour of the United Kingdom and says that Gibraltar will have to adapt to the tax regime set by London in July 2014, which raises online gaming taxes to 15% on the money bet by British clients -which account for around 80% of total consumers-.
- On 21 December the British Prime Minister Theresa May insists that Gibraltar will not be excluded from the Brexit negotiations after it is reported that the EU is pressuring the United Kingdom to resolve its dispute over the colony with Spain if London wants to reach an agreement on a transition period.

#### *Western Sahara*

- On 26 February Morocco withdraws its military units from Guerguerat after the United Nations calls for Rabat and the Polisario to contain the border area, where tensions have been mounting be-



tween the parties since the end of 2016. On 5 March, the Polisario announces that it will keep its soldiers in the area in light of “Morocco repeatedly breaking the terms of the ceasefire.”

- On 10 April the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres presents the annual report on the Western Sahara, which calls for new diplomatic efforts to put an end to the conflict, possibly through the holding of a referendum on self-determination, urges the Polisario to withdraw from the Guerguerat area and defends the continued mandate of the UN mission, MINURSO.

- On 28 April the United Nations Security Council adopts a resolution to resume negotiations on the Sahrawi issue and extends the MINURSO mandate to 30 April 2018. The resolution coincides with the Polisario’s withdrawal from Guerguerat.

- On 16 May the UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) reduces the food rations it hands out to thousands of Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps by 20%, due to a lack of funds, and appeals to the international community for urgent support.

- On 18 May the Polisario announces the interception in the Panama canal of a ship heading for Canada transporting 55,000 tonnes of phosphates extracted from Sahrawi territory.

- On 1 July Morocco vetoes a report made by the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights due to the inclusion of two clauses on sending a delegation to evaluate the human rights situation in the Western Sahara.

- On 19 July the Sale Appeals Court

sentences 23 Sahrawi activists to between two years and life in prison, charged with the death of 11 members of the Moroccan security forces during the dismantling of the Gdeim Izik protest camp in November 2010.

- On 22 August, after Morocco’s consent, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres appoints the former German President Horst Köhler as the new envoy to the Western Sahara, to replace Christopher Ross, whose resignation was announced in March.

- On 23 November the EU and the African Union (AU) announce that the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) will take part in the AU-EU summit in Abidjan on 29 - 30 November. Morocco, which has long been calling for SADR’s exclusion from the AU -a stance which led the country to withdraw from the Pan-African organ between 1984 and 2017- announces that it will not boycott the summit.

- On 22 December a Moroccan court sentences a Sahrawi man to 20 years in prison for violence during the forced clearance of the Gdeim Izik protest camp, in Laayoune.

### Sources

ABC  
 Affaires Stratégiques – IFRI  
 AffarInternazionali - IAI  
 Agence France Presse  
 Agencia EFE  
 Al-Ahram  
 Al-Jazeera  
 Al-Monitor

Al-Masry al-Youm  
 ANSAMed  
 Associated Press  
 BBC  
 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace  
 Chatham House  
 Council of Foreign Affairs  
 DiploWeb  
 Election Guide - IFES  
 El Mundo  
 El País  
 Europa Press  
 Europe Media Monitor  
 Foreign Affairs  
 Foreign Policy  
 Haaretz  
 Il Corriere della Sera  
 International Crisis Group  
 Jeune Afrique  
 Le Figaro  
 Le Monde  
 Le monde diplomatique  
 Limes – La Repubblica  
 L’Orient Le Jour  
 Magharebia  
 Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty  
 Radio Televisión Española  
 Real Instituto Elcano  
 Reuters  
 Robert Schuman Stiftung  
 SwissInfo  
 SWP  
 The Guardian  
 The Huffington Post  
 The New York Times  
 The Telegraph  
 The Washington Post  
 Transconflict  
 Tunisia Live  
 Xinhua