

Chronologies

Chronology of Major Conflicts and Political Events

January 2019

Portugal expands the legal definition of rape and approves a plan for legalizing foreign workers. Spain becomes the main point of entry into Europe for immigrants and asylum seekers. The Yellow Vest protests continue in France. Italy enters a recession. It is seven weeks since the anti-government mobilizations began in Serbia. Kosovo faces public sector strikes. The name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) is changed to North Macedonia. In Turkey, more arrests are made over links with Fethullah Gulen. In Syria, an offensive is carried out on the last Daesh-controlled areas, parallel to the US withdrawal and the Russian deployment in Manbij. Lebanon agrees on the formation of a new government. In Egypt, the activist Ahmed Duma is sentenced to prison. In Libya, the fighting continues against Daesh in Derna, a ceasefire in Tripoli is broken and the commander of the armed forces in east Libya announces a military operation in the country's south. In Tunisia, trade union demonstrations are held and the Tahya Tounes party is formed.

Portugal

- On 11 January the Parliament expands its definition of rape to cover any sex without consent, thereby following in the footsteps of Belgium, Cyprus, the United Kingdom, Germany, Iceland, Ireland and Luxembourg.
- On 14 January the Parliament approves a plan for legalizing undocumented foreigners who are performing an accredited professional activity or if they can demonstrate they have a residence in Portugal.

- On 14 January a group of firefighters try to storm the Labour Ministry during a demonstration in Lisbon against the profession's new statute.
- On 18 January the Parliament votes against the legalization of cannabis for recreational purposes.

Spain

- On 28 January there is unrest in Madrid as taxi drivers are dispersed from the city centre during the eighth consecutive day of strikes to demand changes in the regulation of chauffeured rental vehicles, following the stoppages carried out by taxi drivers in Barcelona since December 2018.
- On 30 January the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) confirms Spain as the main port of entry for immigrants and asylum seekers in 2018, with 65,400 entries, 131% more than in 2017.

France

- On 22 January France and Germany sign the new Franco-German Cooperation and Integration Treaty in Aachen, based on the 1963 Elysée Treaty which will strengthen bilateral ties.
- On 27 January there is a mass demonstration in Paris led by the Red Scarves in defence of democracy and the values of the Republic and against the violence of the Yellow Vests, who continue their large-scale Saturday protests throughout the month.

Italy

- On 14 January Cesare Battisti, a former militant of the Red Brigades-linked Armed Proletarians for Communism,

sentenced to life imprisonment on four counts of murder and on the run for four decades, arrives in Italy following his arrest in Bolivia.

- On 31 January GDP data for the last quarter of 2018 confirms Italy's entry into a recession.

Malta

- On 9 January Malta authorizes 49 migrants who have been stranded aboard the Sea Watch rescue vessel for three weeks to disembark, following a deal for their relocation reached with Germany, France, Portugal, Ireland, Romania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Italy.

Slovenia

- On 24 January before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), the European Commission denounces Slovenia for seizing European Central Bank (ECB) documents during a raid in July 2016 of Slovenia's central bank. For its part, Slovenia accuses the ECB of trying to protect the Bank of Slovenia from an investigation into the possible irregularities of the financial bailout of the Slovenian bank.

Croatia

- On 11 January the Constitutional Court announces its decision, adopted in December 2018, to overturn a previous sentence that separated the case against the former Croatian general Branimir Glavas for war crimes in 1991 from the cases against five of his subordinates from the 1st Battalion of Osijek Defenders. Glavas must, therefore, stand trial again.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 16 January the International Criminal Court (ICC) grants early release to Valentin Coric, one of the six leaders of the unrecognized Bosnian-Croat state of Herzeg-Bosnia who were convicted for war crimes.

Serbia

- On 19 January it is seven weeks since the demonstrations began in Belgrade against the government and the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS, conservative), which began after the attack in Krusevac on 23 November 2018 on the leader of the Serbian Left party Borko Stefanovic. The demonstrations, which condemn the government for being corrupt and authoritarian, spread to other cities at the end of January. On 30 January the protests lead the opposition party Alliance for Serbia to announce a parliamentary boycott.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 8 January the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini reiterates her call for Kosovo to revoke the customs duties introduced against Serbia at the end of 2018.
- On 17 January Palau revokes its decision to recognize Kosovo as an independent state.
- On 28 January Pristina's municipal staff and journalists from the public broadcaster RTK join the public sector strikes, ongoing since the start of the month, against the civil servant wages bill.

North Macedonia

- On 11 January the Parliament passes the four constitutional amendments required to allow the country's name to officially change to Republic of North Macedonia, in accordance with the Prespa agreement signed with Greece in June 2018. The opposition boycotts the vote and calls for early elections.
- On 15 January the law enters into force that recognizes Albanian as the second official language. It had been twice approved by Parliament but the President Gjorge Ivanov had refused to sign it.

- On 31 January the ECHR rules that the North Macedonian requirement for transgender people to undergo sex reassignment surgery before their gender marker on their identity documents can be changed constitutes a human rights violation.

Albania

- On 1 January the prohibition of betting shops comes into force, introduced due to the rapid growth of this business in Albania.
- On 14 January the Prime Minister Edi Rama takes over the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, following the President Ilir Meta's refusal to appoint Gent Cakaj.

Greece

- On 16 January the government survives a parliamentary vote of confidence called by the Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras due to the withdrawal of the Independent Greeks (ANEL, conservative nationalist) and The River (To Potami, social-liberal) from the government coalition over disagreements with the Prespa agreement.
- On 14 and 17 January two demonstrations in the teaching sector against austerity measures end in unrest.
- On 20 January thousands of nationalists take part in a demonstration in Athens against the Prespa agreement, which ends with violent clashes.
- On 25 January FYROM officially changes its name to North Macedonia, with the Greek Parliament's approval of the Prespa agreement.
- On 28 January Alexis Tsipras announces an 11% rise in the minimum wage, the first in a decade.

Turkey

- On 7, 11 and 14 January the authorities order the arrest of hundreds of military staff for alleged links with the Islamic preacher Fethullah Gulen's organization.
- On 25 January a court authorizes the release of the MP Leyla Guven, from the People's Democratic Party (HDP, leftist, pro-Kurdish), who is critically ill following an indefinite hunger strike she began

on 8 November 2018 over her administrative detention.

- On 29 January the opposition politician Eren Erdem, from the Republican People's Party (CHP, social-democratic), begins a hunger strike against his seven-month-long administrative detention.

Cyprus

- On 29-30 January Nicosia hosts a new summit for the southern European Union countries – Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Greece and Cyprus – to agree upon a common stance on migration, energy security, climate change, the future of the EU, the multi-annual financial framework and Brexit.
- On 31 January the United Nations Security Council extends the mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for another six months.

Syria

- On 7 January Daesh launches an offensive against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) – a US-backed coalition of militias led primarily by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) – to recapture territory in Deir ez-Zor.
- On 8 January Russia begins patrolling Manbij, after the Syrian army took the city in December 2018, previously under YPG control.
- On 10 January Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, led by Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, a former subsidiary of al-Qaeda in Syria, takes control of Idlib province, following a deal with the National Liberation Front (NLF).
- On 11 January the US-led international coalition begins the withdrawal of its troops less than a month after the US President Donald Trump announces the move.
- On 16 January at least 16 people are killed in a suicide bomb attack in Manbij, a month after the SDF announce they have ousted the terrorist group from Hajin, its last bastion in Syria.
- On 25 January the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declares that following the withdrawal of the US troops, Turkey will create a safe zone in northern Syria, in accordance with the 1998 Adana agreement, which allows Turkey to enter Syrian territory if under threat.

Syria accuses Turkey of violating the pact by supporting the rebels from the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and demands the Turkish military withdrawal to reactivate the agreement, which prohibits the presence of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorist organization in Syria.

Lebanon

- On 31 January nine months after the parliamentary elections, the much awaited agreement is announced for a national unity government led by Saad Hariri. The new cabinet includes ministers from all parties.

Jordan

- On 21 January Jordan reiterates its objection to the opening of the Isreali airport near Eilat, asserting that it will be impossible to operate without violating Jordanian airspace.

Egypt

- On 9 January the activist Ahmed Duma is sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for charges related with the demonstrations during the uprising against Hosni Mubarak in 2011.
- On 10 January the supreme guide of the outlawed Islamist organization the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Badie, is acquitted in the case relating to the clashes in July 2013 following the overthrow of the President Mohamed Morsi.
- On 13 January the Parliament approves the eighth three-month extension of the state of emergency.
- On 16 January the authorities announce the death of five terrorists in operations close to el-Arish, North Sinai. The army's offensive in the governorate continues throughout 2019 with multiple episodes of fighting and attacks.

Libya

- On 9 January UNHCR says 15,232 migrants and refugees were rescued or intercepted by the Libyan coast guard during 2018.
- On 12 January the United Nations reports multiple civilian casualties in Derna, where there is intense fighting between the army and local militias.

- On 15 January Khalifa Haftar announces the launch of an anti-terrorist operation in the country's south.
- On 16 January at least five people are killed in new fighting between rival militias south of Tripoli, breaking the ceasefire signed in September 2018.
- On 17 January at least 117 people disappear after the ship they were travelling in from Garabulli sinks.
- On 18 January military forces in eastern Libya under the command of Khalifa Haftar say they have killed Abu Talha al-Libi, a senior figure of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Libya.
- On 31 January security forces arrest Khalifa al-Barq in Sirte, suspected of being a Daesh local leader.

Tunisia

- On 3 January Ezedeen Alaoui is killed in fighting in Jilma against security forces. The leader of the Brigade of Jihad and Unity was plotting to take control of Sidi Bouzid and establish an Islamic emirate. Authorities estimate that some 3,000 Tunisians have joined Daesh and other jihadist groups.
- On 9 January six deputies from the Free Patriotic Union leave the party less than three months after its fusion with Nidaa Tounes, on 15 October 2018.
- On 17, 20 and 21 January three days of general strike are held, called by the Tunisian General Workers' Union (UGTT) to demand pay rises in the public sector.
- On 27 January the new secular party Tahya Tounes (Long Live Tunisia) is announced in Monastir, formed by former members of Nidaa Tounes and led by the Prime Minister Youssef Chahed, who contested Hafez Caid Essebsi, son of the Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi, for control of the ruling party.

Algeria

- On 18 January the President Abdelaziz Bouteflika calls presidential elections for 18 April.
- On 26 January the main Islamist party, the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP) decides to run in the presidential elections with Abderrazak Makri as its candidate.
- On 28 January the former minister of various portfolios and President of

the Constitutional Council Mourad Medelci dies.

Morocco

- On 17 January Morocco reports that it intercepted around 89,000 migrants in 2018, trying to cross illegally into Europe.

EU

- On 1 January Romania takes over the Presidency of the EU Council with the priorities of combating hate speech and disinformation; supporting social progress, inclusive development, gender equality and access to education and training; improving the Union's internal security; and strengthening Europe's global role.
- On 18 January the European Parliament passes a bill that will link the distribution of European funding with respect for European values, the separation of powers and the fight against corruption.
- On 29 January the British Parliament votes against leaving the Union without a deal and tasks Theresa May with renegotiating the agreement with Brussels on the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the Union, replacing the Irish backstop with an unspecified alternative arrangement.

Arab League

- On 20 January Beirut hosts the 4th economic summit of the Arab League, which ends with little in the way of agreements and demonstrates the regional discord its members are currently having to deal with.

February 2019

In Portugal, public sector workers stage a one-day national strike and the cabinet is reshuffled again. In Spain, the trial begins against the leaders of the Catalan independence movement and early elections are called. In France, the Yellow Vest demonstrations continue, along with protests staged by the main trade unions against Emmanuel Macron's politics and a large-scale dem-

onstration held against the wave of anti-Semitism sweeping the country. In Italy, Abruzzo and Sardinia hold regional elections. In Serbia and Albania, where the anti-government protests continue, the opposition begins parliamentary boycotts. NATO signs the accession protocol for North Macedonia and several former senior figures from the previous North Macedonian cabinet are arrested. In Greece, a new Foreign Minister is appointed. The arrests and dismissals continue in Turkey in connection with the failed coup attempt in 2016. In Cyprus, the Cypriot authorities and leaders of Northern Cyprus agree on various mutual confidence-building measures, and the discovery of gas reserves in Block 10 fuels tensions with Turkey. In Syria, the SDF launches its final offensive against Daesh in Baghouz. In Egypt, the Parliament debates constitutional amendments to extend the number of presidential terms and their duration and to give the army greater prerogatives. Egypt also hosts the first EU-Arab League summit. Tensions continue in Libya, with the eastern Libyan forces launching an offensive in Fezzan. In Tunisia, the government and trade unions agree on a rise in the minimum wage. In Algeria, protests are staged against Abdelaziz Bouteflika's candidacy in the presidential elections. Morocco bans Fatiha marriages and reinstates compulsory military service.

Portugal

- On 15 February civil servants stage a national strike to demand a pay rise for all public sector workers, which have been frozen since 2009. All public services are brought to a halt.
- On 17 February the Prime Minister Antonio Costa reshuffles the cabinet for the fourth time since 2015. Mariana Vieira da Silva takes over as Minister of the Presidency and Administrative Modernization, Nelson de Souza as Planning Minister, and Pedro Nuno Santos as Infrastructure and Housing Minister.
- On 19 February the left-wing coalition government survives a confidence vote tabled by the Democratic and Social Centre – People's Party (CDS-PP, centre-right).

Spain

- On 12 February the trial begins in the Supreme Court of the politicians responsible for Catalonia's unilateral referendum and independence declaration.
- On 15 February the Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez calls early general elections for 28 April after failing to approve the 2019 state budget.

France

- On 1 February the Constitutional Council rules that the law on prostitution under which clients can be fined is constitutional.
- On 5 February thousands rally throughout France, called by the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) to demonstrate against Emmanuel Macron on a "day of social emergency." The mobilization is an attempt to create a "tactical alliance" against the government with the heterogeneous Yellow Vest movement, which has been demonstrating since 2018.
- On 5 February the National Assembly approves stiffer penalties for disturbing the public order.
- On 7 February France summons its ambassador to Rome following the meeting of the Italian Deputy Prime Minister Luigi Di Maio, from the populist Five Star Movement (M5E) with representatives from the Yellow Vests.
- On 11 February in the context of the Yellow Vest movement, there are now 80 senators, MPs and other political representatives who have been the targets of attacks since 2018, in a wave of vandalism the likes of which has not been seen since the Algerian War.
- On 16 February the National Assembly approves a law that requires school classrooms to display the French and European flags alongside the words to the La Marseillaise.
- On 20 February large-scale demonstrations called by the Socialist Party (PS) and with the participation of all religions present throughout France and all institutions and parties – with the exception of the National Rally (AN, far right) and Unbowed France (FI, far left) – condemn the sudden rise in anti-Semitism, the same day that 80 Jewish

graves are defaced with Nazi swastikas in Quatzenheim, Alsace.

Italy

- On 10 and 24 February Abruzzo and Sardinia both hold regional elections, respectively, in which the centre-right wins most votes. Both elections represent a major setback in the polls for the M5E with respect to the general elections in March 2018.
- On 25 February Gianni Alemanno, the former Mayor of Rome and former Agriculture Minister under Silvio Berlusconi, is sentenced to six years' imprisonment for corruption and illegal financing in the Mafia capitale case.

Malta

- On 12 February the Director General of the Fisheries and Agriculture Department Andreina Fenech Farrugia is dismissed after information is published implicating her in the illegal fishing and export of bluefin tuna.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 12 February Bosnian police kill Edin Gacic near Sarajevo, the country's most wanted fugitive after the man killed two people, which led to a nationwide manhunt.

Serbia

- On 2 February thousands march through Belgrade to protest against Aleksandar Vucic's government. The protests, which have reached their ninth week, spread to Serb-majority North Kosovo.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 1 February the teachers' union suspends a three-week strike after the government pledges to increase salaries in the public sector under a draft law on salaries passed in the Parliament on 2 February.

North Macedonia

- On 6 February NATO signs North Macedonia's accession protocol, required before full membership can be granted.

On 8 February, Greece becomes the first country to ratify the protocol. The Prespa agreement, therefore, enters into force on 12 February, marking the official name change to North Macedonia. On 13 February the North Macedonian government notifies the UN of the name change.

- On 20 February the former Parliament Speaker Trajko Veljanovski and former Education and Transport Ministers of the previous conservative government of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), Spiro Ristovski and Mile Janakieski, are arrested suspected of having links with the violent storming of the Parliament in 2017.

Albania

- On 21 February 65 MPs from seven opposition parties announce they are giving up their seats to force early elections as part of the anti-government demonstrations to demand the resignation of the government for corruption and electoral fraud.

Greece

- On 15 February the Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras appoints George Katrougalos as Foreign Minister, after temporarily occupying the post following the resignation in October 2018 of Nikos Kotzias, because of his opposition to the Prespa agreement. Sia Anagnostopoulou will replace Katrougalos as the Alternate Foreign Affairs Minister.

Turkey

- On 12 February the arrests of 1,112 people are ordered for their alleged links with Fethullah Gulen and the failed coup attempt in 2016; 729 of them are arrested on 12 February. On 22 February the public prosecutor issues 295 more arrests.
- On 26 February seven senior figures from the far-left terrorist group the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP-C) are arrested in Istanbul.

Cyprus

- On 25 February ExxonMobile's imminent announcement that it has dis-

covered underwater gas in Block 10 increases tensions with Turkey, a year after Ankara sent military ships to halt the drilling operations of the Italian company Eni in Cypriot waters.

- On 26 February the Cypriot authorities and Northern Cyprus leaders agree on various mutual confidence-building measures, which include telephone and power networks in the north and south, the clearance of anti-personnel mines and the reciprocal return of works of art, held since 1974.

Syria

- On 5 February the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan acknowledges "low-level" contact with the Syrian regime in "foreign policy" matters, after years of support from Ankara to the armed groups trying to depose Bashar al-Asad.

- On 14 February Russia, Turkey and Iran meet in Sochi to form a unified position on Syria's current and future situation. One of the main causes of division is Russia's rejection of Ankara's plans to create a "safe zone" in Syria after the US withdrawal, without the consent of the President Bashar al-Asad.

- On 16 February at least 13 Daesh members are killed when the SDF and US-led coalition repel an attack close to Baghouz, Daesh's last enclave in eastern Syria, where the SDF are planning a final offensive.

Lebanon

- On 13 February Saudi Arabia lifts the ban on its citizens travelling to Lebanon after confirming "improvements in security conditions."

- On 25 February the British government decides to add the political wing of Hezbollah to its list of terrorist organizations, which already includes the armed wing.

Jordan

- On 2, 9, 16 and 23 February weekly protests are staged against the government and the new tax reforms.

Egypt

- On 5 February the IMF announces the release of a new loan tranche to the value

of 2 billion dollars for Egypt, following a review of the economic reform programme and cuts undertaken by the country.

- On 19 February at least three police officers are killed outside the Al-Hussein University Hospital, close to Cairo's al-Azhar mosque, by the blast of a device triggered by the man carrying it after he is surrounded by officers. This is the same person who, on 15 February, threw a grenade at the al-Istiqamah mosque.

Libya

- On 5 February the United Nations call upon the international community to donate 202 million dollars in aid for more than 550,000 vulnerable people in Libya.

- On 7 February Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) urges all parties to avoid an escalation in the el-Sharara oil field, the country's biggest, and asserts that it will not resume operations until security has been restored. Since December 2018, el-Sharara has been under the control of militants from local tribes, who demand greater investment in the region, triggering a military intervention in southern Libya led by Khalifa Haftar's forces, who are loyal to the Tobruk Parliament.

Tunisia

- On 7 February the government and the UGTT reach an agreement for a public salary rise, which means the general strike planned for the end of the month will not go ahead.

- On 13 February the European Commissioner for Justice Vera Jourova, presents to the European Parliament a list of 23 "high risk" countries for money laundering, which includes Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Iran and Panama.

- On 19 February the Central Bank raises its interest rate by 100 basic points, from 6.75 to 7.75%, to counteract the rising inflation, in the fifth hike since the arrival of Marouane Abassi as the bank's governor a year ago.

Algeria

- On 10 February Abdelaziz Bouteflika announces he will run for a fifth presidential term in the elections on 18 April, days after the four parties of the govern-

ment coalition officially give their support to his candidacy.

- On 13 February Abdelaziz Bouteflika appoints Abdelkader Kara Buhadba as General Director of National Security, to replace Lakhdar Lahbiri.
- On 20 February 18 party leaders and political figures take part in a meeting in Algiers called by Abdallah Djaballah from the Justice and Development Front (FJD), to form a common opposition to the National Liberation Front (FLN, nationalist socialist). They are unable to agree on a single candidate for the presidential elections.
- On 22 and 26 February thousands protest in Algiers against Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth presidential term, calling for regime change.

Morocco

- On 5 February the ban on Fatiha marriages, which take place without a judge present, comes into force.
- On 7 February the Council of Ministers publishes the decree under which the law approved in the Parliament on 26 December 2018 which reinstates compulsory military service is officially adopted.
- On 18 February Mohammed VI appoints six new walis (prefects) and 15 governors.
- On 20 February unrest breaks out during the one-day strike staged by the National Coordination of Contractual Teachers, which precedes the marches on 24 February in different cities to demand civil servant status.

EU

- On 7 February Ukraine makes full EU and NATO membership a strategic goal in its Constitution.
- On 13 February the European Parliament approves the EU-Singapore free trade agreement.
- On 13 February the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) publishes its first statistics for 2018, according to which there were 634,700 applications for international asylum recorded in the EU, Norway and Switzerland, in other words, a 10% decrease compared with 2017 and a similar level to in 2014.
- On 19 February the European Parliament rejects the 1.13-billion-euro

multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027, the first without British contribution, because of cuts in cohesion and agriculture funding, introduced by the EC to ease the effects of Brexit.

Arab League

- On 24 and 25 February Sharm el-Sheikh hosts the 1st EU-Arab League summit with the European priority of fighting against irregular migration and terrorism and the Arab priority of obtaining support to strengthen regimes that have come after – or survived – the Arab Spring. The main agreements signed are on police cooperation and security.

March 2019

In France, the Great National Debate launched on 15 January comes to an end, the Yellow Vest protests continue and the former Prime Minister François Fillon is charged with corruption. In Italy, Basilicata holds regional elections, the minimum wage enters into force and the use of firearms is approved. The ICC sentences the former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic to life imprisonment. The anti-government protests continue in Serbia, Montenegro and Albania. Turkey holds local elections. SDF's entry into Baghouz marks the end of Daesh-controlled territories in Syria, although isolated terror cells are still in operation. In Egypt, two prominent figures from the revolution in 2011 are released and a military court confirms the five-year prison sentence handed down to Hisham Genena. In Libya, the Libyan National Army (LNA), commanded by Khalifa Haftar, advances further into Fezzan. Tunisia hosts the 30th Arab League Summit, announces legislative elections for October and presidential elections for November and extends the state of emergency again. The anti-government protests in Algeria force Bouteflika to give up a fifth presidential term and decree a change of government. In Morocco, public sector teachers go on strike.

Spain

- On 31 March hundreds of thousands of people demonstrate in Madrid to de-

mand measures be taken against the depopulation of rural provinces in central Spain.

France

- On 12 March the former conservative Prime Minister François Fillon is charged with the misuse of public funds and misappropriation of company assets over the fictitious employment of his wife, who is also charged, and two of his sons while he was an MEP and senator. The scandal came to light in 2017, months before the presidential elections in which he was a favourite to win, but ended up losing.
- On 16 March a new Yellow Vest protest in Paris degenerates into a battle between demonstrators and riot police in the Champs Elysée, in which 60 people are injured and a number of shops are ransacked. The explosion of violence is an ultimatum for the politics of President Emmanuel Macron and coincides with the end of the Great National Debate, launched on 15 January by the Presidency, to debate, with social representatives, issues that have been the cause of social opposition in recent months – taxes, public spending, how the State and public services are organized, ecological transition, democracy and citizenship.
- On 19 March the number of churches that have been desecrated and ransacked in different areas of France reaches 12 in seven days.
- On 25 March there are a number of attacks on Roma on the outskirts of Paris after false reports posted on social media accuse them of abducting children for organ trafficking or prostitution networks.
- On 31 March Amelie de Montchalin is appointed Secretary of State for European Affairs; Sibeth Ndiaye Secretary of State to the Office of the Prime Minister and Government Spokeswoman; and Cedric O, State Secretary for the Digital Economy.

Italy

- On 2 March the Camorra boss Marco Di Lauro is arrested in Naples, after being on the run since 2004.
- On 3 March the Democratic Party (PD, centre-left) elects Nicola Zing-

retti, the President of Lazio, as its new general secretary.

- On 6 March the Parliament approves a modification to the Criminal Code legalizing the use of firearms in legitimate self-defence, one of the League's electoral promises.
- On 7 March the so-called "citizens' income" enters into force, M5E's main election promise.
- On 12 March 33 people accused of belonging to the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta are arrested in an operation in Veneto.
- On 19 March the Interior Minister Matteo Salvini says he will not allow the 49 migrants rescued from the central Mediterranean the previous day by the Italian NGO *Mediterranea* to disembark.
- On 23 March the elections in Basilicata are won by the radical right-wing coalition formed by the League, Forza Italia and Brothers of Italy, which wins 42% of the votes, surpassing the centre left by almost 10 points, which loses the regional government after 25 years. M5E wins 20.4% of the vote.
- On 30 March thousands of women from all over Europe protest in Verona against the anti-abortion campaign led by the World Congress of Families, which is being held in the city and to which Matteo Salvini has been invited as a guest.

Malta

- On 5 March the Prime Minister Joseph Muscat announces the appointment of George Vella to succeed Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca as the President of Malta.
- On 27 March the Palau-flagged Turkish ship, *El Hiblu 1*, is hijacked by 108 people rescued in the Mediterranean, who force the crew to set a course for Malta to avoid being returned to Libya. Hours later the Maltese armed forces take control of the ship.

Croatia

- On 2 March media outlets and journalists protest in Zagreb over the number of lawsuits filed against them by the authorities, who they accuse of trying to undermine media freedom.
- On 15 March the news website *Zurnal* reports that members of the Croatian diplomatic and intelligence services

have plotted to recruit and arm Salafis from Bosnia and Herzegovina with the aim of portraying Bosnia as a "refuge for radical Islamic terrorism." Zagreb denies the allegations.

- On 17 March thousands protest in the country's main cities against gender-based violence and the lack of government action as part of the national campaign *Spasime* (Save me).

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 4 March five months after the deadline expired, the tripartite President Milorad Dodik sends the overdue answers to more than 600 additional questions on the pre-accession questionnaire, requested by the EU. A further 20 questions remain to be answered.
- On 18 March the leaders of the three main nationalist parties, Milorad Dodik, Bakir Izetbegovic and Dragan Covic, agree to start talks to establish a new federal Council of Ministers, five months after the general elections.
- On 20 March the ICC increases the sentence of the former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic leader to life in prison for his role in the war crimes committed in the Bosnian War (1992-1995).
- On 29 March the Constitutional Court declares the Bosnian Serb law that sets 9 January as a national holiday, to commemorate the 1992 proclamation of the *Republika Srpska*, as unconstitutional.

Montenegro

- On 30 March the all opposition MPs sign the so-called Agreement for the Future, proposed by the civic movement *Odupri se* (Resist) which organizes civic protests every Saturday to call for the resignation of Milo Djukanovic's government and several political and judicial officials, after an former ally of Djukanovic accuses him and the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) of corruption.

Serbia

- On 16 March, which marks the 15th Saturday of anti-government protests, clashes break out outside the presidential residence where the President Aleksandar Vucic is broadcasting an address

condemning the previous day's storming of the Radio Television of Serbia (RTS).

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 8 March the US urges Serbia and Kosovo to normalize ties at a time of renewed tensions following Kosovo's announcement in 2018 of a 100% increase in customs duty on goods coming from Serbia.

North Macedonia

- On 8 March the Skopje Criminal Court sentences the former secret police chief Saso Mijalkov to three years' imprisonment for interfering in the 2013 local elections.
- On 15 March the Skopje Criminal Court jails 16 people involved in the violent storming of the Parliament in 2017, among them the former Interior Minister Mitko Cavkov, who is sentenced to 18 years in prison.

Albania

- On 5 March Lulzim Basha, leader of the opposition Democratic Party (PD, conservative) calls for a snap election to be held as part of the anti-government protests that accuse Edi Rama's government and the Socialist Party (PS) of corruption and electoral fraud and which continue throughout March, with episodes of violence.

Greece

- On 5 March prosecutors in Athens charge the governor of Attica Rena Dourou and mayors of Rafina and Marathon, Elias Psinakis and Evangelos Bournous, for their responsibility in the deadly wildfire in July 2018.

Turkey

- On 1 March the government lifts travel restrictions imposed on 60,000 people accused of allegedly having links with the 2016 coup attempt. Parallel to this, more than 165 personnel are sacked over their suspected links with Fethullah Gulen. Dozens more arrests are made throughout the month.

- On 31 March Turkey holds local elections. The Justice and Development Party (AKP, Islamist) of the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan loses the municipalities of Ankara, Izmir and Istanbul, where the social democratic party CHP claims victory.

Cyprus

- On 7 March the President Nicos Anastasiades rules out sacking the Finance Minister Harris Georgiades saying he was not responsible for the collapse of the Cyprus Cooperative Bank or the 2013 banking crisis, thereby dismissing the conclusions of the special committee appointed to assess the handling of the banking crisis.

Syria

- On 8 March Russia and Turkey begin joint patrols in Idlib province. On the same day, the Turkish Defence Minister announces the lifting of all airspace restrictions in Idlib and Afrin “in coordination with Russia and Iran.”
- On 10 March hundreds of people protest in Deraa, the cradle of the 2011 revolution and now under regime control again, against a new statue erected in honour of Hafez al-Assad.
- On 14 March at the 3rd Brussels Conference for Syria, donors pledge 6.2 billion dollars in aid for 2019.
- On 24 March the SDF, with the support of the United States, oust Daesh from Baghouz after a three-month-long offensive, depriving the organization of its last physical territory, although the group’s isolated cells and ideology continue to pose a threat.

Lebanon

- On 24 March Iran announces a strengthening in its relations with Lebanon as a result of the US attacks on Hezbollah and the weight of the Shia militia-party in the Lebanese government.

Egypt

- On 3 March a military court confirms the five-year prison sentence handed down to the former anti-corruption chief

between 2011 and 2016 Hisham Genea for “spreading fake news.”

- On 4 March the photojournalist Mahmoud Abdel Shakour Abou Zeid is released after five and a half years in prison in connection with the events in Cairo’s Rabaa al-Adawiya square in August 2013.

- On 29 March the activist Alaa Abdel Fattah leaves prison after serving a five-year prison sentence for calling an unauthorized demonstration during the Egyptian revolution.

Libya

- On 4 March Khalifa Haftar’s LNA announces it has taken control of Qatrun as part of an operation carried out by forces loyal to the Tobruk Parliament to “free the country’s south of the presence of rebel militias and foreign terrorist groups.”

- On 5 March Ahmed Araibi, the former mayor of Benghazi and deputy director of the intelligence service is freed five months after being kidnapped by an unidentified group of individuals, although there are suspicions of the possible involvement of the Tariq Bin Ziyad Brigade, linked with the son of Khalifa Haftar.

- On 23 March relatives and supporters of Abdullah al-Senussi, the intelligence chief under Muammar Gaddafi, call for his release in Tripoli.

- On 25 March workers at El Sharara and two other NOC-owned oil facilities in southern Libya protest again to demand the 67% salary increase promised by the authorities in Tripoli in 2013.

- On 27 March the EU extends the mandate of EUNAVFOR-Med operation Sophia by six months, although without the means needed to carry out its operations because of Italian resistance.

Tunisia

- On 6 March the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE) announces legislative and presidential elections for 6 October and 10 November.

- On 7 March the Presidency of the Republic extends the state of emergency until 5 April, in place since the jihadist attacks in 2015.

- On 9 March the Health Minister Abderraouf Cherif resigns, following re-

ports of the death, on 7 and 8 March in Rabta Hospital, of 11 newborn babies from a possible blood infection.

Algeria

- On 11 March, recently back from two weeks in hospital in Geneva and amid mass weekly protests against his intention to run for a fifth presidential term, Abdelaziz Bouteflika renounces his candidacy for the April elections, which are postponed. The Fridays of protest continue and support for Bouteflika drops from the parties in the presidential coalition and among the recently renewed military leadership, which at the end of the month is already considering activating Article 102 of the constitution, under which the President can be removed from office if he is unfit to rule.

- On 28 March Ali Haddad resigns, president since 2014 of the Algerian employers’ organization and one of Bouteflika’s main supporters. On 31 March he is arrested on the Tunisian border as part of a large-scale court investigation against numerous businessmen for corruption.

- On 31 March the formation of a new transitional government is confirmed led by Nouredine Bedoui, appointed Prime Minister on 11 March. Sabri Boukadoum will be Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister replacing Ramtane Lamamra, as was originally planned. Mohammed Loukal is designated Finance Minister and Mohammed Arkab, Energy Minister in a cabinet that includes five women.

Morocco

- On 24 March thousands of teachers demonstrate in Rabat in defence of free education and against teachers being given renewable contracts.

- On 25 March medicine students begin protests and a strike which continues for months against the government’s plans to privatize medical education.

EU

- On 5 March the new Intelligence College in Europe opens in Paris, an initiative of the French President Em-

manuel Macron, as part of his project of “extensive transformation” of the EU, presented in his speech at the Sorbonne in September 2017.

- On 12 March the British Parliament rejects the Brexit deal negotiated with the Commission by the Prime Minister Theresa May for the second time. On 23 March hundreds of thousands of people call for a second referendum in London. Parallel to this 5 million people have already signed a petition to revoke Brexit. On 29 March the Parliament rejects the deal and remaining alternatives in a third round of voting.
- On 20 March the European People’s Party (PPE) suspends FIDESZ, the party of the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, until further notice, over his campaign against the EU and immigration.

Arab League

- On 30 - 31 March Tunisia hosts the 30th Arab League Summit which concludes with little in the way of agreements and a declaration that includes the condemnation of the US’ recognition of Israel’s sovereignty over the Golan Heights and the defence of the two-state solution to the Palestinian conflict.

April 2019

Spain holds early legislative elections. France approves urgent measures to counter the Yellow Vest movement. Malta elects a new President. The civic protests continue in Montenegro and Serbia. In Kosovo, the Minister of Local Government is sacked. North Macedonia holds the first round of presidential elections. In Syria, the violence continues in areas of Idlib under rebel control. Egypt approves the constitutional reform that extends presidential terms and expands the military’s power. In Libya, the LNA forces, loyal to the Parliament in Tobruk, launch an attack to take Tripoli. In Tunisia, the Nidaa Tounes congress culminates in the election of two rival leaders. In Algeria, after weeks of protests Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigns, replaced by Abdelkader Bensalah who calls presidential elections for July. In Morocco, the government

announces a 10% hike in the minimum wage. In Mauritania, the former Prime Minister Sidi Mohamed Ould Boubacar announces his candidacy in the June presidential elections.

Portugal

- On 18 April the government announces an agreement with trade unions and employers to put an end to the strike held by dangerous goods drivers, ongoing in Portugal since 15 April.

Spain

- On 28 April Spain holds an early general election with a turnout of 78.75%. PSOE wins with 123 seats, up from 85. PP is second, dropping from 137 seats to 66; Citizens wins 57, up from 32; and United We Can wins 42 seats, down from 68. The far-right Vox party bursts into the lower chamber with 24 seats. Valencia also holds regional elections won by PSOE (27 seats), followed by PP (19), Citizens (18), Commitment (17), Vox (10) and United We Can (8).

France

- On 2 April the police find explosive devices in Bastia days before President Emmanuel Macron’s visit to Corsica, where he will end his national tour to debate the Yellow Vest crisis.
- On 9 April the National Assembly approves the draft bill to create a tax on digital services for the big companies in the sector.
- On 15 April a fire breaks out in the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, a symbol of European culture and World Heritage, which destroys the spire and two-thirds of the roof.
- On 19 April thousands of police officers and gendarmes rally throughout France to denounce the wave of suicides in their ranks – 28 so far this year – and demand urgent improvements in working conditions and salaries to reverse a situation which has worsened since the outbreak of the Yellow Vest protests.
- On 25 April Emmanuel Macron presents a series of measures after the end of the so-called Great National Debate

with a view to settling the Yellow Vest crisis. They foresee income tax reductions, the removal of certain tax exemptions that benefit the country’s richest, extend the period of pension contributions and unify all regimes in a points system, revalue the lowest pensions, paralyse the closure of schools and hospitals, guarantee food stamps for single mothers, a constitutional reform that reduces the number of MPs and increases the proportionality of the electoral system, the creation of a citizens’ assembly to reflect on measures to be taken and, the most controversial of all, the closure of the National School of Administration (ENA).

Italy

- On 9 April the Cassation Court acquits the former mayor of Rome Ignazio Marino of charges of fraud and embezzlement, following his dismissal in 2015 over accusations of corruption levelled at him, for which he was sentenced to two years in prison in January 2018.

Croatia

- The former Prime Minister Ivo Sanader is arrested again after the Supreme Court sentences him to six years’ imprisonment for corruption.

Malta

- On 3 April the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) of the Council of Europe describes the Maltese authorities as ineffective in the fight against corruption.
- On 4 April Labour Party member MP George Vella takes over as the new President to replace Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, two days after being elected as the only person nominated by the Parliament. The Democratic Party abstains from the voting calling for a constitutional reform under which the President has to be elected by two-thirds of the Parliament.
- On 13 April the Prime Minister Joseph Muscat announces an agreement for the 64 migrants aboard the German NGO Sea Eye’s rescue ship Alan Kurdi to disembark in Malta before they are taken to Germany, France, Portugal and

Luxembourg, following Italy's refusal to open its ports to them.

Montenegro

- On 6 April the anti-government protests in Montenegro enter their eighth week. The weekly demonstrations take place throughout April, calling for the resignation of the DPS cabinet, which they accuse of corruption and electoral fraud.

Serbia

- On 6 April the anti-government protests in Serbia reach their 18th week calling for the government's resignation, which they accuse of taking authoritarian measures and corruption.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 1 April the ban on all gambling centres comes into force decreed by the Parliament in March after two workers are killed in robberies in Suhareka/Suva Reka on 17 March and Lipjan/Lipjan on 20 March.
- On 3 April the upper airspace above Kosovo remains under Hungarian control for an indefinite period after the 2014 agreement expires between Hungary and the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo (KFOR). No objections are raised.
- On 8 April the Kosovar party Vetëvendosje (Self-determination) files a request with Tirana's Court of First Instance to register a centre that promotes its campaign in Albania to unify Albanians in one country.
- On 9 April the Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj sacks the Minister of Local Government, the Kosovo Serb Ivan Todosije, for describing Kosovo Albanians as terrorists and fabricators of massacres during the war in Kosovo.
- On 20 April Kosovo announces the repatriation of 110 of its citizens from Syria, mostly wives or children of Daesh jihadists, an unprecedented operation in Europe.
- On 29 April a meeting is held in Berlin, organized jointly by Germany and France, to ease tensions between Ser-

bia and Kosovo, which are threatening stability in the Balkans and the enlargement process. Recognition of Kosovo's independence and the possible land swap, which also threatens the spirit of the Dayton Agreement on which the precarious stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina rests, are the two main stumbling blocks.

- On 29 April the President Hashim Thaci refuses to negotiate a land swap with Serbia, although he says he is open to studying border correction.

North Macedonia

- On 2 April Alexis Tsipras becomes the first Greek president to carry out an official visit to North Macedonia.

Albania

- On 17 April Albania expresses its concern over the Dutch Parliament's decision to activate the emergency brake visa suspension mechanism for Albania, due to an increase in criminal activity in the Netherlands carried out by Albanians.

Greece

- On 6 April police clash for the third day in a row with hundreds of migrants on the North Macedonian border looking for a route into Central Europe after false reports are spread on social media according to which border-crossing restrictions had been lifted.
- On 5 April the eurozone Finance Ministers describe Greece's progress in reducing its debt as positive, opening the door to 970 million euros in interests charged by the central banks on loans given to the country.

Turkey

- On 16 April the ECHR condemns Turkey for the illegal arrest of the Constitutional Court judge Alparslan Altan, following the 2016 attempted coup.
- On 21 April several attendees of the funeral for a soldier killed in an operation against the PKK physically assault the leader of the social democratic CHP Kemal Kilicdaroglu, apparently on nationalist grounds.

- On 29 April, 10 days after his arrest, a prisoner jailed in Turkey accused of spying for the United Arab Emirates as part of the investigation into the murder of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi commits suicide.

Syria

- On 4 April at least 12 people are killed in Kafr Nubl, Idlib, when a missile, attributed to the Syrian regime, hits a market. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (OSDH) reports that the shelling by regime forces in the last 24 hours has killed 17 people in the opposition-held area of northwestern Syria.

Egypt

- On 2 April a criminal court in Minya sentences the police sergeant Rabie Mustafa Jalifa to death for the cold-blooded killing in December 2018 in Nahdet al-Qadasa of a Coptic man and his son, amid an increase in sectarian attacks, which include the murder of 114 members of the Christian community since Abdel Fattah el-Sisi came to power, with the backing of the Coptic Pope Theodore II.
- On 16 April the Parliament approves, with a two-thirds majority, the constitutional amendment presented in February by the Tahya Misr (Long Live Egypt) coalition, which will allow Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to remain in the presidency until 2030 and will further increase the power of the armed forces and military courts. The reform extends presidential terms from four to six years and removes the two-term limit brought in after the revolution in 2011. The reforms also bring back the figure of Vice-President; reduce the number of MPs to 450 with a 25% quota reserved for women, revives the Senate, the Parliament's upper house and strengthens the powers of the President over judicial appointments. On 22 and 24 April the reforms are approved in a national referendum by 88%, with a turnout of 44.33%, amid reports of vote buying and coercion.
- On 30 April Hassan Malek, considered to be one of the Muslim Brotherhood's top financiers, is sentenced by the State Security Court to life imprisonment.

Libya

- On 2 April the EU extends sanctions imposed on the President of the Tobruk Parliament, Aguila Saleh and the President and Prime Minister of the rebel government in Tripoli, Nouri Abusahmain and Khalifa al-Ghweil for six months, over the lack of progress to overcome the political crisis in Libya and hand control over to the internationally sponsored Government of National Accord.
- On 4 April the LNA, led by Khalifa Haftar, takes control of Gharyan and announces an offensive on Tripolitania and Tripoli to “cleanse the west of terrorists and mercenaries.”
- On 7 April the eastern Libyan forces carry out an airstrike on southern Tripoli, the United Nations Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) calling for a ceasefire.
- On 9 April the United Nations postpones the national conference for Libya that was to be held in Ghadames on 14 - 16 April due to the current instability.
- On 9 April the Government of National Accord asks the military prosecutor to issue an arrest warrant for Khalifa Haftar for “war crimes and violation of national agreements.”
- On 10 April France blocks a joint statement from the EU calling on Khalifa Haftar to halt his offensive on Tripoli. France’s position, with oil assets in Cyrenaica and having offered military aid to Haftar in the past, clashes primarily with that of Italy, which supports the Government of National Accord.
- On 24 April the UNHCR appeals to the international community to host some of the 3,600 migrants and refugees trapped in detention centres in and around Tripoli.

Tunisia

- On 6 - 9 April the Nidaa Tounes congress held in Monastir deepens the internal division in the ruling party, with the election during the days that follow of two opposing central committees, led by Soufien Toubal, leader of the parliamentary bloc, and by Hafedh Caid Essebsi, the President Beji Caid Essebsi’s son.
- On 24 April the Court of Accounts accuses the Islamist party Ennahda (Rebirth) of benefiting from suspicious donations coming from deceased people

and used to finance the party’s campaign in the 2018 local elections.

Algeria

- On 1 April the Presidency announces that Abdelaziz Bouteflika will step down before 28 April, thereby beginning a transitional period, during which the President of the Parliament Abdelkader Bensalah will be the interim President. On 2 April Bouteflika submits his resignation to the President of the Constitutional Council Tayeb Belaiz.
- On 5 April the first Friday of protest following the resignation of the former President Bouteflika calls for a road map for regime change.
- On 9 April the Parliament appoints the hitherto President of the Parliament Abdelkader Bensalah interim President. On 10 April Bensalah calls presidential elections for 4 July 2019.

Morocco

- On 25 April the government announces a new agreement with employers and trade unions to increase the minimum wage by 10%, except in the agricultural sector. For their part, teachers continue their demonstrations to demand permanent contracts for temporary employees.

EU

- On 3 April the European Commission launches an infringement procedure against Poland over the new disciplinary regime for judges and warns Romania regarding its reforms of the judicial system.
- On 11 April the EU grants the British Prime Minister Theresa May an extension on the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the EU to 30 June, to allow her more time to persuade the British Parliament to approve the deal.
- On 20 April the French National Rally (RN, far right) announces that it will join the initiative led by the Italian League to create a European parliamentary group that brings together the ultra-nationalist Eurosceptic parties.
- On 24 April the Scottish Prime Minister Nicola Sturgeon announces draft legislation in the Scottish Parliament to

hold a second referendum on Scottish independence to enable the country to remain in the EU, should the United Kingdom eventually leave.

May 2019

Spain holds local and regional elections. In France, unrest erupts during International Workers’ Day and the former President Nicolas Sarkozy is ordered to stand trial for corruption. In Italy, tensions mount in the ruling coalition. The Montenegro Supreme Court sentences 13 people to prison over an alleged coup attempt. Northern Kosovo holds elections. North Macedonia holds the second round of its presidential election. Anti-government demonstrations continue in Albania. In Greece, the government survives a no-confidence vote. In Turkey, the Election Board rules that the local elections are to be repeated in Istanbul. The Cypriot Justice Minister resigns. The Syrian army continues its offensive in Idlib. In Lebanon, protests are staged against the draft budget. Jordan reshuffles its cabinet. In Egypt, the former Interior Minister Habib el-Adly is acquitted. Intense combat continues in Libya for control of Tripoli. In Tunisia, the fight for leadership of Nidaa Tounes continues. Citizen protests calling for the end of the regime continue in Algeria.

Portugal

- On 10 May the Parliament votes down the draft bill presented by the Left Bloc on raising teaching salaries, thereby ending the political crisis triggered when the Prime Minister Antonio Costa threatened to resign if the bill was passed.
- On 30 May Portugal becomes the first country in the eurozone to sell “panda bonds” -sovereign debt in yuan.

Spain

- On 26 May Spain holds local and regional elections in 14 of its 19 autonomous regions. PSOE emerges victorious in both elections. Deals need to be struck in most regions to form a government.

France

- On 1 May there is serious unrest which leaves 40 people injured and leads to 330 arrests in Paris during International Workers' Day.
- On 17 May the Constitutional Council rejects an appeal lodged by Nicolas Sarkozy, meaning the former President will stand trial at the Correctional Court over the Bygmalion scandal, centred on the alleged illegal funding of his 2012 presidential campaign.
- On 23 May an explosive device planted by a Daesh supporter wounds 13 people in Lyon.

Italy

- On 8 May the League senator Armando Siri is sacked as Transport Undersecretary, under investigation in a bribery case linked to the Cosa Nostra boss Matteo Messina Denaro. The decision triggers another period of instability in the government coalition.
- On 30 May M5S confirms Luigi di Maio as its leader with 80% of the votes, despite the party's poor results in the European elections.
- On 30 May the Deputy Transport Minister Edoardo Rixi resigns after being sentenced to three years and five months in prison for embezzlement.

Malta

- On 17 - 18 May two soldiers are arrested for killing an Ivorian migrant in Hal-Far and injuring a Guinean and a Gambian. Both soldiers are also accused of running over a migrant from Chad in February.

Slovenia

- On 30 May Slovenia scraps plans to build a hydropower plant on the Mura, following a long battle with residents and environmental organizations.

Croatia

- On 7 May trade unions call for the resignation of the Labour Minister Marko Pavic over government-funded television adverts promoting the pension reform and increase in the retirement

age, measures that have already been adopted by the Parliament.

Montenegro

- On 9 May the Supreme Court hands down sentences to 13 people, including two Russian military intelligence officers, of up to 15 years in prison for the 2016 coup attempt.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 16 May the Parliament approves the draft resolution accusing Serbia of genocide during the Kosovo War.
- On 19 May North Kosovo holds early local elections after the resignation in November 2018 of its mayors over the customs tariff hike on Serbian imports. Srpska Lista wins in the four municipalities.
- On 28 May two UNMIK workers are arrested in an operation against organized crime.

North Macedonia

- On 5 May Stevo Pendarovski, from the Social Democratic Party (SDSM), beats Gordana Siljanovska Davkova (VMRO-DPMNE) in the second round of the presidential elections.
- On 23 May a party in the ruling coalition Democratic Union for Integration (DUI, Albanian nationalist), criticizes the appointment of Erol Musliu as the new intelligence chief, suspecting his involvement in a shootout in Kumanovo in 2015, which left 18 people dead.
- On 26 May after lower than expected results in the presidential elections, the SDSM announces a renewal of its leadership with the dismissal of its six vice-presidents and General Secretary Aleksandar Kiracovski, who is replaced by Ljupco Nikolovski.

Albania

- On 14 May the government announces the same access to jobs for citizens of Albania and ethnic Albanians from Montenegro and North Macedonia.
- On 11 May several participants in the demonstrations taking place every Saturday calling for the government to resign throw Molotov cocktails at the

police. The demonstrations continue on 18 and 25 May.

- On 21 May the EU announces the deployment on the Greek-Albanian border of the first operation carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) in a third country.

Greece

- On 10 May Alexis Tsipras' government survives a no-confidence vote tabled by New Democracy (ND, conservative) against the Deputy Health Minister Pavlos Polakis.
- On 13 and 22 May 190 and 122 migrants are intercepted in the Aegean Sea.

Turkey

- On 1 May the police arrest 127 people during the Workers' Day demonstrations in Istanbul.
- On 6 May the Supreme Election Board orders that the local elections in Istanbul be repeated, overturning the victory of Ekrem Imamoglu (CHP) on 31 March.
- On 15 May a court drops the terrorism charges against Erdem Gul, a *Cumhuriyet* journalist, and opposition MP Enis Berberoglu.
- On 17 May 14 members of the Kurdistan Freedom Hawks are handed down life sentences for the terror attack outside the Besiktas stadium.
- On 20 May the authorities order the arrest of 249 workers from the Foreign Ministry for their links to the Fethullah Gulen network. During May, more than 300 more arrests are ordered for the same reason.
- On 22 May a court hands down a prison sentence of almost four years to the activist Eren Keskin and sentences of between one and two years in prison to six workers of the shut-down newspaper Ozgur Gundem, for terrorist propaganda.
- On 26 May a group of MPs led by Leyla Guven and thousands of Kurdish prisoners end their hunger strike, after a call from Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the PKK terrorist organization.

Cyprus

- On 2 May the Justice Minister Ionas Nicolaou resigns over the police force's

handling of the case of a serial killer who went unnoticed for the last three years.

- On 3 May Turkey's announcement of plans to drill for gas in an area partially included in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone increases bilateral tensions.
- On 8 May the Turkish Cypriot government collapses with the resignation of its leader Tufan Erhurman, following reports of the irregular lease of public land to the son of the Finance Minister Serdar Denktaş. On 22 May, Ersin Tatar succeeds Erhurman.
- On 13 - 14 May public contract workers go on strike to demand the same conditions enjoyed by civil servants.

Syria

- On 1 May the Syrian Arab Red Crescent reports that between 7,000 and 8,000 people have left the Rukban refugee camp and the al-Tanf deconfliction zone in April.
- On 13 May the World Health Organization (WHO) condemns the escalation of violence that began on 29 April in northwestern Syria. Throughout the month the attacks continue, leaving dozens dead.
- On 17 May the EU Council extends restrictive measures against the Syrian regime until June 2020.
- On 22 May the NFL and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham capture Kfar Nabuda, Hama from the regime. In response, government forces shell Maarat al-Numan, Idlib.

Lebanon

- On 12 May retired soldiers and civil servants camp outside the Central Bank to protest against the cuts the government plans to introduce for the 2019 budget to reduce the deficit from 11.5% to 7.5%, thereby avoiding bankruptcy and unlocking 11 billion euros in international aid. The protests continue over the ensuing days. On 27 May the government approves the austerity budget for its parliamentary approval.

Jordan

- On 3 May Abdullah II sacks the intelligence services chief and his policy and information advisor, along with a number of other senior officials, over an alleged

plot to organize an unprecedented protest and bring about the dismissal of the Prime Minister Omar al-Razaz.

- On 9 May Abdullah II approves a government reshuffle that includes six new members, in the third cabinet change since Omar al-Razaz took over as Prime Minister a year ago.
- On 24 May the US approves the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Jordan after declaring that there is a "national emergency" with respect to Iran.

Egypt

- On 7 May the Court of Cassation upholds the death sentence handed down to 13 members of Aynad Misr.
- On 9 May the former Interior Minister Habib el-Adli is acquitted in a retrial after originally being sentenced to seven years in prison for embezzlement.
- On 17 May the President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi pardons 560 prisoners, among them the journalist Abdel Halim Qandil.
- On 19 May 17 South African tourists are injured in an explosion close to the new Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza. This is the fourth terrorist attack in the last six months in the country's most visited place. A day later, the army announces the death of 12 terrorists in an operation on the outskirts of Cairo.
- On 23 May a court orders the release of the al-Jazeera journalist Mahmoud Hussein after being detained for two years charged with spreading false information and having links with the Muslim Brotherhood.
- On 30 May Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that its staff in Egypt are being threatened following the publication of a report on abuses against civilians in Sinai.

Libya

- On 1 May the United Nations reports the Libyan coast guard's arrest of at least 113 people trying to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe in the last two days.
- On 2 May fighting intensifies between the forces of the Government of National Accord and those of general Khalifa Haftar. More than 400 people have died since the beginning of Haftar's offensive in April.

- On 9 May some 40 foreign companies have seen their operations suspended in Libya with the announcement of a government decree under which their licenses have expired.

Tunisia

- On 9 May around 60 migrants die in a shipwreck off the Tunisian coast.
- On 15 May Selma Ellumi Rekik resigns as director of the presidential cabinet in the leadership struggle for the ruling Nidaa Tounes.
- On 28 May the Watad party Mongi Rahoui and another eight deputies leave the parliamentary bloc of the Popular Front coalition in disagreement over the election in March of Hama Hammami as the coalition's candidate to the presidential elections in November 2019, despite his disastrous results in the 2014 elections.

Algeria

- On 1 May the army chief of staff Ahmed Gaid Salah calls for dialogue with state institutions after opposing, on 30 April, the demands of demonstrators for the immediate establishment of transition institutions following Abdelaziz Bouteflika's resignation.
- On 4 May the police arrest Said Bouteflika, the former President's brother, and generals Athman Tartag and Mohamed Mediene, accused of conspiracy against the state authority. On 9 May Louisa Hanoune is arrested, the leader of the Trotskyist Workers' Party, in connection with the same case.
- On 29 May the activist Kamel Eddine Fekhar, jailed since March, dies after 50 days on hunger strike.

Mauritania

- On 13 May the EU expresses serious concern for the growth of terrorism and organized crime in the Sahel and warns that the joint force created by Mauritania, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad needs to step up its efforts.

EU

- On 1 May Warsaw hosts a meeting to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the

2004 enlargement, in which the 13 newest member countries sign a declaration reaffirming their European commitment.

- On 18 May over 20,000 Poles march in Warsaw in support of the EU.
- From 23 - 26 May the EU holds parliamentary elections. The People's Party (EPP) wins 179 seats followed by the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) with 150 seats and the liberals of ALDE, who, with a 39-seat increase, now have 107. Also worthy of note, is a sharp rise for the greens, who came second in Germany. Eurosceptics and right-wing populism also did well, winning in countries like France, Italy, Hungary and Poland, although not performing as well as they'd expected. The Brexit Party wins in the United Kingdom, although the remain parties win more votes than the pro-Brexit parties. Of particular interest is the participation of Volt, the first pan-European party, which wins one seat.
- On 29 May the Scottish government presents its bill for a second independence referendum to avoid Scotland leaving the EU.
- On 29 May the EC indicates in its annual report on the accession process that Turkey is "moving further away" from European membership and that talks have come to a standstill. It recommends opening talks with Albania and North Macedonia, urges Bosnia to form a new government and Kosovo to remove the trade tariffs on Serbian imports.

June 2019

In France, the government announces changes in its political guidelines. In Italy, the League confirms its rise in the local elections. Croatia announces its candidacy to the eurozone. In the north-west of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is unrest and protests over the presence of migrants. In Montenegro, laws are passed on respect for national symbols and the dismissal of civil servants. The anti-government protests continue in Serbia and Albania. Kosovo's Constitutional Court rules that the mandate of the negotiation team for the normalization of relations with Serbia is uncon-

stitutional. North Macedonia reshuffles its cabinet. Greece holds local and regional elections. In Turkey, the local elections in Istanbul are repeated. In Syria, the army's offensive on Idlib, Hama and Homs continues. In Egypt, the former President Mohamed Morsi dies. In Tunisia, there is a double suicide attack. In Algeria, the arrests and convictions of senior officials continue. Morocco approves the law for the generalization of Amazigh. Mauritania holds presidential elections.

Portugal

- On 25 June the Council of Europe condemns Portugal for being the least compliant European country concerning the recommendations on anti-corruption legislation promoted by the body.

Spain

- On 7 June the Supreme Court denies the Catalan separatist leader Oriol Junqueras, in jail pending a resolution over Catalonia's unilateral independence declaration in 2017, permission to collect his credentials as an MEP. On 17 June the Spanish Electoral Commission declares the European Parliament seats of Junqueras and Carles Puigdemont and Toni Comin, both of whom have fled to Belgium, vacant, due to their absence from the compulsory ceremony in which they are sworn into their posts.

France

- On 3 June Laurent Wauquiez resigns as leader of The Republicans (LR, Gaullist), following the party's poor results in the European elections (8.48% of the votes).
- On 12 June the Prime Minister Edouard Philippe is given parliamentary approval for the new government approach, which is moving away from certain liberal positions.
- On 24 June, in Marseille, Emmanuel Macron presides over the Mediterranean Forum, to promote civil cooperation in the western Mediterranean, especially concerning migration and terrorism.

Italy

- On 1 June thousands of pensioners demonstrate in Rome against the government's planned pension cuts.
- On 5 June the EC activates sanctioning procedures against Italy for not applying sufficient measures to reduce its public debt, which is over 130% of GDP.
- On 9 June the local elections held in hundreds of municipalities place the League as Italy's number one party.
- On 26 June the ship Sea Watch, with 42 migrants on board, breaks the Italian government's blockade and enters the port in Lampedusa. Its captain Carola Rackete is arrested.

Malta

- On 5 June more than 270 migrants disembark in Malta after being picked up by the armed forces.
- On 7 June Malta hosts the sixth Southern EU Countries Summit.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 1 June at least 29 people are injured in a fire at Miral migrant camp, in Velika Kladusa. On 5 June 20 migrants are arrested after attacking the centre in protest for having to sleep outside because of the fire.
- On 14 June hundreds of people demonstrated in Bihac against the growing influx of migrants, around 6,000, only half of which reside in transit centres.
- On 24 June the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe announces the temporary suspension of Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership for failing to appoint its delegates for the body, despite having been granted an extension.

Montenegro

- On 10 June the Parliament approves fines of up to 20,000 euros if respect is not shown for national symbols, in a vote that is boycotted by the pro-Serbian opposition.
- On 27 June the Supreme Court rules that civil servants dismissed by the Parliament cannot appeal the decision before a court, in a decision that the op-

position believes will open the door to political persecution.

- On 30 June Momir Bulatovic, the President of Montenegro during the break up of Yugoslavia, dies.

Serbia

- On 1 June thousand of people gather to call for the government's resignation on another Saturday of protests, which have been taking place since December 2018 and continue throughout the month.
- On 27 June Serbia and the EU open chapter 9 on Financial Services in its accession negotiations. This is the 17th chapter opened out of a total of 35.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 4 June the Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj sacks his advisor Sylejman Selimi, the former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK), convicted for crimes of war in 1998-1999. Selimi was appointed advisor on 6 February after being released on bail on 25 January, a decision criticized by the US, Russia and Serbia.
- On 27 June the Constitutional Court rules that the mandate and competences of Kosovo's negotiation team for normalizing relations with Serbia is unconstitutional.
- On 28 June Togo revokes its recognition of Kosovo's independence.

North Macedonia

- On 27 June the Parliament approves the government reshuffle unveiled by the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, who will also continue at the helm of the Finance Ministry.
- On 27 June a Hungarian court rejects the request to extradite the fugitive former North Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski.

Albania

- On 10 June the President Ilir Meta announces the cancellation of the local elections scheduled for 30 June, in view of the persistent violent citizen protests calling for the government's resignation.

In response, the Prime Minister Edi Rama threatens to seek his dismissal through the Parliament. In the end, the elections are held on 30 June and are boycotted by the opposition.

Greece

- On 1 - 2 June around 230 migrants are intercepted in the Aegean. The migrant arrivals continue despite the agreement between the EU and Turkey in March 2016.
- On 2 June ND wins in the local and regional elections, taking the main municipalities and 11 of the 13 regions. The elections are a serious defeat for Syriza, which also lost against ND in the European elections, forcing early elections to be called.

Turkey

- On 18 June the authorities arrest around 65 people for their alleged ties to Fethullah Gulen.
- On 23 June Ekrem Imamoglu (CHP) wins in the repeated municipal elections in Istanbul with 54% of the votes against Binali Yildirim (AKP).

Cyprus

- On 5 June Nikos Polyzos, director of the State Health Services Organization (Okypy) is sacked following several complaints filed against him for bullying.
- On 5 June Cyprus signs an 18-year production sharing agreement for the Aphrodite gas field worth more than 7.9 billion euros, with Noble Energy.

Syria

- On 3 June at least three soldiers are killed in the second Israeli bombardment in Syria in less than a week, following the launch of two rockets at the Golan Heights.
- On 19 June the United Nations reports that the escalation of violence in northwestern Syria since the end of May has left 230 civilians dead and 330,000 displaced. The attacks, considered by Russia as legitimate, continue throughout June, leaving dozens more dead.
- On 30 June Israeli warplanes fire missiles at Syrian positions in Homs and Damascus. According to Syrian state

media, the attack was launched from Lebanese airspace.

Lebanon

- On 3 June at least four members of the security forces are killed in an ambush in Tripoli, the scene of intense fighting between supporters and opponents of the Syrian rebels.
- On 26 June army veterans protest against the benefit and pension cuts in the 2019 budget, the cause of social mobilization in recent months.
- On 30 June two bodyguards are killed in Aley in a clash between soldiers and members of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) when the Refugee Minister Saleh al-Gharib's convoy passes through the town.

Jordan

- On 21 June hundreds of Islamists march in Amman to call for the boycott of the Bahrain Conference on the new US Middle East peace plan.

Egypt

- On 12 June 32 people are sentenced to life imprisonment and 198 to sentences of between three and five years in prison for plotting the assassination in 2014 of President al-Sisi and the then Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammad Bin Nayef.
- On 17 June the Islamist Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected president, dies after collapsing in court while standing trial for espionage.
- On 25 June the retrial begins against the jihadist Hisham al-Ashmawy, sentenced in absentia and handed over in May by the authorities in eastern Libya.
- On 25 June eight people are arrested for their alleged involvement in a coup plot to coincide with the sixth anniversary of the coup against Mohamed Morsi. Among the arrested are the former deputy Ziyad al-Elaimy and the activists and journalists Hossam Moenes and Hisham Fouad.

Libya

- On 2 June Daesh attacks an LNA base in Derna.

- On 10 June the Libyan coast guard intercepts 60 migrants off the coast at al-Joms.
- On 10 June the United Nations Security Council renews its authorization to inspect ships off the Libyan coast and ensure compliance with the arms embargo.
- On 16 June the Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj refuses to sit down to negotiate with Khalifa Haftar, whose troops have been holding the capital Tripoli under siege for two months now.
- On 26 June the government forces of Tripoli take control of Gharyan from Khalifa Haftar's troops.

Tunisia

- On 2 June Tahya Tounes' National Council elects the Prime Minister Youssef Chahed to be its leader, in the 1st congress of the secular movement, in which its merger with the National Destourian Initiative or al-Mubadara is also confirmed.
- On 18 June the Parliament approves a series of amendments to the electoral law that include banning candidates who have undertaken activities that are prohibited for political parties during the year before the elections, establishing a minimum 3% for parliamentary representation and obliges presidential candidates to declare assets and interest.
- On 27 June Daesh carries out a twin suicide bombing leaving at least one dead and eight injured in Tunisia.

Algeria

- On 2 June the Constitutional Council postpones the presidential elections scheduled for 4 July, after rejecting the only two registered candidates -Abdelhakim Hamadi and Hamid Touahri. Some parties have also announced they will not present candidates, thereby siding with the mass demonstrations, which continue throughout the month calling for the elections to be delayed until they can be held with full guarantees of a fair and transparent vote.
- On 4 June a court in Sidi Bel Abbes orders the conditional release of the blogger Abdullah Benaoum, who has been on hunger strike for more than

two months over his imprisonment for insulting the then President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

- On 9 June the former Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, several ministers, senior civil servants from the National Agency of Investment Development (ANDI) and the businessman Mahieddine Tahkout testify before the Court of Algiers regarding alleged privileges granted to the latter. On 12 June, a day after Ouyahia is jailed, the Supreme Court orders another former Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal to be placed in custody.
- On 16 June the former Economy and Finance Minister Karim Djoudi testifies before the Supreme Court in the corruption investigation into Abdelaziz Bouteflika and figures associated with him.
- On 17 June the founder of the construction company ETRHB, Ali Haddad, is sentenced to six months in prison for obtaining and using a second passport.
- On 19 June the public prosecutor refers the former Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia to the Supreme Court in another corruption case, in which he is under investigation along with the Tourism Minister Abdelkader Benmessaoud and former Public Works and Industry ministers Abdelghani Zaalane and Youcef Yousfi.
- On 29 June the iconic founder of the Front for Socialist Forces (FFS), Lakhdar Bouregaa, is arrested for insulting a state body and undermining the morale of the army.

Morocco

- On 5 June Mohammed VI pardons 576 convicts, 100 of which were jailed in connection with the protest movements in the Rif and Jerada.
- On 10 June the Parliament adopts the bill on the generalized use of Amazigh, eight years after its constitutional recognition as an official language.
- On 25 June hundreds of demonstrators call for a revision of the law on abortion to make the text more permissive.
- On 27 June the EU and Morocco hold their first meeting of the Association Council after four years of diplomatic tension over two rulings by the European Court of Justice which estab-

lish that the trade agreements on agriculture and fishing are not applicable to Western Sahara.

Mauritania

- On 22 June the ruling party candidate Mohamed Ould Ghazouani wins in the first round of the presidential elections with an absolute majority (52.01%) rendering a second round unnecessary. Around a hundred opposition figures denouncing the election as a "coup d'etat" are arrested during the ensuing protests.

EU

- On 6 June the EU authorizes a reform that limits entry visas to short stays for countries that do not accept the return of their citizens who are in Europe irregularly.
- On 7 June Switzerland delays signing the framework agreement negotiated with the EU, asking the EC to make clarifications regarding state subsidies, wage protection and citizens' rights.

July 2019

Central Portugal is hit by devastating wildfires again. In Spain, Pedro Sanchez fails to gain the parliamentary support needed to be sworn in as President. France approves the so-called Google tax and signs the agreement on the European Intervention Initiative. Measures are stepped up against migration in Italy, Slovenia and Croatia. In Croatia, there are changes in the government. The Bosnian aluminium smelter Aluminij enters bankruptcy. Anti-government protests continue in Serbia. Kosovo's Prime Minister resigns. Greece holds legislative elections. Turkey receives missiles purchased from Russia and threatens to suspend the migration deal with the EU and to intervene in northern Syria. In Syria, the offensive continues on Idlib, Aleppo and Hama. Jordan reestablishes diplomatic ties with Qatar. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood announces its intention to cooperate with the other opposition parties. The Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi dies. In Algeria, the first meeting is held of the National

Commission for Dialogue and Mediation. In Morocco, Mohammed VI announces major reforms.

Portugal

- On 20 - 21 July massive forest fires rage through central Portugal, which is yet to recover from the devastating fires in 2017.

Spain

- On 25 July the acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez fails to garner the parliamentary support needed for his investiture, almost three months after his party, PSOE, won the general election.

France

- On 16 July the Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne is appointed Environment Minister to replace François de Rugy, who was dismissed after he was discovered to have misused public money during his time as President of the National Assembly.
- On 12 July the Senate approves the OECD initiative known as the GAFA tax, a 3% levy on the revenues of large technology companies. The approval, which follows the agreement reached at the G20 Summit in Fukuoka, opens a new front with the US.
- On 14 July Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel sign the agreement on the French initiative, the European Intervention Initiative, which lays the foundations for a European army.
- On 14 July 150 Yellow Vests are arrested for acts of vandalism during the national holiday.

Monaco

- On 10 July Monaco becomes the first country to offer complete 5G coverage after a deal reached between Monaco Telecom and Huawei.

Italy

- On 9 July the government closes Europe's biggest migrant reception centre, in the former Mineo US military base.
- On 10 July the Family Minister Lorenzo Fontana is appointed Foreign Affairs

Minister, a position that had been temporarily covered by the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte since Paolo Savona left it in February. Alessandra Locatelli takes over at the helm of the Family Ministry.

- On 11 July Milan's public prosecutor opens an investigation into the possible illegal financing of the League, involving Russia.
- On 15 July a major arsenal is seized during a raid on supporters of the far-right Forza Nuova.
- On 17 July the Interior Minister Matteo Salvini urges the provincial prefects to carry out a census on Roma and Sinti camps, to dismantle those that are illegal.
- On 17 July 19 members of Cosa Nostra are arrested in the joint operation New Connection in New York and Palermo.
- On 31 July Italy allows 116 migrants picked up on 25 July by the military vessel Gregoretti to disembark in Augusta. Germany, France, Portugal, Luxembourg and Ireland commit to taking in the migrants.

Malta

- On 15 July the public prosecutor presses charges against the three people arrested for the murder of the journalist Daphne Galizia Caruana.

Slovenia

- On 22 July Slovenia reinforces its border with Croatia to halt the flow of migrants, a decision that adds to the joint border patrols with Italy since the first day of the month.

Croatia

- On 4 July Croatia announces its candidacy for the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (MTC-II) to become part of the eurozone.
- On 15 July HRW calls on Croatia to stopping returning migrants to Bosnia and Herzegovina immediately.
- On 15 July the Public Administration Minister Goran Maric resigns, under investigation for irregularities in private real estate operations.
- On 18 July the Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic announces ministerial changes in Agriculture, Foreign Affairs, Welfare, Public Administration, Regional Development and Labour and Pensions.

- On 25 July the President Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic supports the decision taken by the mayor of Vukovar not to extend the rights of the Serb minority, despite a Constitutional Court ruling for this to be done.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 15 July the government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the largest shareholder of Aluminij, gives the country's largest aluminium smelter six months to put its accounts in order before declaring bankruptcy, which is a major blow to the country's economy.
- On 19 July the Dutch Supreme Court upholds a ruling that the Netherlands was partially responsible for the death of 350 Bosniak men at the hands of Bosnian Serbs, after the Dutch peacekeepers turned them out of the UN base in Srebrenica.

Serbia

- On 13 July for the 32nd consecutive week, anti-government demonstrators protest again calling for the resignation of the cabinet and especially the Interior Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic, accused of having forged his university diploma.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 1 July a demonstration staged by Kosovo Serbs in Mitrovica protests against the customs tariffs on Serbian imports.
- On 19 July the Prime Minister and former UCK leader Ramush Haradinaj resigns after being summoned by the Special Kosovo War Crimes Court. On 22 July the President Hashim Thaci calls early elections for 8 September.
- On 24 July the Central African Republic revokes its recognition of Kosovo's independence.

Greece

- On 7 July Greece holds early legislative elections in which Kyriakos Mitsotakis' conservative ND wins with an absolute majority (39.85% of the votes,

158 seats). Alexis Tsipras' hitherto ruling Syriza party wins 31.53% and 86 seats. Fofi Gennimata's socialist Movement for Change (which includes PASOK) wins 8.9% and 22 seats. The house is completed with the Greek Communist Party (KKE, 5.3%, 15 seats); the populist Greek Solution, (3.69%, 10 seats); and Yanis Varoufakis' Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25, 3.4%, nine seats). The neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party and populist ANEL do not win any seats.

- On 18 July Konstantinos Tasoulas (ND) is elected as the new Parliament Speaker.

- On 22 July the new government survives a no-confidence vote regarding its economic policies.

Turkey

- On 5 July the Court of Cassation acquits the journalist Mehmet Altan, convicted for his alleged ties to Fethullah Gulen.

- On 8 July the former Deputy Prime Minister and former Foreign Affairs and Economy Minister Ali Babacan leaves the AKP due to deep differences over the party's direction and to form a new political party by the end of the year or for early 2020.

- On 17 July the US suspends the sale of F-35 fighter jets to Turkey after Ankara, despite being a NATO member, purchases an S-400 missile defence system from Russia in June.

- On 22 July the Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu threatens to suspend the migration deal signed with the EU, in a move interpreted as a response to the sanctions imposed on Ankara by Brussels – a 145.8 million euro cut in pre-accession funds – to punish Turkey for sending drillships to waters around Cyprus.

Cyprus

- On 10 July Turkey rejects the accusation that the oil and gas drilling it is carrying out in Cypriot waters, condemned by Cyprus, the EU and the US, is illegitimate.

- On 21 June the Cypriot President between 2008 and 2013 Demetris Christofias dies.

- On 25 July the UN Security Council renews the mandate of UNFICYP for a further six months.

Syria

- On 17 July UNICEF reports that tens of thousands of children are in limbo in the al-Hol displacement camp, which hosts more than 70,000 people, most of whom have fled from Deir ez-Zor following the SDF's defeat of Daesh.

- On 22 July Turkey warns that it will enter northeastern Syria if the talks to establish a safe zone on the Turkish-Syrian border fail.

- On 26 July the United Nations reports that the airstrikes carried out by the Syrian government and its allies throughout July on rebel strongholds in northwestern Syria have killed more than 100 civilians in the last 10 days and displaced more than 400,000 people.

Lebanon

- On 1 July the army demolishes 20 Syrian refugee homes in Aarsal. This action adds to the forced dismantlement in June of other refugee structures, which, according to Save the Children, have left roughly 15,000 children homeless.

- On 30 July Hamas expresses its support for the protests that have been carried out for several days in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon against the new measures taken by the Lebanese government demanding that foreigners in the country have a specific work permit to be able to work.

Jordan

- On 16 July Jordan restore full diplomatic ties with Qatar, two years after downgrading them following the embargo on Doha imposed by four other Arab countries.

Egypt

- On 11 July the Parliament approves extending the state of emergency for the ninth time, in place now for two and a half years.

- On 15 July the Muslim Brotherhood issues a statement saying that they are

no longer seeking to be in power should Abdel Fatah al-Sisi's Presidency fall, and instead are looking to cooperate with Egypt's different opposition parties.

- On 25 July the President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi transfers authority over the northern Sinai Port of al-Arish to the army.

Libya

- On 1 July Khalifa Haftar's forces begin a bombing campaign on Tripoli to "free" the capital, which is under the control of the Government of National Accord. On 2 July at least 40 people are killed in an airstrike that hits a migrant detention centre in Tripoli, as part of Haftar's offensive.

- On 20 July the Libyan authorities free Muammar Gaddafi's last Prime Minister, al-Baghdadi al-Mahmoudi, sentenced to death in 2015 and whose name is mentioned in the investigation into Libyan funding of the former French President Nicolas Sarkozy's election campaign.

- On 25 July at least 150 migrants are killed in a shipwreck in waters off Libya. A further 132 are rescued and transferred to the North African country.

- On 26 July the Government of National Accord's forces announces the launch of an attack on the al-Jufra airbase, under the control of "foreign forces" loyal to Khalifa Haftar. Both sides accuse each other of using foreign mercenaries.

Tunisia

- On 1 July 81 migrants go missing after their boat capsizes off the coast near Zarzis. On 7 July, another shipwreck leaves 72 dead.

- On 5 July the Prime Minister Youssef Chahed approves a law that prohibits access to public buildings for people who have their faces covered.

- On 10 July retired army officers announce the creation of a political party named Halumou li Tunis (Acting together for Tunisia) ahead of the legislative elections scheduled for 6 October.

- On 22 July Machrou Tounes (Project Tunisia), Mohsen Marzouk's party, refuses to form an alliance with Tahya Tounes, Youssef Chahed's party, to run in the elections on 6 October.

- On 25 July after being admitted to hospital for a second time in less than a month due to serious health issues, the President Beji Caid Essebsi dies. He was Tunisia's first freely elected president. The Parliament Speaker Mohamed Ennaceur takes over the Presidency in the interim.

Algeria

- On 2 July the Speaker of the People's National Assembly Mouad Bouchareb resigns after weeks of mass demonstrations calling for him to step down.
- On 5 July the former police chief Abdelghani Hamel is arrested for corruption.
- On 7 July the former minister and former secretary general of the National Liberation Front (FLN), Djamel Ould Abbes is ordered to be remanded in custody by the Supreme Court for corruption and misuse of public money. On 8 July Said Barkat, the former National Solidarity Minister, meets the same fate.
- On 11 July the moderate Islamist Sliman Chenin is appointed Speaker of the People's National Assembly, marking the first time the post has been held by someone who does not belong to the ruling party.
- On 20 July the former Industry Minister Mahdjoub Bedda is taken into custody five days after another former minister of the same ministry Youcef Yousfi is also arrested for corruption and the misuse of public funds. On 22 July, Amar Ghoul, the former Transport and Public Works Minister, is also arrested for corruption in the construction of the East-West highway.
- On 28 July the National Commission for Dialogue and Mediation holds its first meeting in Algiers. The commission was set up by the interim President Abdelkader Bensalah to lay the groundwork for new elections.

Morocco

- On 18 July a court sentences three Daesh supporters to death for the murder of two Scandinavian tourists in December 2018.
- On 28 July two Dutch citizens that shot dead a medical student in Mar-

rakech in November 2017 are sentenced to death.

- On 30 July, during his annual Throne Day speech, Mohammed VI announces the creation of a commission to study a new multi-sectoral development model and pardons 4,764 prisoners. Nasser Zafafi, leader of the Rif protests, was not among them.

Mauritania

- On 9 July the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini meets in Ouagadougou with the Foreign Ministers of the G5-Sahel and announces 138 million euros in support for the Joint Force in view of the region's worsening security situation.
- On 31 July the blogger Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir, sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2014, is released after five years in prison.

EU

- On 1 July Finland takes over the Presidency of the Council of the EU with the fight against climate change, the Union's competitiveness, public security and ensuring respect for European values as priorities.
- On 3 July David-Maria Sassoli, an Italian member of the social democratic group, is elected Speaker of the European Parliament for the first half of the parliamentary term.
- On 9 July the British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn announces that he will seek a second referendum on Brexit.
- On 16 July the European Parliament elects the German Christian democrat Ursula von der Leyen as the new President of the Commission.
- On 24 July the conservative Boris Johnson is elected to be the British Prime Minister to replace Theresa May, who resigned from the post. Johnson promises to complete Brexit, whether hard or soft, in October.

August 2019

In Portugal, a strike that had brought the country to a standstill is called off. France hosts the G7 summit. The gov-

ernment crisis in Italy ends with the withdrawal of the League and the formation of a new coalition between M5E and PD. There are mass migrant arrivals in Malta, Italy, Greece and Cyprus. A tripartite agreement is reached in Bosnia and Herzegovina to form a government. In North Macedonia, the special prosecutor for corruption is arrested. In Turkey, tensions arise between the political power and the military and the President announces a new offensive in Syria, parallel to the agreement reached with Washington to set up a joint operations centre and a safe zone to the east of the Euphrates River. For its part, the Syrian army resumes its offensive in Idlib and Hama. Tensions mount between Lebanon and Israel. In Libya, the fighting for control of Tripoli continues. The purge continues of senior officials and businessmen in Algeria.

Portugal

- On 18 August fuel-tanker drivers call off an indefinite strike which began on 12 August to demand pay rises and better working conditions to allow talks to begin with the employers' association and the government, which on 19 August announces the end of the fuel shortage crisis.

France

- On 3 August at least 30 people are arrested during a Yellow Vest protest in Nantes called following the death on 21 June of a young man during a police raid of a techno music festival.
- On 24 - 26 August Biarritz hosts the G7 summit on the ecological disaster in the Amazon, Iranian stability, world trade, development in Africa, gender equality, the fight against inequality and the situations in Ukraine, Libya and Hong Kong.

Italy

- On 5 August the government survives a no-confidence vote in the Senate over its decree in June that imposes fines on NGOs that rescue migrants from the Mediterranean.
- On 13 August the businessman Flavio Briatore founds the Movimento del

Fare (Movement of Doing) with a similar ideology to that of Matteo Renzi's liberal party Italia Viva.

- On 20 August the League withdraws the no-confidence motion it had presented to the Senate against the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte following his decision to resign over the government crisis between M5E and Matteo Salvini's party.
- On 21 August with 83 migrants aboard, rescued in three operations between 1 and 10 August, Open Arms disembarks in Lampedusa after the public prosecutor invokes Article 328 from the Criminal Code, which foresees jail sentences for officials that do not fulfil their institutional obligations, in reference to the Interior Minister Matteo Salvini's refusal to allow the ship to disembark. On 29 August the Agrigento court orders the release of Open Arms, which has been detained by the Italian authorities.
- On 27 August Salvini bans the German ship Eleonore from entering Italian waters with 101 migrants on board.
- On 29 August the President Sergio Mattarella tasks Giuseppe Conte with forming a government, following the previous day's agreement between M5E and the PD which avoids snap elections which the League sought by breaking up the government coalition on August 8.

Malta

- On 23 August Malta announces an agreement to disembark the 356 migrants onboard the Ocean Viking for their subsequent transfer to six other European countries.
- On 26 August the Maltese navy rescues more than 160 migrants aboard two different vessels.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 5 August the Bosnia's Serb, Croat and Bosniak leaders reach an agreement to form a federal government, 10 months after the elections.
- On 29 August the UN Committee against Torture orders the Bosnian State to pay compensation to a woman who was raped by a soldier in 1993 and to establish a reparation scheme for victims of war crimes.

Montenegro

- On 26 August the inauguration of a monument in Tuzi to Dede Gjon Luli, the leader of an uprising against the Ottoman Empire, ignites tensions with Montenegrin Serbs, who view the statue of an Albanian nationalist as a provocation.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 24 August Kosovo issues an international arrest warrant for the Serb nationalist leader Milan Radoicic, suspected of being involved in the murder of the Kosovo Serb politician, Oliver Ivanovic.

North Macedonia

- On 22 August the former special prosecutor for corruption Katica Janeva is arrested, charged with taking bribes, after in July the Italian website, La Verità released recordings that connect her with the magnate Jordan Kamchev, tried over the Imperium corruption scandal. The opposition VMRO-DPMNE accuses Zoran Zaev's government of also being involved.

Greece

- On 24 - 25 August around 160 migrants arrive in Greece from Turkey, practically a week after Turkey arrested a further 330 trying to reach Greece.
- On 29 August the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis calls on Chancellor Angela Merkel for the payment of reparations for the abuses committed in Greece by German troops during World War II.

Turkey

- On 6 August 22 people are arrested accused of belonging to Daesh in the country's south.
- On 16 August two PKK members are shot down by the army in Kirikdag, Hakkari, two days after another two were shot dead in Kars.
- On 17 August the army kills six alleged PKK members in response to an attack on a military base in the district of Semdinli, Hakkari.

- On 19 August the HDP mayors in Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van are suspended from duty for their alleged membership and support of the PKK.
- On 21 August Turkey extends the deadline to 30 October for Syrian refugees that did not register in Istanbul when they entered the country to leave the city or face expulsion.
- On 26 August five army generals resign over their disagreement with the decisions taken in a military council meeting on 1 August, which they describe as an attempt to make the army smaller.
- On 30 August the Turkish intelligence agency arrests Arif Komis in Malaysia, an alleged senior figure in the movement led by Fethullah Gulen.

Cyprus

- On 7 August the government asks the Union to help relocate 5,000 migrants, in view of the disproportionate migration pressure Cyprus is under.

Syria

- On 2 August the government announces the suspension of operations in Idlib to allow for a ceasefire mediated by Russia and Turkey.
- On 6 August the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces that Turkish forces will soon launch a new offensive in northern Syria.
- On 8 August the army announces it is resuming its military offensive in Idlib, given that it believes the rebel groups in control of this region have not shown signs of complying with the ceasefire.
- On 11 August the army takes control of Hbit, in Idlib.
- On 19 August the army takes back control of Khan Shaykhun, Idlib.
- On 22 August the army announces the opening of a humanitarian corridor to allow those who want to leave the areas targeted by the military offensive on Idlib and Hama.
- On 23 August the army takes control of Murak, Lahaya and Maarkaba, in Hama province, and a Turkish observation post.
- On 27 August the Syrian-Kurdish authorities report that their fighters have begun to withdraw from areas along the border with Turkey, following the crea-

tion of the so-called buffer zone negotiated between Turkey and the US.

- On 31 August the army begins to comply with a new ceasefire in Idlib province.

Lebanon

- On 25 August two Israeli army drones crashed in the Mouawad neighbourhood in Beirut, in the last of a series of attacks carried out in the last week by the Israeli Defence Forces on targets in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.
- On 27 August Amnesty International condemns the forced deportation of almost 2,500 Syrian refugees in the last three months, under a government-approved order in May.

Jordan

- On 22 August a campaign carried out by the Public Security Directorate, which began two months ago, ends with 750 arrests for illegal possession of firearms. The campaign is undertaken parallel to the government initiative in 2016 for the Parliament to approve a reform on the 1952 arms law which increases restrictions on access to firearms.

Egypt

- On 12 August at least 20 people are killed in Cairo in the blast produced by a car bomb outside Egypt's National Cancer Institute. The driver is a member of the Hasm armed group, who the authorities accuse of having ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.
- On 19 August a criminal court in Cairo sentences six people to death and a further 41 to life in prison for terrorist activities.

Libya

- On 4 August fighting intensifies in Murzuq between forces of the Government of National Accord and those of Khalifa Haftar.
- On 5 August Khalifa Haftar's forces bomb the Misrata Military Academy.
- On 9 August the Government of National Accord accepts the United Nations proposed ceasefire during the Eid el-Adha religious holiday.

- On 11 August a car bomb explosion in Benghazi kills three United Nations staff members. The UN urges the parties to respect the truce.

- On 17 August the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) condemns attacks carried out by Khalifa Haftar's forces on the airport of Zuwara.
- On 17 August the Libyan coast guard intercepts four vessels off the coast at Tripoli with 278 people on board.

Tunisia

- On 2 August the interim President Mohamed Ennaceur announces a one-month extension to the state of emergency declared in 2015.
- On 7 August the Defence Minister Abdelkarim Zbidi steps down from his post to run as a candidate in the presidential elections on 15 September.
- On 22 August the Prime Minister Youssef Chahed delegates all his powers to the Administration and Public Policy Minister Kamal Morjane to focus on his candidacy in the presidential elections.

Algeria

- On 1 August the public prosecutor in Algiers Belkacem Zeghmati is appointed Justice Minister to replace Slimane Brahmi, who was sacked on 31 July in the context of the court investigation into corruption in the entourage of Abdelaziz Bouteflika.
- On 5 August the Supreme Court orders the arrest of the former Labour Minister, Mohamed el-Ghazi, and Public Works and Transport Minister, Abdelghani Zaalane, for corruption.
- On 6 August a military court issues an international arrest warrant for conspiracy and breach of the public order against the former Defence Minister Khaled Nezzar, his son Lofti, director of the company Smart Link and Benhamdine Farid, director of the Algerian Pharmacy Society.

Morocco

- On 25 August six activists jailed for their participation in the Rif protests in

2017 announce they are renouncing their Moroccan citizenship and declare a hunger strike.

Mauritania

- On 1 August Mohamed Ould Cheikh Mohamed Ahmed is sworn in as the new President in Mauritania's first peaceful power transfer.

September 2019

Spain holds elections. In France, there are ministerial changes and Yellow Vest demonstrations. Italy forms a new government. The Republika Srpska unveils its new gendarmerie force. In Albania, a former Interior Minister is convicted for abuse of power. Greece announces economic reforms. In Turkey, prominent members of the AKP leave the party. In Syria, the US and Turkey begin joint patrols and the UN says that more than a thousand civilians have been killed in Idlib since April. In Lebanon, there are anti-government protests and tensions escalate between Hezbollah and Israel. In Egypt, protests break out against Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Tunisia holds the first round of its presidential elections. The arrests continue in Algeria among the former President Bouteflika's entourage amid renewed protests.

Spain

- On 24 September new legislative elections are called for 10 November in light of the failed negotiations to form a government since PSOE's close election victory in the elections on 28 April.
- On 30 September the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) demands that the new Statute of Autonomy includes the right to decide on Basque self-determination.

France

- On 3 September Jean-Paul Delvoe moves from being High Commissioner to delegate Minister for Solidarity and Health for Pension Reform and Jean-Baptiste Djebbari is appointed State Secretary of Transport under the

Minister of Ecological and Inclusive Transition.

- On 11 September the National Assembly President Richard Ferrand is questioned by judges investigating an allegedly corrupt property deal in 2011 when he was head of an insurance company in Brittany.
- On 14 September there is unrest and dozens of arrests in Nantes in a new Yellow Vest protest.
- On 21 September there are two big marches in Paris; one against climate change and another against the pension reforms. Groups from the anarchist “black bloc” movement and the Yellow Vests cause unrest, and more than 150 arrests are made.
- On 26 September Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic between 1995 and 2007, dies in Paris.

Italy

- On 2 September the ship *Eleonore* of the Germany NGO Mission Lifeline is seized after violating the ban on entering Italian waters. France, Germany, Ireland, Portugal and Luxembourg agree to host the migrants rescued by the vessel.
- On 9 September the Parliament gives its backing to the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte in a confidence vote, giving the green light to a government formed by M5E and the Democratic Party. Luigi Di Maio, the M5E leader, is appointed Foreign Affairs Minister and Luciana Lamorgese replaces Matteo Salvini at the helm of the Interior Ministry.
- On 15 September the 82 migrants rescued by the Ocean Viking disembark in Lampedusa. On 20 September the Ocean Viking asks Italy and Malta for a safe port for a further 218 migrants.
- On 26 September the Constitutional Court rules that the use of euthanasia is not punishable in extreme cases, in the case of the former MEP from the Radical Party Marco Cappato on trial for helping DJ Fabiano Antoniani to die.

Malta

- On 23 September the interior ministers of Germany, France, Italy, Malta and Finland agree on an automatic and voluntary allocation system for rescued

migrants that disembark in Malta or Italy.

Croatia

- On 18 September the new Secretary General of the Council of Europe Marija Pejcinovic Buric, elected in June, assumes office.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 18 September the Bosniak politician Senad Bratic resigns as Deputy Speaker of the Bosnian Serb Parliament following his Party of Democratic Action’s (SDA, conservative) approval on 14 September of a declaration that advocates centralizing guidelines for all of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- On 24 September the Republika Srpska unveils a new armed gendarmerie, which sparks criticism from Bosniak parties.

Serbia

- On 18 September Aleksandar Obradovic, a worker at a state weapons factory, is arrested for revealing trade secrets by leaking documents, thereby blowing the lid on a cut-price arms sale scam, which saw weapons exported to Daesh in Yemen and which involves the father of the Interior Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic.
- On 21 September the demonstrations against Aleksandar Vucic’s government enter their 42nd consecutive week.
- On 30 September taxi drivers bring Belgrade to a standstill in protest against ride-sharing services.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 5 September a court in Kosovo hands down sentences of between one and 10 years in prison to six people for planning attacks on KFOR and attacks in France and Belgium.

North Macedonia

- On 1 September the National Security Agency (ANB) begins work, which replaces the Directorate for Security

and Counterintelligence (UBK), which was at the heart of the illegal wiretapping scandal in 2015. The new agency is not part of the Interior Ministry and has no police powers.

- On 18 September public healthcare professionals demonstrate against the increase in assaults on hospital staff and to call for more resources.

Albania

- On 19 September the former Interior Minister Saimir Tahiri is given a three-year suspended prison sentence for abuse of power, but is absolved of charges of drug-trafficking and having ties to the Habilaj clan.

Greece

- On 7 September Greece announces reforms to attract foreign investment and consolidate the country in the wake of its debt crisis, such as lowering taxes on income and dividends and revitalizing the construction sector.
- On 29 September there is unrest and clashes in Lesbos following two fires at the Moria detention centre.

Turkey

- On 6 September Canan Kaftancioğlu, the CHP leader in Istanbul, is sentenced to nine years and eight months in prison for insulting the President and spreading terrorist propaganda.
- On 12 September the Supreme Court orders the release of six journalists from the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, sentenced to five years’ imprisonment for terrorism.
- On 13 September the former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu leaves the ruling AKP, together with other prominent party members, after the party launches a disciplinary investigation against them for their criticism of the party’s ideology.
- On 14 September the public prosecutor issues arrest warrants for 222 soldiers for their support of Fetullah Gulen’s organization.
- On 19 September the police arrest 22 people across eight provinces accused of running transnational money transfer networks for Daesh.

Cyprus

- On 18 September Cyprus signs agreements with the French and Italian oil companies Total and Eni for drilling in Block 7 of the EEZ.
- On 26 September the Finance Minister Harris Georgiades announces that Cyprus is going to introduce a green tax on energy consumption in 2021.

Syria

- On 5 September Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights says that more than a thousand civilians have died in Idlib since the Syrian army began its offensive in April.
- On 8 September the US and Turkey begin joint patrols in the buffer zone that Ankara wants to establish in Syrian territory east of the Euphrates River.
- On 15 September the President Bashar al-Assad issues a new amnesty for draft dodgers.
- On 19 September the UN Security Council votes on two rival draft resolutions for a ceasefire in northwestern Syria. The proposal of Kuwait, Germany and Belgium calls for an immediate and unconditional end to the hostilities. The proposal of Russia and China would include an exception in the truce actions for groups on the Security Council's list of terrorist organizations. Both resolutions are vetoed. Demonstrations are staged in Idlib against the UN's failure to stop the fighting.
- On 19 September there are clashes and several demonstrators are shot dead by government forces in Salihyah, Deir ez-Zor, where populations from a number of towns are calling for the withdrawal of Bashar al-Assad's troops and denounce a government campaign to alter the region's demographic mix.
- On 20 September Turkey and Russia agree on the delineation of the demilitarized zone established in September 2018 in Idlib.

Lebanon

- On 1 September Israel fires several artillery shells from the Golan Heights at the Shebaa Farms and the hills of Kfarchouba after Hezbollah confirms

an attack on an Israeli military vehicle in Avivim.

- On 8 September Lebanon sees the most serious exchange of attacks since the war between Israeli and Hezbollah in the summer of 2006.
- On 8 September Ali Hatoum, a former Hezbollah member, is found dead in his apartment in Beirut.
- On 29 September Beirut is paralysed by a mass demonstration against corruption and the failure to provide solutions to the economic crisis.

Jordan

- On 8 September the teachers' union goes on strike to demand the 50% pay rise promised since 2014. After talks on 9 September fail, the Legal Affairs Minister hints at the possibility of dissolving the union, created in 2011.

Egypt

- On 2 September the Wafd Party suspends the membership of the former party leader Al-Sayyid al-Badawi Shehata.
- On 11 September a court sentences 11 Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Badie, to life in prison for spying for Hamas.
- On 18 September the Dignity Party (Nasserist) announces its intention to suspend its political activity if the authorities continue their campaign of arrests targeting government opponents. This includes the arrest in June of several political figures planning to create a coalition, Hope, to run in the parliamentary elections, accused of attacking the State and receiving funds from the Muslim Brotherhood.
- On 19 September Ethiopia asserts that it will not accept a unilateral proposal presented by Egypt on the annual water flow from the Nile that should be guaranteed to Egypt once the Great Renaissance Dam is completed.
- On 21 September demonstrations in a number of cities call for the end of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government. There is unrest and numerous arrests throughout the month –at least 1,900 according to the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms. The protests

were organized through social media and triggered by Mohamed Ali, an Egyptian contractor exiled in Spain, who has been posting videos against the regime for several weeks.

Libya

- On 12 September 98 vulnerable refugees are evacuated in the year's third humanitarian evacuation to Italy.
- On 13 September Filippo Grandi, the High Commissioner for Refugees, urges countries to follow the examples of the recent UN agreements with Niger and Rwanda and accept refugees trapped in Libya.

Tunisia

- On 15 September Tunisia holds the first round of its presidential elections. The two candidates with the most votes and who will contest the second round in October are the professor of constitutional law Kais Saied, who is running as an independent candidate, and the businessman Nabil Karoui, the leader of the populist party Qalb Tounes (Heart of Tunisia).
- On 19 September the former President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, who was overthrown in 2011, dies in exile in Saudi Arabia from prostate cancer.

Algeria

- On 15 September the former Justice Minister Mohamed Charfi is named President of the National Independent Authority for Elections.
- On 19 September Fodil Boumala, one of the most prominent protest leaders, is arrested for attacking national unity. His arrest adds to those of two other opposition figures Karim Tabbou, on 12 September, and Samir Benlarbi, on 17 September.
- On 20 September thousands of Algerians demonstrate in the first major protest since, on 16 September, the interim President Abdelkader Bensalah announced presidential elections for 12 December.
- On 25 September a military court sentences the former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's brother, Said, to 15 years' imprisonment for conspiracy.

Morocco

- On 9 September the National Human Rights Council (CNDH) announces that it will present its recommendations to decriminalize abortion, in the context of the trial against the journalist Hayar Raisuni charged with having an abortion and maintaining extramarital affairs.

EU

- On 9 September Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom enacts a law passed in the Parliament to prevent the UK leaving the EU without a deal.
- On 10 September the President of the Commission, the German Ursula von der Leyen, announces the new commissioners in her cabinet, the first gender-balanced commission team ever. A green and digital Europe, the social economy, preserving the European way of life, greater strength internationally and fresh impetus for democracy are the priorities of the new cabinet.
- On 20 September the IOM reports that 63,417 migrants have arrived in Europe by sea in 2019 – 20% less than in 2018 – and at least 953 have died in the attempt.
- On 20 September Sweden and Norway join the European Intervention Initiative (IEI).
- On 24 September the British Supreme Court rules that the Prime Minister Boris Johnson's temporary suspension of the Parliament on 28 August to prevent a parliamentary veto on leaving the EU without a deal was unlawful.
- On 24 September the EU Parliament and Council appoint the Romanian Laura Codruta Kovesi as the future European chief prosecutor.

October 2019

Portugal and Kosovo hold parliamentary elections. In Spain, the Supreme Court passes sentences for the unilateral secession process in Catalonia. In France, the judiciary decides to try Edouard Balladur and Nicolas Sarkozy. Italy reduces the number of parliamentary seats and the League wins in the elections in Umbria. The EC gives the green light to Croatia's entry into the

Schengen area. The ECHR condemns Bosnia and Herzegovina for failing to hold elections in Mostar for over 10 years. Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia agree on a free movement zone. Serbia signs a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union. North Macedonia holds early elections. Cyprus condemns Turkey for sending a drilling ship into its waters. In Syria, the US announces the withdrawal of its troops and the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In Lebanon, the government of Saad Hariri falls. Tunisia holds legislative elections and the second round of presidential elections. Morocco reshuffles its cabinet.

Portugal

- On 3 October the former Prime Minister and founder of CDS Diogo Freitas do Amaral dies.
- On 6 October Portugal holds legislative elections with a turnout of 54.5%. The Socialist Party wins increasing its number of seats from 86 to 106. The Social Democratic Party (PSD) wins 107 seats, up from 77 and the CDS-PP drops from 18 to five seats, leading Assuncao Cristas to announce her resignation as party leader. The far-right Chega (Enough) party wins one seat.

Spain

- On 13 October the Supreme Court hands down sentences for sedition and embezzlement of between nine and 12 years in prison to nine pro-independence leaders over Catalonia's unilateral secession process. Protests and violent clashes break out in Barcelona after the ruling and throughout the month. On 14 October, the Supreme Court issues a new international arrest warrant for the former regional President Carles Puigdemont.
- On 24 October the remains of the dictator Francisco Franco are moved from the mausoleum in the Valley of the Fallen to the Mingorrubio cemetery, in Madrid, after the Supreme Court backed the decision on 24 September.

France

- On 1 October the Court of the Republic decides to try the former Prime

Minister Edouard Balladur and former Defence Minister François Leotard in the Karachi case over possible bribes for the sale of submarines to Pakistan in the mid-nineties.

- On 1 October the Court of Cassation orders the trial of the former President Nicolas Sarkozy in the Bygmalion case, centred on the possible illegal financing of his 2012 election campaign.
- On 2 October thousands of police officers demonstrate in Paris against Emmanuel Macron's politics regarding the outbreak of the Yellow Vest protests which began in November 2018 and has led to serious grievances regarding working conditions in the sector, with 52 suicides recorded so far for 2019.
- On 3 October four police officers are killed in the Paris Police Prefecture at the hands of an Islamic convert from Martinique.
- On 13 October Christian Jacob is elected chairman of LR.

Italy

- On 8 October the Chamber of Deputies approves reducing the number of MPs from 630 to 400 and senators from 315 to 200, as proposed by M5E.
- On 19 October a large rally in the San Giovanni square in Rome protests against the government, called by the League and joined by the far-right parties Forza Italia, Brothers of Italy and CasaPound.
- On 20 October the former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi officially presents his new party, Italia Viva, after announcing on 16 September his departure from the PD.
- On 27 October the League wins in the elections in Umbria with 57.6% of the votes.

Malta

- On 15 October several migrants escape from the Marsa detention centre. At the Safi centre there are protests staged by migrants demanding their release.
- On 16 October Jean Pierre Debono resigns as coordinator of the Nationalist Party (PN, conservative) to focus on his candidacy in the general election.

Croatia

- On 19 October mass demonstrations denounce the release of the perpetrators of the rape of a teenager in Zadar. On 24 October, the government announces a series of proposals for tougher penalties for sexual violence.
- On 22 October the EC says that Croatia meets the conditions for applying to join the Schengen Area.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 4 October the Federal Constitutional Court orders the Republika Srpska to remove the death penalty from its Constitution.
- On 27 October the European Parliament warns the Commission of the need to take urgent action regarding the massively overcrowded Vucjak migrant camp.
- On 29 October the ECHR condemns Bosnia and Herzegovina for not holding local elections in Mostar for more than a decade, failing to comply with a 2010 ruling of the country's Constitutional Court.

Montenegro

- On 8 October the public prosecutor decides that Ivica Stankovic will remain as the country's supreme state prosecutor despite being investigated for corruption as no one has applied to succeed him.

Serbia

- On 10 October Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia agree to create a free movement zone for 2021.
- On 25 October Serbia signs a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union, despite the EU's warnings that it is not compatible with Union membership.
- On 26 October Party of Democratic Action of Sandzak (SDA-Sandzaka) renews its call for the Bosniak-majority region's autonomy.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 6 October Kosovo holds early legislative elections. The ultra-national-

ist, left-wing Vetëvendosje is the most voted party (26.29%) followed by the conservative Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK, 24.46%). The big losers are the two UÇK successor parties, which until now, have dominated politics in Kosovo. In North Kosovo, the Serb List wins 96% of the votes.

- On 9 October the protests against the construction of the Strpce hydropower plant end in clashes with police, after a year of demonstrations.
- On 15 October Kosovo withdraws its application to join Interpol.

North Macedonia

- On 20 October the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev announces early elections for 12 April 2020, following the European Council's refusal to open accession talks.

Albania

- On 11 October the Venice Commission queries the launch of an impeachment process against the President Ilir Meta for his attempts to delay the local elections scheduled for 30 June until 13 October, because of the climate of protest. It also considers the draft bill on property rights to be incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights and the Albanian Constitution.
- On 24 October the Prime Minister Edi Rama announces he is taking legal action against the former Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj for claiming that Rama and the Serbian and Kosovar presidents Aleksandar Vucic and Hashim Thaci were planning to steal 10 billion euros from the Trepca mining complex, in the context of the failed land swap initiative between Serbia and Kosovo.

Greece

- On 14 October a fire is reported to have broken out in the Samos refugee camp following clashes between migrants. HRW warns that the situation in the centres on the Greek islands is on the brink of collapse.

Turkey

- On 14 October the US President Donald Trump orders sanctions to be

imposed on Turkey as a "deterrent" from carrying out its offensive in northern Syria. On 23 October, Trump lifts the sanctions following a negotiated ceasefire.

- On 15 October the state bank Halkbank is accused of evading US sanctions on Iran.
- On 30 October Turkey condemns the US' decision to recognize the 20th-century Armenian killings as genocide.

Cyprus

- On 4 October Turkey sends an oil and gas drilling ship to the Guzelyurt-1, in an area that Cyprus considers to be inside its EEZ and where Nicosia has already granted exploration licenses to Eni and Total.
- On 11 October Cyprus complains to the UN regarding Northern Cyprus' plans, announced in June, to study the reopening of Varosha, a contested district of Famagusta which has been abandoned and fenced off since the conflict in 1974 under Security Council Resolution 550.

Syria

- On 1 October Turkey announces plans to resettle 2 of the 3.6 million refugees it is currently hosting to Syrian Kurdistan.
- On 6 October the US announces the withdrawal of its troops from northern Syria.
- On 9 October Turkey begins its Peace Spring offensive on the north-eastern strip of Syria. The SDF suspends its operations against Daesh to respond to the offensive, causing a number of jihadists to flee. At the beginning of the operation, there were already 60,000 displaced people in Syrian Kurdistan. On 14 October, the army advances towards Tal Tamer, following an agreement with the Kurds to stop the Turkish army from entering. Russia deploys troops to avoid direct fighting.
- On 22 October Russia and Turkey agree in Sochi on a memorandum that implements the 1998 Adana Agreement and ratifies the 30-kilometre buffer strip in northeastern Syria, which

the Kurdish militias are given 150 hours to leave. The agreement commits Turkey to Syria's territorial integrity, the return of refugees living in Turkey and to facilitate a reconciliation process based on the Astana talks.

- On 27 October Donald Trump announces the death of the Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi during Operation Kayla Mueller in Idlib.
- On 29 October the SOHR reports on the first direct fighting between Turkish forces and the Syrian regime, in Ras al-Ain, from where the Kurdish militias left on 20 October.
- On 30 October Geneva hosts a new Russian-led attempt to resume negotiations between the regime and the opposition.
- On 31 October Russia and Turkey begin joint patrols in the border strip in northeastern Syria.

Lebanon

- On 17 October large-scale demonstrations erupt against the government's plans to establish a tax on calls through Internet messaging services and to call for the government's resignation for corruption and its failure to resolve the crisis dogging the country.
- On 20 October four ministers from the Christian Lebanese Forces party resign in opposition to the economic measures taken by the Prime Minister Saad Hariri.
- On 21 October in an effort to ease the protests, the government approves a reform plan that foresees cutting politicians' salaries by half, introducing no new taxes for 2020, major privatizations, improvements to infrastructure and bank contributions to reduce the enormous public deficit in the 2020 budget, which, along with the aforementioned amendments, is approved.
- On 29 October Saad Hariri and his government resign after weeks of mass protests.

Jordan

- On 5 October the Teachers Syndicate and government reach an agreement which puts an end to four weeks of strikes and sees teachers' basic salaries increased as of 2020.

Egypt

- On 1 October the government restores the food subsidy programme for almost two million people who had been excluded.
- On 14 October the activist Esraa Abdelfatah is arrested as part of the crackdown which began on 20 September following new anti-government protests.
- On 26 October the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi extends the state of emergency that has been in place since April 2017 for the tenth time.
- On 29 October Egypt announces the death of 13 suspected terrorists during an operation in al-Arish.

Tunisia

- On 6 October Tunisia holds legislative elections with a poor turnout (41%). The Islamist Ennahda party wins with 52 of the 217 seats in the Parliament. Nabil Karoui's party, Qalb Tounes, comes second with 38 seats. Votes for the secular party Nidaa Tounes plummeted after having won the 2014 elections. They now hold 3 seats, down from 86.
- On 9 October a court orders the release of the presidential candidate Nabil Karoui, who has been remanded in custody since 23 August accused of tax evasion and money laundering.
- On 13 October Tunisia holds the second round of its presidential elections in which the ultra-conservative, jurist Kaies Said claims victory over the populist Nabil Karoui.
- On 29 October the Prime Minister Youssef Chahed announces the replacement of the Defence and Foreign Affairs Ministers Abdelkrim Zbidi and Khemaies Jhinaoui with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Sabri Bashtouji and the Justice Minister Karim Jamoussi, respectively, as part of the negotiations to form a new government.

Morocco

- On 9 October Mohammed VI approves the partial cabinet reshuffle unveiled by the Prime Minister Saadeddine Othmani and which does not affect any of the key ministries. The reform comes after the Party of Progress and Social-

ism (PPS) leaves the government coalition led by the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD).

- On 16 October Mohammed VI pardons the journalist Hajar Raissouni, sentenced to a year in prison for "illegal abortion" and "sexual relations outside marriage."
- On 25 October the Casablanca Appeal Court increases the 12-year prison sentence to 15 years, handed down in November 2018 for human trafficking, abuse of power and rape to Taoufik Bouachrine, director of the newspaper Akhbar al-Yaoum, who says the trial was politically motivated.

EU

- On 17 - 18 October despite the Commission's recommendations, the European Council delays a decision on the opening of accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania, mainly faced with the French demand to reform the enlargement process first, which the Commission's President Jean-Claude Juncker describes as an "historic mistake."
- On 17 October hundreds of thousands of people demonstrate in London calling for a new Brexit referendum.
- On 18 October Christine Lagarde is appointed President of the ECB following the European Parliament's approval on 17 September.
- On 19 October the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson asks the EU to delay the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU for the third time, forced to do so by the House of Commons to avoid a no-deal Brexit. On 29 October, the Parliament accepts Johnson's motion, who offers more time to adopt the Withdrawal Agreement in exchange for early elections on 12 December. For its part, the EU grants a new three-month extension for Brexit.

November 2019

Spain holds legislative elections. The citizen protests continue in France. Italy decrees a state of emergency in Venice. In Malta, there are a number of resignations in relation to the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia. Slovenia

passes the 2020 and 2021 budgets. In Croatia, thousands of teachers call for a pay rise. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the tripartite Presidency agrees on the appointment of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Albania is hit by an earthquake that measures 6.4 on the Richter Scale. Greece toughens the procedure for granting asylum. Turkey begins repatriations of Daesh members. Egypt, Greece and Cyprus criticize the agreement signed by the Libyan Government of National Accord and Turkey on maritime boundaries. In Syria, the fighting in Idlib intensifies and Russia deploys more troops. The anti-government protests continue in Lebanon and Algeria. Israel returns Baqoura and Ghumar to Jordan. In Egypt, three journalists from the Mada Masr newspaper are arrested. In Tunisia, Rachid Ghannouchi is elected as the Parliament Speaker and Ennahda names Habib Jemli the new Prime Minister.

Portugal

- On 13 November the government proposes raising the interprofessional minimum wage by 6%, setting it at 8,890 euros per year.
- On 21 November thousands of police officers demonstrate to demand higher wages and better working conditions.

Spain

- On 10 November Spain holds legislative elections following its failure to form a government with the results from the elections in April. With a turnout of 69.87%, PSOE wins again with 120 seats, three less than in April, followed by PP, which increases its seats from 66 to 89. The far-right party Vox becomes the third strongest party winning 56 seats. United We Can (leftist) wins 35 seats and the liberal Citizens party drops from 57 to 10 MPs, leading its leader Albert Rivera to resign.
- On 12 November PSOE and United We Can agree to form a coalition government. For the rest of the month, the acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez tries to negotiate with various nationalist and pro-independence parties for an agreement to increase his support with a view to his investiture.

- On 19 November in the context of the ERE case centred on the misappropriation of 680 million euros from public funds between 2001 and 2010, the former socialist presidents of Andalusia's regional government, Manuel Chaves and Jose Antonio Griñan, are barred by the Seville Court from serving office for 9 and 15 years respectively, with a six-year prison sentence handed down to the latter. The former Economy and Taxation Counsellor and former Minister of Public Works Magdalena Álvarez is barred from office for nine years. Another 16 senior officials and union representatives are also sentenced.
- On 26 November the ECHR condemns Spain for its Constitutional Court's failure to accept amparo appeals from ETA prisoners, who requested that the sentence they served in France be taken into account to reduce their sentence in Spain.

France

- On 6 November the Prime Minister Edouard Philippe announces industry-specific quotas for migrants who can enter France legally. These will be established on an annual basis by the Parliament, following talks between the government and social agents.
- On 13 November marches in the main cities decry the precarious situation of many university students, following the self-immolation of a student in Lyon whose grant had been withdrawn.
- On 16 November there is unrest in Paris and other cities during the first anniversary of the Yellow Vest movement, when "black bloc" groups clash with riot police.
- On 23 November thousands demonstrate in France to demand urgent measures be taken to combat domestic violence, in a year when 137 women have been murdered by their partners.
- On 26 November farmers block roads in central Paris, in protest against the government for prioritizing free trade agreements over the national farming sector.
- On 27 November several senior members of RN are handed down prison sentences of between one and four years in the court investigation into an illegal financing scam of the far-right

party, through the micro-party Jeanne and election services company Riwal.

- On 28 November the police clear between 200 and 300 migrants from a camp close to the Porte d'Aubervilliers, in north Paris.
- On 29 November the Interior Minister Christophe Castaner sends a memo to 200 French prefects, telling them that President Emmanuel Macron wants to make the fight against Islamic fundamentalism and communitarianism a "national priority."

Italy

- On 3 November the ship Asso Trenta docks in Pozzallo, Sicily, with 151 migrants aboard, rescued from Libyan waters.
- On 7 November the authorities assign police protection for the Senator and Holocaust survivor Lilibian Segre, in light of the increase in death threats she receives because she is Jewish following the approval on 31 October, and with the abstention of the League, of the so-called Segre Committee, set up to combat the worrying levels of anti-Semitism, racial hatred and violence spreading through Italy.
- On 12 November the government decrees a state of emergency in Venice as a result of climate change after the city is flooded by a 187-centimetre tide, the largest since 1966. Minutes before the great flood, the Regional Council of Veneto, controlled by the League, rejected a series of measures to ease the effects of climate change. The construction of the Mose Project, a giant barrier designed in 1984 to protect Venice from the rising acqua alta in the Adriatic Sea, remains at a standstill over corruption scandals.
- On 24 November 213 migrants aboard the Ocean Viking, run by the NGO Doctors without Borders and SOS Méditerranée, disembark in Messina. On 25 November another 140 people rescued by the vessels Open Arms and Aita Mari, disembark in Taranto and Pozzallo, respectively.

Malta

- On 20 November the businessman Yorgen Fenech is arrested in connection

with the murder in October 2017 of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, who, eight months before she died, posted in her blog that the shell company registered in Dubai, 17 Black Ltd., had ties to Maltese politicians, in connection with the international Panama Papers scandal. On 26 November there are resignations from Keith Schembri, Prime Minister Joseph Muscat's chief of staff, the Tourism Minister Konrad Mizzi and Economy Minister Chris Cardona. On 27 November, Schembri is arrested for questioning. The European Parliament announces it is sending an urgent mission to Malta.

- On 29 November the Minister Edward Scicluna, self-suspended Minister Chris Cardona and former Minister Konrad Mizzi are ordered to face a criminal inquiry over their alleged involvement in the privatization deal for the St Luke's, Gozo General and Karin Grech hospitals in 2015.

Slovenia

- On 22 November the Parliament passes the national budget for 2020 and 2021, amid a political crisis caused when the Levica party (The Left) withdrew its support for the government at the beginning of the month.

Croatia

- On 25 November thousands of teachers protested in Zagreb calling for better salaries after a month of strikes in the education sector. On 27 November, the government offers teachers a 10.4% pay rise.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 12 November the Bosnian Serb Parliament approves two non-binding resolutions proposed by the Union of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) rejecting the Bonn Powers, which give authority to the international community's high representative Valentin Inzko, and calls for a referendum to be held on NATO accession and the self-determination of the Republika Srpska.
- On 18 November the tripartite Presidency appoints the Bosnian Serb Zoran Tegeltija President of the Council of

Ministers after more than a year of disputes between the three main nationalist parties.

- On 21 November a protest is staged in Sarajevo after the MP Sabina Cudic, from the opposition party Nasa Stranka (Our Party) shares photographs in the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina that show severe abuse in the Pazaric Institute for special-needs children.

Serbia

- On 19 November the EU and Serbia sign a cooperation agreement that allows Frontex to provide border assistance to Serbia and carry out joint operations.

- On 21 November the Professional Ethics Committee of the University of Belgrade concludes that the Finance Minister Sinisa Malic plagiarized his doctoral thesis.

- On 21 November the President Aleksandar Vucic announces that the intelligence services have uncovered a large-scale Russian spy plot involving the bribery of members of the Serbian army.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 5 November thousands of protesters demonstrate in Pristina to call for a new investigation into the death three years ago of activist Astrit Dehari, while he was being held in custody charged with being involved in an attack on the Parliament.

- On 7 and 13 November Ghana and Nauru withdraw their recognition of Kosovo's independence.

- On 11 November the Election Commission orders a recount of the votes in more than half the polling stations in October's parliamentary election and invalidates the votes that were sent from Serbia, following dozens of complaints over alleged irregularities.

- On 25 November the appointment by the outgoing Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj of Kreshnik Gashi and Burim Ramadani as director and inspector general of the Intelligence Agency, respectively, draws criticism from Vetëvendosje, which is preparing to form a government.

North Macedonia

- On 8 November the EU Finance Ministers remove North Macedonia from their grey list, after it is decided the country has met all its commitments on tax cooperation.

Albania

- On 27 November a day of national mourning is declared after the earthquake on 25 November, which measured 6.4 on the Richter Scale, the biggest in four decades and which has left at least 40 people dead. On the same day, another 5.6 magnitude earthquake shakes the centre of the country.

Greece

- On 1 November after the significant increase in the number of migrants, the Parliament adopts the law announced by the government on 30 September, which tightens procedures for awarding asylum.

- On 7 November the government decides to move 4,000 migrants to areas of mainland Greece to alleviate the overcrowded centres on the Greek islands, which in the last year have received 45,000 new arrivals.

- On 11 November Greece completes its early repayment of loans worth 2.7 billion dollars, given by the IMF in the financial bailout.

- On 20 November the government announces the closure of the three biggest migrant camps on Lesbos, Samos and Chios.

Turkey

- On 11 November Turkey begins repatriations of Daesh members held in Turkish prisons to their countries of origin.

- On 13 November four HDP mayors are sacked accused of having links to the PKK.

- On 13 November a court orders journalist Ahmet Altan to be returned to prison a week after his release, following a new trial against him for charges related with the 2016 coup attempt and the Fethullah Gulen network.

- On 21 November more than three years after the trial of employees of the

opposition newspaper Cumhuriyet for charges of terrorism, the court in Istanbul upholds the sentence it handed down to 12 of them, after Ankara's Court of Cassation requested a retrial.

- On 28 November Egypt, Greece and Cyprus criticize the agreement signed by Libya's Government of National Accord and Turkey on maritime boundaries, which they say violates international law, ignores Crete's presence between Libyan and Turkish waters and complicates the exploration and drilling disputes in the eastern Mediterranean.

Cyprus

- On 3 November Egypt, Greece and Cyprus carry out joint military exercises as part of the Medusa 9 programme, to "counter potential threats in the Mediterranean." On 5 November, the Defence Ministers from the three countries sign a joint declaration condemning Turkey's actions in Cypriot and Syrian waters.

- On 14 November the Turkish Vice-President Fuat Oktay dismisses the EU's warnings of sanctions against Turkey for drilling in waters of the Peninsula of Karpasia, an area Nicosia considers to be inside its EEZ.

Syria

- On 2 November a car bomb explodes in a commercial district of Tal Abyad killing at least 13 civilians and injuring a further 20. Turkey, which controls the town, accuses the SDF of the unclaimed attack.

- On 11 November the Briton James Le Mesurier, co-founder of the Syrian Civil Defence NGO – or White Helms – is found dead at his home in Istanbul in unclear circumstances. Le Mesurier had been repeatedly accused by Syria, Russia and Iran of espionage and terrorism.

- On 15 November Russia says it has taken control of the Metras airfield, south of Kobani. This move adds to the installation of Russian forces in the Manbij and Tabqa military bases, allowing the Moscow-backed forces to dominate part of the strategic M4 motorway.
- On 20 November around 23 people are killed according to the SOHR, in

Israeli airstrikes on positions of the Syrian army and Iranian al-Quds Force. The bombings came after four missiles were fired from Syria at the Golan Heights.

- On 21 November at least 21 civilians are killed in two attacks carried out by regime forces in Idlib, which hit medical facilities. According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 61 medical facilities have been attacked in recent months by forces backing Bashar al-Assad, despite this constituting a war crime.

- On 25 November US troops resume large-scale counterterrorism missions against Daesh in northern Syria, two months after the President Donald Trump's abrupt order to withdraw troops from the country.

- On 26 November the Turkish Vice-President Fuat Oktay reports that 370,000 Syrian refugees in Turkey have already been returned to areas of Syria under Turkish control.

Lebanon

- On 1 November banks reopen their branches for the first time after two weeks of protests that have paralysed the country, but impose restrictions on transfers and withdrawals. On 12 November, banks close again fearing for the safety of their staff who have felt intimidated by customers demanding access to their money.

- On 3 November thousands of people demonstrate in support of the President Michel Aoun, who in his address on 31 October advocates studying how to replace the current confessional system for allocating power with a government formed by technocrats, in an attempt to appease the protestors.

- On 4 November demonstrators block the main access points to Beirut and other cities around the country. On 5 November, the army disperses demonstrators making dozens of arrests and opening the country's major roads.

- On 15 November private hospitals go on strike to protest over the serious economic, social and political crisis the country is experiencing.

- On 15 November after a meeting between the outgoing Prime Minister Saad Hariri and the pro-Iranian parties Hezbollah and Amal, allies of the Pres-

ident Michel Aoun, the Sunni billionaire and former Finance Minister Muhammad Safadi is proposed as the new Prime Minister. However, on 17 November, Safadi gives up on forming a government due to difficulties in garnering enough political support and the demonstrations in opposition to his appointment.

- On 19 November the Parliament is forced to postpone resuming its sessions after demonstrators block access to the building.

- On 22 November to mark Independence Day, thousands of Lebanese citizens stage a peaceful demonstration calling for the formation of a new government and elections outside of the confessional system for allocating power.

- On 25 November clashes break out in Beirut and Tripoli between anti-government protestors and Hezbollah and Amal supporters.

Jordan

- On 6 November four tourists, their guide and a security guard are stabbed in the Roman ruins of Jerash, in an act linked to Daesh.

Egypt

- On 6 November Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan take part in a meeting mediated by the US in Washington to settle the dispute over Ethiopia's construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in the Nile.

- On 23 November the journalists Lina Attalah, Mohamed Hamama and Rana Mamdouh from the Mada Masr news website are arrested during a raid on the offices of the country's latest independent digital news outlet. The arrests come after the news site reported the dismissal of the President's son Mahmud al-Sisi, from a senior post at the General Intelligence Service and his transfer to the Egyptian embassy in Moscow as military attaché.

Libya

- On 5 November the New York Times publishes a report revealing that in the last six weeks Russia has sent an estimated 200 mercenaries to Libya to sup-

port Khalifa Haftar's forces from the Wagner Group, a private firm associated with Yevgeny Prigozhin, sanctioned in the US for interfering in the presidential elections and in relation to the war in eastern Ukraine.

- On 14 November the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says that at least 300,000 people have been internally displaced because of the fighting for control of Tripoli and other cities like Derna and Marzuk.
- On 18 November the EU calls for the immediate release of the prominent politician and activist Sihan Sergiwa, kidnapped on 17 July following an armed attack on his home in Benghazi, a city controlled by Khalifa Haftar's forces, who are blamed for his disappearance.
- On 27 November fighting between forces of the Government of National Accord and the LNA forces the closure of the El Feel oil field, operated by ENI and NOC, close to Sabha.

Tunisia

- On 13 November the leader of Ennahda Rachid Ghannouchi is elected Parliament Speaker.
- On 15 November Ennahda announces the appointment of Habib Jemli, the former Secretary of State for Agriculture, as the new Prime Minister.
- On 21 November Tunisia is elected as a member of the UNESCO Executive Board for 2020-2024.

Algeria

- On 3 November riot police enter a courthouse in Oran to disperse a group of magistrates interrupting the session as part of the strike which began on 27 October to denounce the government's control over the judiciary, demand a salary increase and oppose the Justice Ministry's policy for assigning transfers. On 5 November, the main magistrates' union called the strike off after reaching an agreement with the Justice Ministry.
- On 4 November Khalida Toumi, the former Culture Minister between 2002 and 2014, is accused of squandering public funds and remanded in custody.
- On 14 November the Parliament passes the new energy law that the

government presented in October, which opens the energy market to foreign companies. The decision is rejected by Algerian demonstrators protesting for the 36th consecutive Tuesday outside the Parliament. On the same day, Rachid Hachichi, appointed seven months ago to head the national oil company Sonatrach, is replaced by Kamel-Eddine Chikhi.

- On 15 November 48 hours into the presidential election campaign for the vote on 12 December, Algerians demonstrate en masse to reject an election that they see as offering no guarantees of being transparent or democratic.
- On 20 November the National Committee for the Liberation of Detainees (CNLD) denounces numerous arrests during a protest against the presidential elections.

Morocco

- On 19 November Mohammed VI appoints the former Interior Minister and former ambassador to France Chakib Benmoussa as chairman of the special committee in charge of the development model.

Mauritania

- On 5 November several people are injured by police at a student protest in Nouakchott, called after the government announces its decision to set the maximum age for accessing the country's universities at 25.
- On 5 November at least 62 migrants are killed in a shipwreck off the coast near Nouadhibou as they attempted to reach the Canary Islands.

EU

- On 4 November the parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee's report on Russian meddling in the Brexit referendum, due to be published on this day, is delayed by order of the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson until after the elections set for 12 December.
- On 5 November Spain, Portugal, Italy, Poland, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania hold a summit in Prague to call

for funding of the Cohesion Policy not to be cut in the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework.

- On 5 November the CJEU rules that the disciplinary regime for judges approved in Poland in 2017 runs counter to European law and violates the separation of powers, in the third infringement procedure launched against the country for its judicial reform.
- On 7 November in the United Kingdom, an alliance is unveiled between the Liberal Democrats, the Greens and Plaid Cymru (Party of Wales) as part of the Unite to Remain initiative, which hopes to maximize the number of MPs in favour of remaining in the Union in the December elections.
- On 13 November the International Organization for Migration says that 91,568 migrants and refugees have arrived via the Mediterranean, and 1,091 have died in the attempt so far this year.
- On 18 November the Council, the Commission and the Parliament reach an agreement on the 2020 budget – 168.69 billion euros in commitments and 153.57 billion euros in payments –, mainly focused on climate change, employment, youth and the security and solidarity of the Union. On 27 November, the Parliament approves the 2020 budget.
- On 19 November Austria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia call on the EC not to halt the accession processes of North Macedonia and Albania as a result of the enlargement process reform proposed by France.
- On 20 - 21 November the EPP holds its congress in Zagreb in which Donald Tusk is elected party president to replace Joseph Daul.

Arab League

- On 25 November the Arab League condemns the US' recognition of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

December 2019

In Spain, Madrid hosts the United Nations Climate Change Conference and, the Catalan President is banned from office. In France, there are major dem-

onstrations against the pension reform. In Italy, a large-scale operation is carried out against the 'Ndrangheta and Venice issues another flood warning. The European Parliament calls for the resignation of the Maltese Prime Minister. Croatia holds presidential elections. Bosnia and Herzegovina appoints its Prime Minister and approves the new federal government. Montenegro passes the law on religious freedom. Albania passes a media law. Greece expels the Libyan ambassador. Turkey announces it will deploy troops in Libya. Tens of thousands of people displaced by the Syrian army's military offensive on Idlib arrive in Turkey. Russia deploys troops in Raqqa. Lebanon appoints its new Prime Minister amid fierce protests. In Egypt, the Parliament approves a government reshuffle which reinstates the controversial Information Ministry. In Libya, Khalifa Haftar announces an imminent offensive on Tripoli. In Tunisia, the Prime Minister Habib Jemli struggles to form a government. Algeria holds presidential elections and appoints a Prime Minister.

Spain

- On 1 December the acting Defence Minister Margarita Robles temporarily takes over the Foreign Ministry to replace Josep Borrell who, on the same day, assumes the position of EU High Representative.
- On 2 - 13 December Madrid hosts the 25th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-25) following Santiago's decision not to organize it due to the social unrest in Chile. The summit ends without any noteworthy agreements.
- On 3 December the socialist Meritxell Batet is reelected as Parliament Speaker.
- On 19 December CJEU rules that since his election as MEP on 26 May, the leader of the Catalan pro-independence party the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) Oriol Junqueras had parliamentary immunity when the Supreme Court sentenced him to 13 years in prison for sedition in October.
- On 19 December Catalonia's High Court of Justice rules that the President of the Regional Government Quim Tor-

ra be banned from holding public office for a year and a half for disobeying the Central Electoral Board's order to remove banners supporting those convicted of sedition from Catalan government buildings.

France

- On 9 December the leader of the French party France Unbowed Jean-Luc Melenchon is given a three-month suspended sentence by the Bobigny Criminal Court and an 8,000-euro fine for intimidation, rebellion and provocation.
- On 11 December after a week of demonstrations against the government's planned pension reform, the Prime Minister Edouard Philippe announces the gradual implementation over 10 years of a universal regime in the pension system. The reform keeps the retirement age at 62 and encourages people to work longer.
- On 18 December Laurent Pietraszewski is appointed high commissioner for the reform of the national pension system, to replace Jean-Paul Delevoye, who resigned on 16 December over a potential conflict of interests.
- On 17 December a one-day general strike paralyzes France calling for the withdrawal of the planned pension reform. On 27 December, a national strike begins against the reform despite the Prime Minister Edouard Philippe's call on 23 December to set up a roundtable for national dialogue. On 28 December, major demonstrations called by the unions and the Yellow Vests take over the streets.
- On 30 December the Interior Minister Christophe Castaner announces the deployment on 31 December of 100,000 police officers and gendarmes throughout France in the context of the railway strike against the pension reform, which has paralysed France throughout December.

Italy

- On 11 December the Constitutional Court elects Marta Cartabia as president of the institution. This is the first time a woman has occupied the post.
- On 12 December the police arrest 13 members of a gang smuggling mi-

grants into Italy hidden aboard yachts coming from Greece.

- On 15 December the Sardinies citizen movement, which began in November in Bologna, holds its first national demonstration in Rome, where around 35,000 people protest against the League and its ideology.
- On 20 December a police operation ends in the arrest of 334 people in Italy and abroad in connection with the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta, and including politicians, businessmen and professionals from different sectors and political affiliations.
- On 25 December the Interior Ministry reports that 11,439 migrants have arrived in Italy in 2019, compared with 23,210 in 2018 and 118,914 in 2017, thanks to the migration agreement with Libya.
- On 22 December the authorities issue another flood warning in Venice, because of a storm that has already claimed three lives in Italy.
- On 23 December 159 migrants disembark in Taranto, rescued on 20 December by the Ocean Viking rescue ship.

Malta

- On 9 December activists from the Moviment Graffiti stage a sit-in at the Auberge de Castille government offices, calling for the resignation of the Prime Minister Joseph Muscat because of the links of some of his associates with the 2017 murder of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.
- On 11 December Jean-Claude Micallef is elected as a Labour MP to replace the former Equality Minister Helena Dalli, appointed as European Commissioner.
- On 18 December the European Parliament approves a resolutions calling for the immediate resignation of the Maltese Prime Minister, the social democrat Joseph Muscat, accused of failing to order a credible investigation into the murder of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.
- On 23 December Malta suffers its second nationwide power cut in less than a month following the one on 26 November caused by a fault in the Sicily-to-Malta undersea cable.

Croatia

- On 20 December the Zagreb Administrative Court rules that a same-sex couple have the right to adopt.
- On 22 December Croatia holds the first round of presidential elections in which the two most voted candidates are Zoran Milanovic from the Social Democratic Party (SDP) with 29.55% of the votes and Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic from the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ, conservative) with 26.65%.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 5 December the Bosnian Parliament endorses the appointment of the Bosnian Serb economist Zoran Tegeltija as Prime Minister, who, on 17 December, unveils the new government.
- On 10 December the relocation of migrants begins from the improvised Vucjak camp to facilities that are in better condition.
- On 23 December, 14 months after the elections, the Parliament approves the new federal government, which includes the SDA, HDZ-BiH and SNSD parties.
- On 30 December the Bosnian public prosecutor accuses the former Security Minister Dragan Mektic of abuse of power in the implementation of an EU-funded, cross-border firefighting project.
- On 31 December the former general Milomir Savcic, president of the Veterans' Organization of the Republika Srpska is charged with assisting genocide in Srebrenica in 1995.

Montenegro

- On 28 December the Parliament approves the new law on Religious Freedom, sparking a number of protests from the Serbian Orthodox Church, as it enables properties to be confiscated if proof cannot be provided that they were purchased or built before 1 December 1918.

Serbia

- On 10 December Serbia opens the chapter on free movement in its accession talks, bringing the number of chapters opened to 18 out of 35, with two provisionally closed.

- On 18 December the Council of Europe says the situation of Roma communities in Serbia is still alarming, despite the legal framework adopted by Belgrade for the protection of national minorities.
- On 31 December the former Yugoslav commander Pavle Gavrilovic is acquitted on appeal of the attack on the Kosovo village of Trnje/Terne in 1999.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 5 December a court in Kosovo sentences the MP and former Minister Ivan Todosijevic to two years in prison for denying the Racak massacre in 1999, which prompted NATO's intervention against Serbia.
- On 26 December Glauk Konjufca (Vetevendosje) is elected as Parliament Speaker.

North Macedonia

- On 14 December the junior partner in the coalition government, DUI, and the main opposition party, VMRO-DPMNE, submit 6,000 amendments to the electoral law reform presented by the ruling Social Democratic Union, which envisages a single electoral district for the country.
- On 22 December the Parliament adopted the budget for 2020 submitted by the government, the biggest in the country's history and with heavy investment in social spending.

Albania

- On 18 December despite the EU's warnings, the Parliament passes the new media laws, criticized for undermining press and media freedom.

Greece

- On 6 December Greece expels the Libyan ambassador in Athens over the sea boundary accord between Turkey and Libya, under which the Turkish EEZ is extended to Libyan territorial waters. On 29 December, the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis warns that if a new agreement is not reached, he will go to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

- On 18 December the Parliament approves the budget for 2020.
- On 19 December police use teargas to disperse a protest staged by around 300 migrants in Samos calling for their transfer to mainland Greece.
- On 29 December Greece announces the implementation as of 1 January 2020 of a 2,000-euro baby bonus to address its demographic crisis.

Turkey

- On 5 December Turkey approves NATO's plan for the Baltic countries and Poland in exchange for greater support from the Alliance in Ankara's fight against terrorism in Syria.
- On 7 December Turkey dismisses HDP mayors in Baskale, Erkan Acar; Ozalp, Yakup Almac; Muradiye, Yilmaz Salan; and Ikikopru, Osman Karabulut.
- On 10 December the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces his intention to deploy troops in Libya if the UN-backed Government of National Accord requests it.
- On 10 December the ECHR calls for the release of the businessman Osman Kavala, who was jailed following purges surrounding the attempted coup in July 2016.
- On 13 December the former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu unveils his new political party, the Future Party.
- On 20 December the authorities arrest Filiz Buluttekin, the HDP mayor in the Sur district of Diyarbakir, suspected of terrorist propaganda and insulting the Turkish State and its institutions.
- On 21 - 22 December more than 25,000 civilians arrive in Turkey fleeing from the Syrian army's military offensive on Idlib. The Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that more than 80,000 displaced people have begun to flee and warns Europe of another migration crisis like in 2015. On 23 December, representatives from the Russian and Turkish governments start talks in Moscow to align positions on the flight of tens of thousands of Syrians towards Turkey, the growing presence of terrorist groups in Idlib and Turkey's intention to deploy troops in Libya.
- On 24 December a court in Silivri decides to keep the philanthropist Osman Kavala in custody, despite the

ECHR's call for his release. Kavala is facing a possible life sentence charged by the prosecutor with attempting a coup by financing the wave of protests in 2013.

- On 26 December the Constitutional Court orders the block on Wikipedia to be lifted, in force in Turkey since 2017, saying it violates freedom of expression.
- On 27 December six journalists from the *Sozcu* newspaper are arrested charged with having ties to Fethullah Gulen and the 2016 coup attempt.
- On 30 December around a hundred people are arrested charged with having ties to Daesh in a countrywide operation.

Cyprus

- On 13 December a doctors' strike decries the lack of incentives to stay in the public health service.

Syria

- On 9 December Russian forces enter Raqqa for the first time since the US withdrawal.
- On 20 December Russia and China veto a draft resolution tabled by Germany, Belgium and Kuwait in the UN Security Council to allow humanitarian aid into Syria through two border crossings in Turkey and a third in Iraq that will replace the four existing ones on the Turkish, Jordanian and Iraqi borders, which will be closed on 10 January 2020. The alternative draft resolution proposed by Russia to allow aid to be delivered via the two border crossings in Turkey for six months is also unsuccessful.
- On 22 December Sky News Arabia reports the death of Bilal Juraisat, one of the leaders of *Hurras al-Din*, the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda, in a drone attack in Idlib.
- On 23 December a car bomb attack attributed by Turkey to the Kurdish YPG leave eight civilians dead and dozens injured in Tal Abyad.
- On 25 December the government announces it has begun oil and gas exploration in the Mediterranean in collaboration with Russian companies.
- On 27 - 28 December over 2,000 refugees return to Syria from Lebanon

and Jordan, according to the Russian Defence Ministry's Reconciliation Centre for Syria. Previously, on 22 December, the same body reported the return of a further 900.

Lebanon

- On 10 December a group of protesters block a major highway calling for the release of people arrested during the anti-government protests.
- On 19 December the President Michel Aoun appoints the former Education Minister Hassan Diab as Prime Minister, tasked with forming a government.

Jordan

- On 5 December the government approves increases in civil service salaries and pensions starting in 2020.

Egypt

- On 22 December the Parliament approves a government reshuffle which brings back the Ministry of Information, abolished in 2014, led by Osama Heikal, who was the Information Minister under the military-backed government that followed Hosni Mubarak's resignation.
- On 22 December the former chief of staff Sami Anan is released after serving two years in prison charged with trying to run in the 2018 presidential elections without the military's permission.
- On 26 December two members of the Muslim Brotherhood are sentenced to death for the murder of a police officer in 2014.
- On 26 December the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi proposes the more than 100 political parties in Egypt merge to form four or five major parties.

Libya

- On 9 December Turkey affirms its readiness to provide military support to the Government of National Accord after signing an oil deal, at the end of November, and agreeing on the sea border between both countries, an

agreement decried by Greece, Cyprus and Egypt.

- On 12 December general Khalifa Haftar announces an imminent offensive to take control of Tripoli.
- On 23 December the head of the Russian contact group for Libya Lev Dengov says that Russia is looking at hosting talks between the parties in the Libyan conflict.
- On 28 December Italy suggests creating a no-fly zone over Tripoli to put an end to the fighting for control of the capital.

Tunisia

- On 2 December police disperse protests in Jelma in the third day of demonstrations after a young man set himself on fire to denounce the government's inaction in improving the town's economic situation.
- On 6 December two of the main parties, Achaab and Atayar, state that they will not join the Prime Minister Habib Jemli's government coalition. On 23 December, Jemli announces that he will form a government composed of technocrats and without political party representation, in light of the deep divisions between the different parliamentary groups.

Algeria

- On 12 December Algeria holds presidential elections marked by the protests against the voting, incidents in several cities and a turnout of just 40% due to the election boycott, which is especially effective in Kabylie. Abdelmadjid Tebboune is declared the winner of elections whose results are described as fraudulent by the *Hirak* movement, which has been protesting in the streets for 43 weeks.
- On 19 December the Foreign Minister Sabri Boukadoum takes over as interim Prime Minister following the resignation of Noureddine Bedoui.
- On 20 December thousands of Algerians protest against the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, a day after he is sworn into the post.
- On 22 December a court orders the provisional release of activist Abdelkader Djeriou, arrested on 20 December in

Oran while on his way to participate in a rally against the government.

- On 23 December the chief of staff Ahmed Gaid Salah dies of a heart attack.
- On 28 December the academic and former diplomat Abdelaziz Djerad is appointed Prime Minister.

Morocco

- On 17 December Spain reacts to the unilateral procedure in the Moroccan Parliament to approve two laws on Morocco's maritime border, reminding the country to abide by the two countries' mutual agreement, to respect the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and that Spain's 2014 request to extend its 200-nautical mile continental shelf to the maximum allowed of 350 is still under discussion.
- On 29 December hundreds of people protest in Raba against the arrest of the journalist Omar Radi, detained on 26 December for criticizing a court ruling against demonstrators from the Rif on Twitter. Radi is released on bail on 31 December.

Mauritania

- On 6 December the coast guard reports the interception of a vessel carrying 140 migrants off the coast near Nouamghar.

EU

- On 1 December the mandate for the new Commission begins led by the German Ursula von der Leyen after obtaining parliamentary approval on 27 November. The mandate begins a month late as the commissioners proposed initially by France, Hungary and Romania were rejected following their Parliamentary examination. The new Commission will not have a British commissioner, despite Britain not yet having left the EU, because of London's refusal to appoint a representative, causing Brussels to open an infringement procedure. The new Commission's main priorities are ensuring the EU becomes a digital power and carbon neutral by 2050, guaranteeing a balance between the free market and social protection, strengthening the Un-

ion's international role and overcoming the political union's impending institutional crisis.

- On 1 December the Belgian Charles Michel assumes the Presidency of the European Council, taking over from the Polish President Donald Tusk.
- On 4 December Frontex's extended and strengthened mandate enters into force, giving the agency the necessary capacities and authority to support the 115,000 agents from the Member States deployed on the ground.
- On 12 December the United Kingdom holds an early general election in which Boris Johnson's conservative party wins with 364 seats, giving the Tories free rein to complete Brexit. Significant outcomes are the disastrous performance of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party, which has its worst results since 1935, and the success of Nicola Sturgeon's Scottish National Party, which, on 19 December asks Johnson to enter talks for a new independence referendum to keep Scotland in the EU.
- On 18 December the Irishwoman Emily O'Reilly is reelected as the European Ombudsman.
- On 20 December the British Parliament passes the bill on the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU, thereby preparing the ground for Boris Johnson's plans for Brexit to come into effect on 31 January 2020.

Arab League

- On 31 December the Arab League rejects any kind of foreign interference or military intervention in Libya.

Gibraltar

- On 1 February, at Spain's request, Gibraltar is included as a British "colony" in a draft law agreed upon by the 27 Member States to issue 90-day visas for British citizens entering the Union after Brexit, which is passed on 4 April in the European Parliament.
- On 9 April Gibraltar announces the Victoria Keys development project on the western side of the Rock, adding to the one announced in February, the Hassan Centenary Terraces, on the east

side of Gibraltar. Both projects are criticized for their potential environmental impact by the social democratic opposition and environmental groups, as well as by Spain, which warns it will take legal action if work begins on the two planned projects, which are to be built on land reclaimed from Spanish territorial waters, which was not ceded to Britain in the Treaty of Utrecht.

- On 4 July the authorities in Gibraltar detain the Iranian oil tanker Grace-1, suspecting it of transporting crude oil to Syria, in breach of the sanctions imposed by the EU. On 15 September the Grace-1 is released after the United Kingdom is given a "written assurance" that Iran will not discharge the oil in Syria. On 8 September Iran reports that the ship, renamed the Adrian Darya-1, has sold the oil "at sea to a private company"; the US and the United Kingdom suspect that the cargo has been sold to Syria.
- On 17 October, with a turnout of 70.84%, Gibraltar holds a general election. The Prime Minister Fabian Picardo's Socialist Labour Party (GSLP) wins with 52.49% of the votes. Keith Azopardi's Social Democrats (GSD) win 25.55% of the votes.

Western Sahara

- On 22 March the second round of talks comes to an end in Geneva on Western Sahara – following the round held in December 2018 – with the commitment to keep cooperating to resolve the Sahrawi issue and in an atmosphere of "mutual respect."
- On 22 May the UN Special Envoy Hans Kohler resigns from the post citing "health reasons."
- On 15 June the new President of El Salvador Nayib Bukele announces he is breaking diplomatic relations with the Polisario Front following a cooperation agreement signed with Morocco.
- On 26 October Morocco and the United Kingdom sign an agreement defining their bilateral relations after Brexit, which includes Western Sahara.
- On 30 October the United Nations Security Council renews the mandate for another year of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

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