

Chronology of Major Conflicts and Political Events

January 2020

Spain and Malta appoint new prime ministers. France begins social dialogue to put an end to the protests over the pension reform. In Italy, the leader of the Five Star Movement (M5E, populist) resigns and Emilia-Romagna and Calabria hold elections. In Slovenia, the coalition government collapses. Croatia assumes its first European Presidency and holds the second round of its presidential elections. There are protests in Montenegro and Serbia. Serbia and Kosovo reestablish air links. The Prime Minister of North Macedonia resigns. Albania approves legislative modifications. Greece sees the election of its first female president. In Syria, thousands head towards Turkey fleeing the offensive on Idlib. Lebanon unveils a new government. Turkey authorizes the deployment of troops in Libya. Tunisia appoints a new prime minister. Algeria appoints a new government and announces a constitutional reform. Morocco approves the demarcation of maritime boundaries and the creation of its Exclusive Economic Zone (ZEE).

Portugal

- On 18 January Rui Rio is re-elected leader of the Social Democratic Party (PSD, conservative).
- On 19 January the publication of the report known as the Luanda Leaks uncovers the corrupt origin of the fortune of the former Angolan President José Eduardo dos Santos' daughter, and a major financial web involving the EuroBic bank and other big Portuguese companies.

Spain

- On 4 January the Central Electoral Commission suspends the President of the Catalan regional government Quim Torra's MP status. In December 2019, Torra was sentenced by the High Court of Justice of Catalonia to an 18-month ban from holding public office for disobedience. On 27 January, the Catalan Parliament withdraws Torra's MP status.
- On 7 January Pedro Sanchez is sworn in as Prime Minister. Sanchez will preside over a coalition government formed by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and Podemos (left-wing).
- On 9 January the Supreme Court refuses to recognize the Catalan pro-independence leader Oriol Junqueras as a European MP following his prison sentence in October 2019 for sedition. On 10 January the European Parliament strips Junqueras of his MEP status.

France

- On 7 January dialogue begins between the government and trade unions to put an end to the mass protests that have taken place since 5 December 2019. On 10 January the government temporarily scraps the fixed retirement age in the contested pension law reform.
- On 24 January France confirms its first case of COVID-19 in Bordeaux. During the days to come, Finland, Germany, Spain, Sweden and Italy all confirm their first cases and the WHO declares a global health emergency.
- On 26 January the Interior Minister Christophe Castaner reports a 130% increase in racist and xenophobic acts in 2019, reaching a total number of 1,142.
- On 28 January three new cases of suicide in the National Police Force are

reported in January, adding to the 59 in 2019, attributed to precarious working conditions, high levels of anxiety and a lack of police resources.

- On 28 January clashes break out between police and firefighters during a demonstration by the fire service in Paris demanding better pay and conditions.

Italy

- On 19 January the Sardinian citizen protest movement brings 35,000 people together in Bologna in protest against Matteo Salvini, the leader of the far-right League party.
- On 22 January Luigi Di Maio resigns as leader of M5E amid a major party crisis, although he will continue as Foreign Minister.
- On 26 January the Democratic Party (PD, social democratic) wins in Emilia-Romagna's regional elections. In Calabria, victory goes to the coalition of Forza Italia (FI, right-wing) and the far-right parties, The League and Fratelli d'Italia (Fdi).

Malta

- On 8 January some 500 immigrants are evacuated after a fire breaks out at a reception centre in Marsa.
- On 11 January the Labour Party (PL) elects Robert Abela as its new leader and Prime Minister following the resignation of Joseph Muscat in connection with the murder of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.
- On 14 January the former leader of the Nationalist Party (PN), Simon Busuttil, is appointed Secretary General of the European People's Party (EPP, centre-right).
- On 17-20 January, respectively, the chief of police, Lawrence Cutajar, and

Minister for Gozo, Justyne Caruana, resign in connection with the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia.

Slovenia

- On 27 January the Prime Minister Marjan Sarec resigns putting an end to the coalition government between the List of Marjan Sarec (LMS, social liberal), the Social Democrats (SD), the Party of Modern Centre (SMC, liberal), the Party of Alenka Bratusek (SAB, centrist) and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS, social liberal).
- On 31 January the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) declares it lacks jurisdiction to rule on the border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia, urging both parties to resolve their differences in accordance with the 2017 ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague.

Croatia

- On 1 January Croatia takes over the EU Presidency with the priorities of negotiating relations with the United Kingdom, agreeing on the 2021-2027 financial framework and the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), increasing the Union's international influence, relaunching the enlargement process, the eurozone and the Schengen Space and reforming the asylum system.
- On 5 January Croatia holds the second round of its presidential elections. The former Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic, from the Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP) claims victory over the outgoing President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, from the conservative Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ).
- On 28 January the Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic sacks the Health Minister Milan Kujundzic after information comes to light indicating he misrepresented figures in his property declaration.

Montenegro

- On 27 January there is unrest in Cetinje following a demonstration against a new Law on Religious Freedom, under which property belonging to the Ortho-

dox Church whose ownership prior to December 1918 cannot be proved will be expropriated.

Serbia

- On 8 January, for the 58th Saturday, a demonstration in Belgrade calls for the resignation of the President Aleksandar Vucic and his government, accusing them of corruption and authoritarianism. The rallies continue throughout January and February.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 20 January Serbia and Kosovo reestablish air links for the first time in 21 years.

North Macedonia

- On 3 January the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev resigns following the European Council's decision in October 2019 not to open accession talks with the country. He is replaced by the Interior Minister Oliver Spasovski.

Albania

- On 14 January the three main political parties agree to undertake the electoral reform needed to start EU negotiations.
- On 20 January the opposition Democratic Party (DPS, conservative) and Socialist Movement for Integration (DUI, social democratic) criticize the appointment of Artur Metani, a former State Attorney and linked with the Socialist Party of Albania (PSS), as the High Inspector of Justice.
- On 31 January the approval in a council of ministers of several modifications to the penal code and laws regulating the justice system and police force aimed at combating corruption and organized crime, are criticized by different rights and freedom groups over the lack of transparency of the process.

Greece

- On 2 January Greece, Cyprus and Israel sign a deal to build the Eastmed gas pipeline to transport gas to Europe

from the Leviathan and Aphrodite gas fields, thereby reducing dependence on Russian gas.

- On 17 January Greece threatens to veto all agreements on Libya reached at the Berlin Conference if the maritime border deal signed by Turkey and Libya is not annulled.
- On 22 January Katerina Sakellariopoulou is elected President of Greece by the Parliament.
- On 22 January thousands gather in Lesbos, Chios and Samos to demand thousands of refugees be moved to the Greek mainland and denounce plans to replace the refugee camps with Immigration Detention Centres (IDC).

Turkey

- On 2 January the Parliament authorizes the deployment of Turkish troops in Libya to support the Government of National Accord (GNA). The decision is condemned by Egypt and met with concern by the EU and US.
- On 6 January 18 people are handed down life sentences for their role in the failed coup attempt in 2016.
- On 13 January the Republican People's Party (CHP, Kemalist) demand a parliamentary committee be formed to investigate the political links of the Islamic preacher Fethullah Gulen's movement.
- On 25 January an earthquake measuring 6.5 on the Richter scale leaves 29 dead and more than a thousand injured.

Cyprus

- On 30 January the UN Security Council renews the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

Syria

- On 3 January in the context of the escalation between the US and Iran, Syria condemns the US attack in Baghdad which killed the Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, the Quds Force commander, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy chairman of the Shia militia Popular Mobilization Units.
- On 4 January the UN reports that approximately 300,000 displaced people are heading towards Turkey fleeing

the attacks to control Idlib, which have been ongoing since December 2019. On 24 January, Ankara raises the number to 400,000.

- On 12 January Turkey agrees to a ceasefire in Idlib ordered by Russia on 9 January, which fails to put an end to the violence in the province.
- On 26 January government forces backed by Russia reach the outskirts of Maarat al-Numan, Idlib.

Lebanon

- On 10 January there are clashes between supporters and opponents of the mayor of Beirut Jamal Itani and Ziad Shebib, both accused of corruption by Lebanese protest movements, which continue to demonstrate throughout January.
- On 21 January after months without a cabinet, the Prime Minister Hassan Diab finally wins the support of the majority of political parties and that of the President Michel Aoun for his technocratic government.

Jordan

- On 10 January thousands of Jordanians protest against the possibility of the National Electric Power Company (NEPCO) purchasing Israeli gas.

Egypt

- On 16 January Egypt and Sudan announce progress in negotiations in Washington on the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.
- On 13 January the Egyptian-American Mustafa Kasseem dies following a hunger strike in protest against his arrest in 2013 on charges of espionage.
- On 14 January the Parliament authorizes a new extension to the state of emergency, in place since April 2017.

Libya

- On 6 January the forces of the Libyan National Army (LNA), under the command of Khalifa Haftar take Sirte.
- On 11 January the rival powers of Tripoli and Tobruk agree to the ceasefire proposed on 8 January by Russian and Turkey.

- On 19 January the Berlin International Conference on Libya agrees to push forward a process to end the war which includes creating an international committee to monitor the agreed ceasefire and the arms embargo imposed by the UN in 2011. The EU announces the European Council's agreement to restart Operation Sophia to oversee the embargo.

Tunisia

- On 20 January the President Kais Saied appoints the former Finance Minister Elyes Fakhfakh as Prime Minister, tasked with forming a government after the cabinet unveiled by his predecessor Habib Jemli, from the Islamist Ennahda party, was voted down by Parliament.

Algeria

- On 2 January 76 people who took part in the protests that led to the fall of Abdelaziz Bouteflika in April 2019 are released.
- On 2 January the Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad unveils his government, in which Sabri Boukadoum, Belkacem Zgmati and Abderrahmane Rauia, continue as the Foreign, Justice and Finance ministers, respectively.
- On 8 January the President Abdelmajid Tebboune announces the creation of a committee tasked with reviewing the Constitution.

Morocco

- On 22 January the Parliament unilaterally approves the demarcation of Moroccan waters and creation of its EEZ, despite the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea requiring the consent of affected third-party countries. The extension encompasses an area off the coast of Western Sahara which includes the underwater volcano, Tropic, with enormous mineral reserves and overlapping Spain's 2014 request to the UN to extend its waters to the maximum permitted of 350 nautical miles, which is still under study.
- On 23 January the media reports negotiations between the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) with Anas Doukkali, who was thrown out of

the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS) for opposing the party's decision in October 2019 to abandon the coalition government led by Saadeddine Othmani – from the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) – in which Doukkali was the Health Minister.

Mauritania

- On 14 January Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement in Mauritania (IRA) welcome the reforms introduced by the President Mohamed Ould el-Ghazouani in favour of human rights and against the practice of slavery.

European Union

- On 3 January the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that 1,283 migrants died trying to reach Europe in 2019, while a further 110,669 succeeded in entering the EU.
- On 13 January the members of the new Commission led by Ursula Von der Leyen are sworn into the posts.
- On 14 January the European Commission (EC) asks the CJEU to stop the judicial reforms in Poland and suspend the functioning of the disciplinary chamber of the Polish Supreme Court.
- On 15 January the European Parliament approves the European Green Deal presented by the Commission.
- On 31 January the United Kingdom officially leaves the EU and the transition period begins that will bring Brexit to completion on 31 December 2020.

February 2020

In Spain, the farming sector demonstrates in protest against its precarious situation. In France, Emmanuel Macron outlines a plan to tackle "Islamist separatism." Italy becomes the European country most affected by the coronavirus from Wuhan. Slovenia appoints its Prime Minister. In Croatia, the new President takes office. Territorial tensions are reignited between the entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The protests continue in Montenegro against the Law on Religious Freedom. The new Prime Minister in Kosovo announc-

es a number of major reforms. North Macedonia ratifies its NATO membership. In Greece, there are fresh protests against the IDCs and the arrival of thousands of refugees following Turkey's decision not to stop them from entering the EU faced with the escalation in Idlib. Egypt's former President Hosni Mubarak dies. The Geneva peace talks on Libya are suspended. The Tunisian Parliament approves the government of Elyes Fakhfakh. In Algeria, Saïd Bouteflika is sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. In Morocco, thousands protest demanding greater social equality.

Portugal

- On 20 February the Parliament approves the legalization of euthanasia.

Spain

- On 5 February farmers demonstrate in Madrid to condemn abuse by distributing chains, demand the government defends Spanish interests in the CAP reform and denounce the lack of investment and depopulation of rural Spain.
- On 11 February the Parliament approves the draft law regulating the right to euthanasia.
- On 16 February thousands of people from Leon demonstrate to demand that the region be made an autonomous community and call for greater investment.
- On 18 February the Education Minister appeals to the courts over the government of Murcia's decision to implement the so-called parental pin, which allows parents to decide if their children can access certain educational content.
- On 18 February the death is announced of Fernando Moran, the former Foreign Affairs Minister who signed Spain's entry into the European Economic Community.
- On 26 February the former Justice Minister Dolores Delgado is appointed the country's Attorney General.

France

- On 16 February the Health Minister Agnes Buzyn agrees to run as the Republic on the Move's (LREM, liberal) candidate for mayor of Paris in the local elections, following the withdrawal

of Benjamin Griveaux after the leak of sexual images involving the former candidate.

- On 18 February the President Emmanuel Macron outlines a plan to fight "Islamist separatism" to protect the values of the Republic.

Italy

- On 12 February the Senate withdraws parliamentary immunity from the League's leader and former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, thereby allowing a trial to be held against him for kidnapping and abuse of power over his refusal to allow 131 immigrants aboard an Italian coast guard ship to disembark.
- On 26 February Italy becomes the European country most affected by COVID-19. The epidemic forces the cancellation of different events across Europe. Throughout February, Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Austria, Romania, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Monaco, North Macedonia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland all confirm their first cases.

Malta

- On 27 February the government and Parliament agree that women should represent at least 40% of the house.

Slovenia

- On 26 February the President Borut Pahor appoints the leader of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS, conservative) Janez Jansa as Prime Minister, following an agreement between the SDS, SMC, New Slovenia (NSI, Christian democratic) and DeSUS, thereby avoiding the holding of early elections.

Croatia

- On 7 February the Constitutional Court rules in favour of equal opportunities to adopt for heterosexual and same-sex couples.
- On 18 February Zoran Milanovic takes office as President.
- On 20 February the State Attorney Drazen Jelenic resigns after acknowledging being a Freemason.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 15 February the Bosnian Serb member of the federal presidency Milorad Dodik once again pushes for a referendum on the Republika Srpska's independence.
- On 24 February the Bosnian Serb Parliament demands the border between the country's two entities be clearly defined following the Constitutional Court's ruling to overturn a Bosnian Serb law that gives the Srpska Republika ownership of all agricultural public property on its territory.

Montenegro

- On 15-16 February there are new mass protests against the Law on Religious Freedom.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 3 February the Parliament appoints the leader of Vetevëndosje (left-wing nationalist) Albin Kurti Prime Minister, four months after the early general election.
- On 12 February the government revokes the almost 100% pay rise on ministerial salaries approved by the previous cabinet of Rasmush Haradinaj.
- On 14 February Serbia and Kosovo agree to restore railway links.
- On 26 February the government sacks Kosovo Telecom's board of directors for poor results and corruption.
- On 27 February Albin Kurti announces a partial lifting of the 100% tariff on imports from Serb and Bosnia Herzegovina imposed in 2018.

North Macedonia

- On 11 February the Parliament ratifies the country's NATO membership.
- On 16 February the Parliament passes laws on Defence and Taxation, required for the accession process to move forward.
- On 16 February the Labour Minister Rasela Mizrahi is fired for refusing to use the country's new name.
- On 25 February thousands are rallied by the opposition party the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organiza-

tion – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE, conservative) to demand an investigation be launched against the former Prime Minister Zoran Zaev for abuse of power.

- On 26 February the trial begins against the former parliament speaker Trajko Veljanoski, the former ministers of transport and education Mile Janakieski and Spiro Ristovski and the former secret police chief Vladimir Atanasovski, over their involvement in the mob assault on Parliament in April 2017.

Albania

- On 13 February the opposition expresses its concern over the plans of Edi Rama's government to allow the police to conduct surveillance activities without first obtaining authorization from the courts.

- On 17 February a donor conference to help Albania's reconstruction after the earthquake in November 2019 raises 1.15 billion euros, 400 million of which is from the EU.

Greece

- On 18 February a national transport strike brings Greater Athens to a standstill.

- On 25-26 February violent clashes break out on Chios, Samos and Lesbos during protests against the government's decision to create IDCs.

Turkey

- On 18 February the Criminal Court of Istanbul acquits nine defendants charged for trying to overthrow the government during the Gezi Park protests in 2013, among them the philanthropist Osman Kavala. Despite the decision, the prosecutor rules he be kept in jail over his alleged involvement in the failed coup attempt in 2016.

- On 21 February the lira plummets to its lowest level since May 2019, a day after the Central Bank approves the sixth consecutive interest rate cut.

Cyprus

- On 11 February the Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK) expels its

MEP Demetris Papadakis for failing to align with party guidelines.

- On 27 February Cyprus makes the early repayment of a 2013 IMF loan, which was part of the country's financial bailout.

Syria

- On 14 February the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that over 800,000 people have been displaced since 1 December 2019 due to the Syrian regime's offensive on Idlib.

- On 20 February the first clear confrontation between Turkey and Syria takes place, demonstrating the breakdown in dialogue between Ankara and Moscow.

- On 27 February Syrian army attacks on Turkish positions in Idlib leave at least 33 Turkish soldiers dead. Turkey responds to the attack with air strikes. As a result of the Syrian attack and in anticipation of increasing numbers of displaced people heading towards the Turkish border, Ankara announces it will not stop refugees from reaching Europe, thereby suspending the 2016 migration agreement.

- On 28 February the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg calls an emergency meeting at Turkey's request to hold consultations under article 4 of the Washington Treaty, in light of the worsening situation in Syria. On the same day, Russia sends two frigates from the Black Sea Fleet to the Mediterranean.

Lebanon

- On 11 February Hassan Diab's new cabinet survives a parliamentary confidence vote on his government's programme, which includes far-reaching reforms to overcome the economic crisis.

- On 21 February Lebanon confirms its first case of COVID-19.

- On 26 February the US announces sanctions against three people and 12 Lebanese entities for their alleged links with Hezbollah.

Egypt

- On 7 February the Egyptian student and gender rights activist Patrick

George Zaki is arrested at the Cairo airport accused of spreading false news and inciting disorder.

- On 11 February Egypt's population reaches 100 million people. The most populated country in the Arab world and second in all Africa is facing a demographic crisis as a result of the sustained increase in the birth rate since 1960.

- On 14 February Egypt confirms Africa's first case of COVID-19.

- On 22 February the two children of former President Hosni Mubarak, Alaa and Gamal, are cleared of illicit share trading.

- On 25 February the death is announced of the former President Hosni Mubarak, ousted in April 2011.

Libya

- On 3 February after its stipulated three-year timeframe expires, Italy and Libya renew their 2017 migration deal.

- On 4 February representatives of the rival Tripoli and Tobruk governments arrive in Geneva to take part in a forum sponsored by the United Nations, aimed at continuing on from the Berlin International Conference on Libya held in January.

- On 18 February the negotiations of the Joint Military Commission on Libya are resumed in Geneva in an effort to agree on a ceasefire that will enable the political summit scheduled for 26 February to be held. The talks are interrupted hours later after Khalifa Haftar's forces attack a boat in the port of Tripoli suspected of transporting arms from Turkey to the GNA.

Tunisia

- On 27 February five months after the elections, the Parliament approves the new government of the Prime Minister Elyes Fakhfakh, supported by Ennahda, Achaab, Attayar, Tahya Tounes and the parties of the National Reform group.

Algeria

- On 4 and 6 February the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune pardons 10,000 prisoners charged with minor offences.

- On 10 February Said Bouteflika, the brother and former advisor to the ousted Abdelaziz Bouteflika and two former intelligence chiefs are sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment.
- On 12 February the media magnate Mohamed Mokadem, close to former President Bouteflika, is placed in custody on corruption charges.
- On 20 February the President Abdelmayid Tebboune declares the 22 February a national day, marking the day the protests began against Abdelaziz Bouteflika.
- On 23 February some twenty demonstrators from the Hirak movement are sentenced to between three months and a year in prison.
- On 25 February Algeria confirms its first case of COVID-19.
- On 27 February the President's son Khaled Tebboune is cleared of charges of corruption and influence peddling in connection with the businessman Kamel Chiji.

Morocco

- On 4 February six people are arrested accused of forming part of a terrorist cell that was planning to carry out attacks in the name of Daesh.
- On 9 February Abdellatif Ouahbi is elected the new secretary general of the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM, monarchist).
- On 23 February thousands gather to call for greater social equality and democratization in Casablanca, in a demonstration organized by the Social Front, an umbrella movement of the Moroccan left created in November 2019.

Mauritania

- On 19 February Mauritania cancels the international arrest warrants on the exiled opposition figures Mohamed Ould Buamatu, Moustapha Chafi and Mohamed Ould Debagh.
- On 25 February Mauritania takes over the presidency of the G5 Sahel.

European Union

- On 5 February the Enlargement Commissioner Oliver Varhelyi presents the new methodology proposed by the

Commission for the enlargement process that will group the negotiation chapters into six thematic clusters. The Commission also renews its recommendation to open talks with North Macedonia and Albania.

- On 12 February the European Parliament resolves to support the Commission's directives in negotiations for the future relationship with the United Kingdom.
- On 16 February the Munich Security Conference comes to an end, during which the French President Emmanuel Macron insists on the need for Europe to develop its own defensive structure.
- On 21 February the European Summit of Heads of State and Government ends without reaching an agreement on the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework. The new allocations under the CAP following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom are one of the main stumbling blocks.
- On 26 February the French-Italian summit in Naples relaunches the Paris-Rome axis, established under the Quirinal Treaty in January 2018 to move towards revamping the EU and improving European coordination in matters of migration, climate change, budget stability, security and the fight against crime.

March 2020

With almost the entire planet affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus that originated in 2019 in Wuhan and already considered by the United Nations as the biggest crisis for humanity since the Second World War, most Euro-Mediterranean countries declare states of emergency. Italy and Spain are the two worst affected countries. France, postpones its pension reform and the second round of local elections. An earthquake hits Croatia. Serbia postpones its legislative elections. The coalition government in Kosovo collapses. The European Council authorizes the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, which also becomes a member of NATO. Tensions rise between Greece and Turkey over the new migrant arrivals fleeing the worsening situation in Idlib. Turkey

launches its fourth military offensive in Syria. Lebanon declares bankruptcy. The fighting continues in Libya while the EU launches Operation Irini. Morocco officially approves its EEZ.

Portugal

- On 18 March Portugal declares a state of emergency for COVID-19, after reporting its first case on 2 March.

Spain

- On 3 March thousands of officers from the National Police Force and the Civil Guard demand wage parity with the Local Police.
- On 14 March Spain declares a state of alarm over COVID-19.
- On 15 March Felipe VI withdraws the financial allocation of his predecessor, Juan Carlos I, following revelations of the latter's involvement in the Panamanian Lucum Foundation, which received 100 million dollars from the Saudi royal house.
- On 24 March Spain surpasses the figures offered by China for the number of COVID-19 deaths, thereby recording the second highest death rate after Italy.

France

- On 2 March new demonstrations take place in protest against the pension system reform that the government approved by decree after surviving two no-confidence votes in the National Assembly.
- On 14 March thousands of Yellow Vests protest in the country's main cities.
- On 15 March France holds the first round of its local elections. The second round is suspended due to the pandemic.
- On 16 March the President Emmanuel Macron declares a state of emergency over COVID-19 and postpones the pension reform.

Monaco

- On 16 March Albert II becomes the first head of state to test positive for COVID-19, two days after the Principality closes its education and recreation centres.

Italy

- On 9 March the government announces lockdown measures over the increase in COVID-19 infections, which on 11 March is declared a pandemic by the WHO.
- On 19 March Italy surpasses the figures offered by China for the number of COVID-19 deaths. By the end of the month, only the US surpasses Italy as the most affected country.
- On 22 March Italy suspends all non-essential face-to-face activities. The worsening of the situation and inadequate European response to Italian requests leads Rome to seek assistance from China, NATO and Russia, whose troops cross the borders of the Atlantic Alliance member state to provide aid. The consequences of lockdown for southern Italy's fragile domestic economy give rise to the first incidents of looting and calls for rebellion, which the government attempts to counter with an emergency fund of 10 billion euros.

Malta

- On 7 March Malta confirms its first case of COVID-19 and on 13 March announces a nationwide lockdown.

Slovenia

- On 12 March after confirming its first case on 4 March, Slovenia declares a state of epidemic over COVID-19.

Croatia

- On 22 March Croatia is hit by an earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale, which affects Zagreb and leaves dozens injured, partially interrupting the COVID-19 lockdown measures.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 2 March the deputy leader of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA, Bosniak nationalist) Asim Sarajlic resigns following the leak of recordings that reveal corrupt dealings within the party.
- On 17 March after confirming its first case on 5 March, a state of emergency is declared for COVID-19.

Montenegro

- On 17 March Montenegro, the last European country to resist the spread of COVID-19, reports its first cases, despite its speedy declaration of a state of emergency on 13 February.

Serbia

- On 16 March Serbia declares a state of emergency for COVID-19 and, on 17 March, postpones April's parliamentary elections.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 2 March Sierra Leone withdraws its recognition of Kosovo's independence.
- On 13 March Kosovo confirms its first case of COVID-19.
- On 18 March the confrontation between the Prime Minister Albin Kurti and President Hashim Thaci, over the imposition of the state of emergency for COVID-19, leads to the dismissal of the Interior Minister Agim Veliu, member of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and supporter, like Thaci, of its implementation. On 25 March, the government collapses after losing a no-confidence vote filed by the LDK.

North Macedonia

- On 18 March North Macedonia declares a state of emergency for COVID-19 and postpones its legislative elections scheduled for 12 April.
- On 24 March the European Council authorizes opening accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania.
- On 27 March North Macedonia becomes a member of NATO.

Albania

- On 2 March thousands rally in Tirana, called by the President Ilir Meta, in protest against the government which they accuse of violating the Constitution, having links with organized crime and using the justice system reform to take control of all institutions.
- On 16 March the Parliament extends its emergency legislation for COVID-19

adopted after the first confirmed case on 8 March.

Greece

- On 4 March tensions rise on the Turkish border as the number of migrants trying to cross into Greece increases.
- On 20 March the government begins the transfer of 604 migrant arrivals on Samos, Chios and Lesbos to the Greek mainland. These add to another group of 436 migrants transferred during the previous days. All of them will be deported.
- On 22 March the government imposes a lockdown for COVID-19.

Turkey

- On 10 March Turkey calls for the 2016 migration agreement to be updated in light of the "new circumstances" in Syria, as well as greater support against Russia from NATO and the EU, which continues to condition its support on Ankara halting the flow of migrants.
- On 11 March the former minister Ali Babacan, co-founder of the Justice and Development Party (AKP, Islamist), presents the Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA, liberal).
- On 11 March Turkey reports its first case of COVID-19. In the following days, measures for a gradual lockdown are adopted.
- On 23 March the People's Democratic Party (HDP, pro-Kurdish socialist) condemns the dismissal of eight mayors from the party accused of corruption and terrorism.
- On 30 March Turkey announces the death in Iraq of Nazife Bilen, member of the executive council of the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), as part of the campaign against the PKK terrorist organization and affiliated groups.

Cyprus

- On 3 March Cyprus temporarily closes the crossings at Ledra Street, Astromeritis, Lefka and Dherynia to avoid the spread of COVID-19. On 15 March, after confirmation of its first case on 9 March, Cyprus declares a state of emergency.

Syria

- On 1 March Turkey launches its fourth military offensive in northern Syria, “Operation Spring Shield,” following the Syrian regime attacks on Turkish positions in late February.
- On 2 March the army retakes control of Saraqib, four days after Turkish-backed rebels captured the city.
- On 5 March Turkey and Russia agree on a ceasefire in Idlib, which includes a security corridor along the M4 highway between Aleppo and Latakia.
- On 16 March Syria declares emergency measures in response to COVID-19. On 23 March, Syria confirms its first case.

Lebanon

- On 7 March the Prime Minister Hassan Diab says the country must default on its foreign debt payment due to a major financial crisis, for which he blames institutional corruption. The announcement intensifies the citizen protests.
- On 16 March Lebanon declares a state of emergency for COVID-19.

Jordan

- On 2 March Jordan confirms its first case of COVID-19. On 17 March, it declares a state of emergency.

Egypt

- On 4 March Hisham el-Ashmawy is executed. He was arrested in 2018 in Derna for a number of attacks, including the bomb attack on the Italian consulate in Cairo and the murder of the public prosecutor Hisham Barakat in 2015.
- On 24 March Egypt steps up its COVID-19 lockdown measures.
- On 17 March the army reports it has killed six terrorists in Bir el-Abed, as part of the anti-jihadist offensive in Sinai.

Libya

- On 2 March the UN Envoy for Libya Ghassan Salame resigns and is temporarily replaced on 14 March by Stephanie Williams.
- On 14 March the GNA declares a state of emergency for COVID-19 and

a unilateral ceasefire. On 21 March, the authorities in Tobruk announce a curfew and agree to declaring a ceasefire. On 24 March, Libya confirms its first case of COVID-19 and a day later the fighting resumes in Tripoli, where on 27 March around a hundred militia members are reportedly killed.

- On 26 March the EU launches Operation Irini to enforce the arms embargo to Libya.

Tunisia

- On 2 March Tunisia confirms its first case of COVID-19. On 20 March, it imposes a mandatory lockdown.
- On 6 March a suicide bombing outside the US embassy in Tunisia leaves six people injured.
- On 10 March 10 Heart of Tunisia MPs leave the party, citing a lack of leadership and the failure to join the coalition government.

Algeria

- On 11 March the leader of the Democratic and Social Union (UDS) Karim Tabbou is sentenced to a year in prison. The opposition finger with links to the Hirak movement is scheduled to be released on 26 March after having already served his sentence, but on 24 March is ordered by an appeal court to remain in jail.
- 20 March marks the first Friday since 22 February 2019 that the Hirak movement has not held a demonstration, due to the COVID-19 measure, following confirmation of the country’s first case on 2 March.

Morocco

- On 2 March Morocco confirms its first case of COVID-19. On 20 March, the country declares a state of emergency.
- On 30 March Morocco officializes the laws extending its territorial waters and establishing its EEZ, which now overlaps waters claimed by Spain before the UN.

Mauritania

- On 14 March Mauritania confirms its first case of COVID-19. On 20 March, the country imposes a curfew.

European Union

- On 4 March the EU closes ranks around Greece and Bulgaria faced with the new migrant arrivals following Turkey’s decision to suspend the 2016 migrant agreement.
- On 13 March the Commission presents its strategy to mitigate the consequences of COVID-19, make the best use of the flexibility offered by the Treaties to allow states to support their health and financial systems and making the EU budget available for the fight against the pandemic. On 26 March, the Parliament approves the measures. On 23 March, for the first time in history the states activate the “general escape clause” of the Stability and Growth Pact.
- On 15 March France calls on the EU to tighten border controls in the Schengen Area, faced with the decision by several countries to close their borders. On 16 March, the Commission closes the Union’s external borders for 30 days.
- On 18 March the ECB announces the purchase of 750 billion euros of public bonds and private assets to allow Member States to finance their stimulus packages faced with the effects of the pandemic.
- On 25 March France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Portugal, Greece, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Ireland call for the issuance of so-called “coronabonds,” a common debt instrument aimed to alleviate the consequences of COVID-19. Germany, Austria and the Netherlands oppose the move.
- On 31 March the EU issues a warning to Hungary regarding the previous day’s parliamentary approval of a state of emergency that allows the Prime Minister Viktor Orban to rule by decree with no time limit put in place.

Arab League

- On 15 March Sudan votes against an Arab League resolution to close ranks around Egypt against Ethiopia in the dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile, which would make Ethiopia Africa’s biggest hydropower producer and exporter.

April 2020

After gaining relative stability with regard to their COVID-19 infection rates, a large share of European countries begin their respective relaxation of restrictions and approve unprecedented financial rescue packages. Italy and Malta declare their ports to be unsafe. Kosovo announces the removal of tariffs on Serbian imports and its President tasks the LDK with the formation of a new cabinet. Turkey steps up its prospecting activities in the eastern Mediterranean. In Syria, the United Nations reiterates the need to establish a ceasefire to be able to focus on the COVID-19 pandemic. In Lebanon, the anti-government protests intensify. Jordan begins its relaxation of restrictions. In Egypt, the Parliament expands presidential powers. In Libya, Khalifa Haftar announces he is taking political control of the whole country. Tunisia and Morocco extend their state of emergency. Morocco and Algeria order the release of thousands of prisoners and impose overnight curfews. In Algeria, General Abdelghani Hamel is sentenced to prison for corruption and the country criminalizes the spreading of fake news.

Portugal

- On 2 April Portugal extends its state of emergency for two more weeks, toughening its lockdown measures.

Spain

- On 4 April Spain extends lockdown until 25 April, when it extends the state of emergency again until 10 May.
- On 6 April 260 migrants storm the Melilla border fence.
- On 22 April the government approves additional measures to support the economy in the face of the crisis sparked by the coronavirus.

France

- On 3 April a man stabs two people to death in Romans-sur-Isère, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, crying "Allah is great."
- On 16 April France joins the United Kingdom and the US in demanding China give an explanation for its silence at the beginning of the COVID-19 pan-

demic, sluggish application of measures and engagement in misinformation.

- On 18 April clashes break out in Villeneuve-la-Garenne after a young man is injured when the police tried to arrest him for violating lockdown. Similar incidents take place over the following nights in other towns.
- On 23 April the Parliament approves 110 billion euros in aid to tackle the COVID-19 crisis.
- On 27 April three police officers are rammed in Colombes by a Daesh supporter who is then arrested.

Italy

- On 1 April Italy extends its state of emergency and lockdown measures until 13 April and then again until 3 May.
- On 7 April Italy closes its ports to migrant rescue vessels, declaring them as unsafe due to COVID-19.
- On 17 April the 146 migrants aboard the Alan Kurdi, which has been anchored off the coast near Palermo for more than 10 days, are transferred to a Red Cross ship to undergo quarantine in case of any COVID-19 infections.
- On 24 April the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte outlines lockdown easing measures in four phases.
- On 27 April Veneto's governor and League party member Luca Zaia approves easing lockdown, a week ahead of the schedule set for all regions across the country.
- On 28 April Italy celebrates the completion of the road viaduct in Genoa to replace the Morandi bridge, whose collapse in August 2018 left 43 people dead.

Malta

- On 6 April Malta steps up security in the Hal Far migrant centre after eight people there test positive for COVID-19.
- On 16 April a criminal investigation is launched against the Prime Minister Robert Abela and members of the armed forces after the NGO Repubblica files a complaint against them accusing them of being responsible for the death of at least five migrants for failing to come to their aid after the closure of Maltese ports on 9 April, when they were declared unsafe due to COVID-19.

Croatia

- On 18 April Croatia extends its lockdown until 4 May.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 23 April the Constitutional Court rules that the age-based restrictions imposed by the Bosniak-Croat Federation are unconstitutional.

Serbia

- On 3 April Slovenia's former Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak is appointed as EU Special Representative for Serbia-Kosovo dialogue.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 1 April Kosovo announces that it will lift the 100% tariff on Serbian imports, after a year and a half of pressure from the EU and US.
- On 23 April the President Hashim Thaci tasks the LDK and its prime ministerial candidate Avdullah Hoti to form a government.

North Macedonia

- On 6 April North Macedonia extends its curfew. On 20 April, a plan for easing restrictions is announced as of early May.

Greece

- On 1 and 5 April the Ritsona and Malakasa migrant camps in Athens are placed under quarantine after residents test positive for COVID-19. On 21 April, Greece prohibits all migrant mobility until 10 May.
- On 19 April Greece begins evacuating hundreds of migrants from the Aegean Islands to the Greek mainland, and on 28 April announces that before the end of 2020 it will close the Samos camp, following several fires and incidents there.

Turkey

- On 12 April the Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu announces his resignation fol-

lowing the controversy caused by the curfew he enforced for the weekend, which gave people just two hours before it entered into effect. The President Recep Tayyip Erdogan rejects the resignation.

- On 14 April the Parliament approves a law that reduces sentences and allows for the release of some 90,000 prisoners, in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- On 20 April a section of the new city hospital is opened in the Basaksehir district, Istanbul, with 2,682 intensive care beds. Another similar hospital has also been set up in the Sancaktepe district.
- On 20 April Mumtaz Senel, the mayor of Yesilova (CHP), is shot and wounded along with his wife at their home. Senel is an active opponent of the controversial project to turn Lake Salda into a mass tourist destination.
- On 22 April the Central Bank announces the eighth interest rate cut in less than a year, in a measure to bolster credit and moderate the economic impact of the pandemic.
- On 27 April Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces a new three-day lockdown in 31 cities as of 1 May.
- On 27 April Recep Tayyip Erdogan expresses his support for Ali Erbas, Turkey's leading cleric and president of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, who on 24 April stated that Islam "curses homosexuality," a declaration that the opposition and Ankara Bar Association say could incite hatred. On the same day, Ankara's public prosecutor opens an investigation into the Bar Association, on suspicion that they may have insulted Islam.

Cyprus

- On 19 April Turkey sends the drillship Yavuz to block 7 of Cyprus' EEZ, a week after the Turkish Foreign Minister asserts that Turkey will continue drilling in waters under Cypriot sovereignty that have been claimed by Ankara.
- On 24 April Cyprus extends its suspension of commercial flights until 17 May. The ban does not include cargo and repatriation flights.

Syria

- On 9 April Daesh claims responsibility for 29 attacks in Iraq and 11 in Syria dur-

ing the first week of the month, as it exploits the pandemic to step up its activity.

- On 17 April the Kurdish administration in northeastern Syria officially confirms the first COVID-19 death in the area, in Qamishli.
- On 21 April the government condemns airstrikes in Palmyra, which it attributes to Israel, during the Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif's visit to Damascus.
- On 22 April the trial begins in Koblenz against two former officers that deserted the Syrian army, charged with crimes against humanity in Syria.
- On 29 April the government extends the nationwide curfew imposed at the end of March to halt the spread of coronavirus.

Lebanon

- On 5 April a Syrian refugee sets fire to himself in Bekaa Valley in protest against refugees' worsening living conditions under the COVID-19 restrictions.
- On 6 April the President Michel Aoun calls on the international community for assistance, faced with the country's severe economic crisis, exacerbated by the pandemic and refugee crisis.
- On 9 April a riot breaks out in the Qubbah prison, a day after the police thwart a mass escape attempt in another prison in Bekaa Valley.
- On 22 April Lebanon becomes the first Arab country to legalize cannabis farming for medicinal and industrial purposes.
- On 24 April Lebanon's money changers announce they are going on strike until 27 April, calling for an urgent intervention from the government and Central Bank, amid worsening social tension.
- On 27 April several days of clashes begin between security forces and demonstrators protesting against the devaluation of the Lebanese pound and soaring prices.
- On 30 April Germany designates Hezbollah a terrorist organization.

Jordan

- On 19 April the government ends the lockdown in Aqaba and reduces curfews in Karak, Tafileh and Maan as of 22 April. On 27 April, it authorizes

free movement and the reopening of businesses.

Egypt

- On 22 April the Parliament approves 17 amendments to the 1958 state of emergency law, which give the President powers to ban public and private assembly and control scientific research. The jurisdiction of military courts is also expanded.
- On 23 April the Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly announces an overnight curfew throughout Ramadan in an effort to contain COVID-19, a measure also adopted by other Muslim countries.
- On 28 April the President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi extends by three months the state of emergency imposed in April 2017 for the attacks in Tanta and Alexandria, due to the pandemic and insurgency in Sinai.

Libya

- On 5 April the former Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril dies of COVID-19.
- On 14 April the GNA takes control of Surman, Sabratha and al-Ajaylat.
- On 14 April the National Oil Company (NOC) estimates the losses resulting from the closure of oil facilities imposed since January by Khalifa Haftar at 4 billion dollars.
- On 28 April the LNA commander in chief Khalifa Haftar declares that his military council is ready to take control of all Libya and announces the end of the Skhirat Agreement, a UN-mediated deal from 2015 which led to the formation of the GNA.

Tunisia

- On 4 April the Parliament grants the Prime Minister Elies Fajfaj special powers to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.
- On 19 April Tunisia extends its lockdown measures until 3 May.
- On 20 April hundreds of Tunisians trapped in Libya force their way across the border in Ras Jadir after waiting for a week to be evacuated.
- On 29 April the President Kais Saied extends the state of emergency until 28 May.

Algeria

- On 1 April General Abdelghani Hamel is sentenced to 15 years in prison for corruption.
- On 1 April a presidential pardon sees the release of 5,037 prisoners, none of whom are Hirak members, as a preventative measure against COVID-19.
- On 14 April Abdelmadjid Tebboune announces that a National Agency for Health Security is soon to be created in a bid to overhaul the healthcare system after the pandemic.
- On 22 April as part of the penal code reform, the Parliament approves a law that criminalizes the broadcast of fake news.
- On 24 April the government announces the end of lockdown in Blida, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak in Algeria, and its replacement with a curfew. It also reduces the curfew in nine provinces.

Morocco

- On 5 April Mohamed VI pardons 5,654 prisoners to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- On 18 April the government extends the state of emergency for COVID-19 and the nationwide lockdown until 20 May. On 23 May, an overnight curfew is announced for Ramadan.

Mauritania

- On 21 April the parliamentary committee, which since 15 February has been investigating cases of corruption over the last decade, announces that it will call the former President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz to testify.

European Union

- On 2 April the EC boosts its response to COVID-19 proposing a solidarity instrument known as SURE, worth 100 billion euros in financial assistance for workers and companies.
- On 2 April the CJEU rules against Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic for their refusal to relocate asylum seekers in 2015.
- On 8 April the Commission recommends extending the closure of the

Schengen Area until 15 May for the pandemic.

- On 9 April the Eurogroup approves 540 billion euros in loans to deal with the consequences of the pandemic, but which does not include the so-called coronabonds.
- On 29 April the Commission launches proceedings against Poland for ignoring warnings over its justice system reform, which goes against EU principles.
- On 30 April the EU and United Kingdom begin talks on the future management of the Northern Irish border.

May 2020

Most European countries start to ease restrictions following the first wave of COVID-19 and announce recovery plans. France and Germany present their initiative for the creation of a common European fund to help repair the damage caused by the pandemic. In Italy, the government survives two no-confidence votes. Malta withdraws from Operation Iirini. In Croatia, the Defence Minister resigns and early elections are called. Bosnia and Herzegovina postpone local elections. Kosovo's Constitutional Court rules that a new government can be formed without holding elections. In Syria, the escalation of Daesh and Israeli attacks continues. Lebanon calls on the IMF to rescue its economy. Jordan and Tunisia begin easing lockdown. In Libya, the Turkish intervention in support of the GNA pushes back LNA troops.

Portugal

- On 2 May Portugal lifts the state of emergency and on 4 May begins its gradual relaxation of restrictions in three phases declaring a less severe state of calamity.

Spain

- On 4 May Spain begins asymmetrically easing lockdown in four phases, based on each region's situation.
- On 6 May the Parliament approves a new extension of the state of alarm until 24 May, coinciding with protests in several cities ongoing since the middle

of the month against the government's handling of the crisis.

France

- On 2 May the government extends its state of emergency until 24 July and submits its plan to ease lockdown to the Parliament, which is given the green light by the National Assembly.
- On 5 May senior figures in health-care management believe the first cases of COVID-19 in France began in December 2019 in Seine-Saint-Denis.
- On 11 May France begins its first phase to ease restrictions, which will last until 2 June.
- On 18 May the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron present an initiative for the creation of a European rescue fund through a joint loan requested by all Member States.
- On 18 May clashes break out in Angenteuil between police and demonstrators following the death of a motorcyclist after colliding with a police car.
- On 19 May 17 LREM MPs present the statutes of the new Ecology, Democracy, Solidarity party (EDS), leaving the President Emmanuel Macron's party without a parliamentary majority. On 27 May, a further seven MPs leave LREM to form a new independent group Act Together.

Italy

- On 4 May Italy begins resuming economic activity and its gradual easing of restrictions, and Bergamo prosecutors open an investigation into the government's handling of the pandemic. On 17 May, the government gives into regional pressure and accelerates the reopening process. Only Campania announces it will not speed up its plans to relax restrictions.
- On 12 May the Financial Guard arrests 91 members of the Acquasanta and Arenella clans from Cosa Nostra.
- On 13 May the government approves the regularization of thousands of immigrants employed in agriculture and as domestic helpers.
- On 14 May Italy announces a new 55-billion-euro rescue plan to prop up the economy.
- On 20 May the government survives two no-confidence votes tabled against

the Justice Minister Alfonso Bonafede, over the release of some 8,000 prisoners during the pandemic, including around 500 members of the mafia.

Malta

- On 4 May Malta begins easing restrictions.
- On 8 May Malta withdraws from Operation Irini, which enforces the arms embargo to Libya, and announces it will veto decisions within the operation concerning spending procedures for migrant disembarkation.

Slovenia

- On 4 May Slovenia continues to ease its lockdown, which began on 30 April with the end of commercial and mobility restrictions. On 15 May, Slovenia reopens its borders to the rest of the Union.
- On 4 May a fourth Friday of protests denounces an authoritarian drift in the coalition government, which is undergoing a growing internal crisis.

Croatia

- On 7 May the Defence Minister Damir Krsticevic resigns after two soldiers are killed when their plane crashes near Zadar.
- On 10 May Croatia begins easing its lockdown.
- On 18 May the Parliament is dissolved to hold early parliamentary elections as a second wave of COVID-19 may make it impossible to hold elections later.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 10 May border police thwart an attempt in Izacic by 87 immigrants to cross into Croatia.
- On 16 May thousands of people protest against the holding of a mass in memory of the victims of the Bleiburg massacre, committed by partisans against Nazi collaborators during the Second World War.

Montenegro

- On 4 May Montenegro begins easing restrictions.

- On 13 May clashes break out in different cities between police and demonstrators protesting against the arrest of an orthodox bishop and several priests for leading a religious procession in the middle of lockdown.

Serbia

- On 16 May Serbia deploys the army in Sid, on the Croatian border, to "protect the local population from harassment and robbery committed by migrants" from three camps, following the lifting of the state of emergency.
- On 26 May the European Council approves border management agreements between Frontex and Montenegro and Serbia.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 28 May the Constitutional Court rules in favour of the presidential decree for the formation of a new government without elections being held.

Albania

- On 17 May there is unrest between police and demonstrators protesting during the demolition of the National Theatre in Tirana, who accuse the government of destroying cultural heritage in the interests of private investors.
- On 31 May the government and opposition fail to comply with the deadline set for the modification of the electoral code, requested by the EU before accession talks can be opened.

Greece

- On 4 May Greece begins its gradual relaxation of lockdown.
- On 20 May the government unveils a 24-billion-euro rescue package to help get through the economic crisis caused by COVID-19.
- On 26 May Greece confirms it will complete the border fence with Turkey along the Evros river in three months.

Turkey

- On 4 May Turkey announces it will be easing the coronavirus restrictions imposed in several cities as of 11 May.

- On 4 May a new diplomatic incident takes place between Turkey and Greece after Athens condemn the fact that several Turkish fighter jets harassed a helicopter flying over the Aegean Sea in which the Greek Defence Minister Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos was travelling.

Cyprus

- On 4 May Cyprus begins easing lockdown. On 21 May, travel restrictions are lifted for Cypriot citizens.

Syria

- On 17 May the magnate and former confidant of Bashar al-Asad, Rami Makhluf, asserts that the Syrian authorities have set a deadline for him to give up control of Syriatel or Syria's biggest mobile operator would have its license revoked and assets seized for failing to pay back its debts to the State.
- On 17 May an airstrike on Deir ez-Zor by the US-led military coalition and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, claims the lives of Daesh's regional leaders Ahmad Isa Ismail az-Zawi and Ahmad Abd Muhamad Hasan al-Jughayfi. On 26 May, the death is also reported of Daesh's leader in Iraq, Mutaz Numan Abd Nayif Najm al-Jaburi.
- On 18 May the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights (SOHR) reports three Daesh attacks in the last 24 hours, which have left at least nine people dead on the Homs-Deir ez-Zor road.
- On 25 May the deployment of Syrian, Russian and SDF troops reopens the Aleppo-Latakia highway, following an agreement with Turkey.
- On 26 May the government announces the end of the overnight curfew imposed in March, despite the rise in COVID-19 infections.
- On 28 May the EU extends sanctions against the Syrian regime for another year.

Lebanon

- On 1 May Lebanon asks the IMF to help bail out its economy.
- On 5 May the government extends lockdown measures until 24 May.

- On 20 May Mazen Hamdan is arrested, director of the Central Bank's monetary operations, together with several senior figures of the currency exchange union, as part of a court investigation into the bank's possible involvement in the manipulation of exchange rates.

Jordan

- On 3 May Jordan announces that from 6 May economic and commercial activities can resume gradually, although the overnight curfew remains in place.

Egypt

- On 2 May the producer Shady Habash dies in Tora prison from unknown causes. Habash was arrested in 2018 for his filming and release on the evening of the presidential elections of the music video for Balaha (Date) by the now-exiled singer Ramy Essam, which mocks Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.
- On 3 May at least 18 suspected terrorists are killed in Sinai in fighting with the army as part of the counterterrorism operation in the governorate, which on 23 and 31 May claims the lives of another 21 and 19 militants, respectively.
- On 11 May Egypt announces an international alliance with Greece, Cyprus, France and the UAE to confront Turkey's provocative moves in Libya and the Mediterranean.
- On 14 May the government announces its plan for easing lockdown in three phases.
- On 17 May the journalist Lina Attalah, director of Mada Masr, considered the last independent media outlet in Egypt, is released on bail hours after being arrested in Cairo while interviewing Laila Sueif, the mother of jailed activist Alaa Abdelfatah, currently on hunger strike.

Libya

- On 4 May the EU's Operation Irini begins its activities to enforce the arms embargo on Libya.
- On 7 May at least five people are killed in an attack by Khalifa Haftar's forces on Tripoli.
- On 18 May GNA forces announce it has taken control of the al-Watiya airbase from the LNA, thanks to Turk-

ish support. On 20 May, the LNA announces its withdrawal from the front lines in Tripoli.

- On 29 May Russia says that the ceasefire declared in January has failed, three days after the US, on 26 May, accuses Russia of sending fighter jets to support its interests and those of Khalifa Haftar, an accusation that adds to a United Nations report accusing Moscow of deploying mercenaries.

Tunisia

- On 4 May Tunisia starts easing restrictions by economic sector, age range and governorate.
- On 24 May the Tunisian coast guard intercepts 223 migrants trying to reach Europe.
- On 25 May the police disperse workers protesting in Bizerte against the freeze on a number of building projects.

Algeria

- On 12 May the Prime Minister Abdelaziz Yerad announces a new two-week extension on the lockdown. On 29 May, another two-week extension is declared.
- On 20 May the activists Larbi Tahar and Boussif Mohamed Boudiaf are sentenced to 18 years in prison for posting content critical of the government. A third activist, Soheib Debaghi, is sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

Morocco

- On 18 May the Prime Minister of Morocco Saadeddine Othmani extends the state of emergency for COVID-19 by three weeks.
- On 24 May Mohammed VI pardons or reduces jail terms for 483 prisoners for Ramadan.
- On 29 May the former Prime Minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi dies of cancer.

European Union

- On 6 May the EU-Western Balkans summit in Zagreb approves 3.3 billion euros in aid to the region and an increase in cooperation to strengthen its European perspective.

- On 9 May the Commission declares that the Union's external borders will remain closed until mid-June.
- On 13 May the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) reports that due to the pandemic, between January and April 2020, applications for asylum in the EU, Switzerland and Norway have fallen by 25% with respect to the same period in 2019.
- On 19 May the EU and Australia present a resolution backed by 116 countries asking the WHO to investigate the origins and spread of SARS-CoV-2.
- On 19 May the European Council adopts the SURE instrument worth up to 100 billion euros in loans granted on favourable terms to Member States to deal with the effects of COVID-19.
- On 26 May OECD figures show a 3.3% fall in European GDP in the first quarter of 2020 due to COVID-19, the greatest drop since 1995, in line with Eurostat's estimates in January.
- On 27 May the President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen presents an unprecedented 750-billion-euro European recovery fund, based on debt mutualization and financial transfers.
- On 29 May Germany, Spain, France and Italy propose substantially increasing European defence integration.

June 2020

Demonstrations take place in numerous European cities, particularly in France, to condemn the murder of African-American George Floyd in Minneapolis on 25 May. In Portugal, the Finance Minister resigns. In Spain, the state of alarm comes to an end and the Supreme Court launches an inquiry into the king emeritus Juan Carlos I. In France, a judicial inquiry is set out into the government's handling of the pandemic, there is a surge in public unrest, the second round of local elections is held and the former Prime Minister François Fillon is sentenced for embezzling public funds. In Italy, an operation against the Camorra ends with 59 arrests. There are ministerial resignations in Malta, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Montenegro, the Budva mayor and local assembly chief

are arrested. Serbia holds parliamentary elections. In Kosovo, the Parliament approves Avdullah Hoti's government and the prosecutor for the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) accuses the President Hashim Thaci of war crimes. In North Macedonia, the former Special Anti-corruption Prosecutor is convicted for corruption. Greece and Italy agree on the demarcation of their maritime border. In Turkey, numerous arrest warrants are issued for figures allegedly linked to Fethullah Gulen and the opposition. In Syria, the State seizes Syriatel and the Prime Minister is sacked, coinciding with the resurgence of social protests, which also increase in Lebanon and Tunisia. In Libya, the Tripoli forces continue their advance. Algeria reshuffles its cabinet and the former Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia is convicted of corruption. Morocco extends its state of emergency. Mauritania restructures its military leadership.

Portugal

- On 9 June Mario Centeno steps down as Finance Minister and is replaced by Joao Leao.
- On 22 June the government tightens measures against the pandemic in Lisbon with an overnight curfew and limiting gatherings to up to 10 people.

Spain

- On 3 June the Parliament extends the state of alarm to 21 June.
- On 8 June the Supreme Court launches an inquiry into Juan Carlos I over his alleged receipt of illegal payments in exchange for the contract for the Medina-La Meca high-speed railway line being awarded to Spanish companies.
- On 15 June the government unveils a 3.75-billion-euro package to support the car industry through increased competitiveness and decarbonization.
- On 21 June the state of alarm for the pandemic ends, restrictions are eased and borders are partially reopened.

France

- On 7-8 June demonstrations in numerous European cities condemn the murder by police of the African-American

George Floyd in Minneapolis on 25 May, which sparks a serious socio-political crisis in the US. The mobilizations gain particular strength in France, where police are deployed in large numbers, the situation reigniting anger over Adama Traore, a young man who died in 2016 while in police custody in Persan.

- On 9 June the government unveils a 15-billion-euro support package for the aviation industry.
- On 10 June the submission of 63 complaints is cause for the public prosecutor to open an investigation into possible criminal offences committed in the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- On 11-12 June new protests are staged by the police force and gendarmerie against government policy and to denounce poor working conditions and low pay.
- On 12 June four days of score-settling violence erupts between Chechen and North African gangs.
- On 13 June a large anti-racism protest ends in fierce clashes in Paris.
- On 16 June the National Front, now renamed the National Rally, is ordered to pay 18,570 euros for "misuse of corporate assets," and illegal financing.
- On 22 June compulsory face-to-face school attendance is resumed.
- On 28 June the second round of local elections, postponed due to COVID-19, delivers poor results for the President Macron's LREM party and a recovery for The Republicans (LR, Gaullist), who gain votes in rural France. Worthy of note are the victory of the Prime Minister Edouard Philippe in El Havre and the re-election of Anne Hidalgo (PS) in Paris.
- On 29 June the former Prime Minister François Fillon is sentenced to five years' imprisonment and a 10-year ban from holding office for embezzling public funds.

Italy

- On 1 June Italy reopens its borders.
- On 9 June a major police operation against the Camorra leads to the arrests of 59 members of the Puca, Verde and Ranucci clans, including three brothers of Luigi Cesaro, the former president of the province of Naples and FI senator.
- On 10 June the public prosecutor announces that he will call the govern-

ment to testify over its handling of the pandemic in an investigation opened following the receipt of a number of complaints.

- On 23 June after nine days of government meetings with social representatives at the States General called in Rome, the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announces an ambitious plan to relaunch the economy. The centre-right opposition boycotts the meetings and demands the plan be debated in Parliament.

Malta

- On 17 June the deputy leader of the ruling PL, Chris Cardona, resigns after a witness says he paid to have the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia murdered in 2017.
- On 23 June Angelo Gafa is appointed commissioner of the National Police to replace Lawrence Cutajar. The voting is boycotted by the opposition, which disagrees with the selection procedure.

Slovenia

- On 30 June the Interior Minister Ales Hojs and police chief Anton Travner resign in the context of an inquiry into the purchase of protective equipment for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Croatia

- On 1 June Croatia reopens its borders to 10 countries in the Union.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 2 June the Security Minister Fahrudin Radoncic resigns over political disagreements with coalition government partners concerning the deportation of 9,500 illegal immigrants, which he defends. Another reason for his resignation is the scandal related to the purchase of overpriced Chinese respirators, which also affects the caretaker Prime Minister Fadil Novalic.
- On 9 June Bozo Mihajlovic, the former head of the Special Department for Organized Crime, Economic Crime and Corruption at the state prosecution is sentenced to five years in prison for embezzlement.

- On 17 June Bosniak and Croat nationalists reach an historic agreement to hold local elections in Mostar, for the first time in 12 years.

Montenegro

- On 24 June the mayor of Budva Marko Carevic and local assembly chief Krsto Radovic are arrested after refusing to hand over power after one of its councillors defected to the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS). Incidents break out with hundreds of supporters of the arrested men, which spread to other cities.
- On 25 June public gatherings are banned in light of a spike in COVID-19 infections. The Serbian Orthodox Church accuses the government of exploiting the pandemic to put an end to the protests against the arrests made since May of various religious figures for defying the lockdown measures.

Serbia

- On 21 June Serbia holds parliamentary elections. President Aleksandar Vucic's Serbian Progressive Party (SNS, conservative) wins (62.7%). The hitherto co-ruling Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) comes second (10.4%).

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 3 June the Parliament approves Avdullah Hoti's new government. The former Prime Minister Albin Kurti and his party, Vetëvendosje, demand new elections are held and stage a protest march on 12 June.
- On 6 June the new government announces the lifting of Serbian import tariffs.
- On 24 June the prosecutor for the KSC accuses the President Hashim Thaci and another nine former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK), among them the leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK, conservative) and former parliament speaker Kadri Veseli, of war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- On 30 June trade unions condemn the Constitutional Court ruling that the 2019 Law on Salaries is unconstitutional

tional because its provisions violate the separation of powers.

North Macedonia

- On 4 June a curfew enters into force in Skopje, Stip, Tetovo and Kumanovo, until 8 June, due to a spike in COVID-19 infections.
- On 13 June the state of emergency ends and is declared again on 16 June for eight days to prepare for the early elections in July.
- On 18 June the former chief special prosecutor Katica Janeva and businessman Bojan Jovanovski are sentenced to seven and nine years in prison respectively for their involvement in the "Extortion" corruption scandal.
- On 30 June North Macedonia steps up its military presence on its borders with Greece and Serbia, anticipating an increase in the number of migrants trying to cross over.

Greece

- On 9 June Greece and Italy sign an agreement in Athens on the demarcation of their maritime border and their EEZs, which complements the one signed in 1977.
- On 17 June the Parliament lifts the immunity of lawmakers Andreas Patsis (New Democracy, conservative) and Miltiadis Hatzigiannakis, (SYRIZA, left-wing) who are under investigation for possible criminal offences.

Turkey

- On 2 June the Istanbul prosecutor's office issues arrest warrants for 118 people charged with having links to Fethullah Gulen.
- On 5 June the lawmakers Enis Berberoglu (CHP) and Leyla Guven and Musa Farisogullar (HDP) are arrested on suspicion of spying and terrorism after being stripped of their status as parliamentarians.
- On 9 June arrest warrants are issued for 191 soldiers charged with having links to Fethullah Gulen.
- On 11 June the parliamentary majority of the AKP and the ultra-nationalist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) gives broader powers to the neighbour-

hood guard that are almost on a par with those of the police force.

- On 17 June the UN General Assembly elects the diplomat and former Turkish European Affairs Minister Volkan Bozkir as its President.
- On 27 June at least 60 migrants die trying to cross Lake Van.

Cyprus

- On 5 June the Parliament approves the 220-million-euro package unveiled by the government to counter the effects of the pandemic.
- On 9 June Cyprus reopens airports, ports, hotels and recreational centres in its third phase of easing restrictions, which will last until 24 June.
- On 23 June the nurses' union calls off the strike organized for the following day after reaching an agreement with the state health service Okypsi to improve staffing in the sector.

Syria

- On 2 June the National Securities Commission announces it will indefinitely suspend trading shares in Syriatel, the country's biggest telecommunications company, owned by Rami Makhoul, after the deadline expires to pay back 450 million euros in debt to the treasury.
- On 4 June Daesh attacks the Azraq field, one of the main oil facilities in Deir ez-Zor, controlled by US-backed Kurdish forces.
- On 11 June Bashar al-Assad dismisses his Prime Minister Imad Khamis faced with the resurgence of protests against the crisis, corruption and the lack of democracy, this time with Sweida at the epicentre. The protests continue throughout June and are responded to with pro-regime counter-demonstrations.
- On 14 June at least two senior members of Hurras al-Din, the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda, are killed in bombing in Idlib attributed to the international coalition.
- On 15 June the pro-Turkish authorities in northeastern Syria formally announce the adoption, from the beginning of the month, of the Turkish lira in territories under Turkish control, faced with a 200% devaluation of the Syrian pound since the beginning of the war.

- On 17 June the US increases sanctions against the Syrian regime as part of the entry into force of the so-called Caesar Act.
- On 17 June a court in Paris sentences Rifaat al-Assad, the Syrian President's uncle and nicknamed the "Butcher of Hama," to four years in prison and seizes his hoard of illegal property assets.
- On 19 June Save the Children reports that thousands of families have started leaving the refugee camps in northeastern Syria for fear of COVID-19.
- On 26 June fighting intensifies between Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Hurras al-Din, the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda, in areas surrounding Idlib.
- On 30 June the fourth EU and UN-sponsored donors' conference raises a little over 4.9 billion euros, less than half what was asked for, to combat the humanitarian emergency in Syria.

Lebanon

- On 1 June shopping centres reopen as part of the measures for easing restrictions for the COVID-19 pandemic.
- On 6 June there is a large-scale protest against the government, accused of incompetence in failing to prevent the country's crisis. On 12 June, the government holds an emergency meeting after the protests turn violent over a new drop in the Lebanese pound, which loses more than 60% of its value.
- On 29 June the director general of the Finance Ministry Alain Bifani resigns.

Jordan

- On 6 June Jordan further eases restrictions in view of its success in containing the pandemic.

Egypt

- On 9 June Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia resume talks on the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.
- On 12 June the government postpones the total reopening of its economy due to the continued increase in COVID-19 infections.
- On 14 June the LGTBO activist and supporter of the Bread and Freedom party Sarah Hegazy commits suicide,

as a result of the trauma she suffered during her time in prison in 2017. She was arrested for unfolding a rainbow flag at a concert for the Lebanese group Mashrou Leila, amid an Egyptian government campaign against the LGTBO community, which included 57 arrests.

- On 30 June the government announces the death of two "extremely dangerous" terrorists amid constant fighting in North Sinai as part of the army's counter-terrorism offensive.

Libya

- On 4 May GNA forces capture the Tripoli airport, which had been in LNA hands since April 2019.
- On 5 June the GNA announces that Tripoli and its periphery have been liberated from its siege by Khalifa Haftar's troops, which withdraw to Tarhuna, where they are surrounded by GNA and Turkish soldiers. Tarhuna falls on the same day. Libya's eastern forces, backed by Russia, Egypt and the UAE maintain control over Cyrenaica and its oil terminals.
- On 5 June Egypt announces an initiative to end hostilities in Libya as of 8 June, which is supported by the UAE and Khalifa Haftar. Meanwhile GNA and Turkish forces continue their advance to retake Sirte.
- On 22 June the United Nations Human Rights Council establishes a mission to investigate the violations and abuses committed by the warring parties in Libya.
- On 26 June the GNA extend the curfew for COVID-19 by 10 days due to the increase in infections.
- On 26 June the state-owned oil company NOC condemns the presence of Russian mercenaries at the Sharara oilfield, the country's biggest, and rejects the foreign interference in the Libyan conflict.

Tunisia

- On 4 June hotels and cultural centres reopen and domestic movement is allowed.
- On 9 June the EU announces the removal of Tunisia and Bosnia and Herzegovina from the list of countries with insufficient measures against money laundering and terrorist financing.

- On 11 June at least 45 migrants die when the vessel they were travelling in sinks after leaving Sfax on 4 June headed for Italy.
- On 18 June thousands of health workers go on strike demanding improvements in the public system in the wake of COVID-19, after, on 15 June, the government announces the end of the pandemic.
- On 22 June a general strike is staged in Tataouine called by the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) in protest against the dismantling on 20 and 21 June of a camp in Kamour, which for two months had been demanding the government stand by its promises in 2017 for socio-economic improvements.
- On 27 June Tunisia reopens its borders.

Algeria

- On 7 June Algeria begins its first phase to ease lockdown.
- On 24 June the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune reshuffles the cabinet. Notable changes include: the former CEO of Sonatrach Abdelmadjid Attar who replaces Mohamed Arkab as the Energy Minister, who, in turn, takes over as Mining Minister; Aymen Abderrahmane, governor of the Bank of Algeria, who takes over as Finance Minister to replace Abderrahmane Raouia.
- On 24 June the former Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia is sentenced to 12 years in prison for corruption in the "Sovac" case trial against businessman Mourad Eulmi, sentenced to 10 years in prison. Also sentenced to three and 20 years in prison, respectively, are the former Energy Minister Youcef Yousfi and Industry and Mining Minister Abdeslam Bouchouareb.
- On 26 June the former director general of the national police Abdelghani Hamel and Algiers' former regional police chief Nouredine Berrashdi are sentenced to four years in prison for abuse of power.

Morocco

- On 10 June Morocco extends its state of emergency until 10 July.

Mauritania

- On 8 June the President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani announces sweeping

reforms in the army with the appointment of Mohamed Ould Meguett as army chief of staff to replace Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mohamed Lemine, who becomes chief of the National Guard, in turn replacing Misgharu Ould Sidi, who takes over as director general of National Security, until now occupied by Ould Meguett.

European Union

- On 5 June France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands agree to form a European alliance to find a vaccination against Covid-19.
- On 11 June the Commission recommends reopening the Union's external borders as of 30 June.
- On 22 June the EU and China hold their bilateral summit in which the Union calls on China to respect its commitments regarding market access for European companies, transparency on subsidies and technology transfer, warns Beijing against cyberattacks and disinformation and expresses concern for the situation in Hong Kong.
- On 24 June the Commission unveils its draft budget for 2021, the first of the next multiannual financial framework and the first without a British contribution. The draft budget totals at 388 billion euros, -166.7 billion corresponding to the annual budget and 211 billion for the "Next generation EU" recovery plan. It also foresees 133 billion euros in loans, which is also in the framework of the Recovery Plan.
- On 25 June the annual EASO report reveals that in 2019, 738,425 asylum applications were lodged, 11% more than in 2018 with a 40% recognition rate.

Arab League

- On 23 June the Arab League rejects the foreign interference in Libya.

July 2020

In most European countries, the states of emergency in place for the first wave of COVID-19 come to an end. Portugal declares a state of alert over wildfires. In Spain, Galicia and the Basque Country hold elections. France reshuffles the

cabinet. In Italy and Malta the large-scale migrant arrivals continue. Croatia holds early parliamentary elections and advances the process for adopting the euro. In Serbia, there are protests against the handling of the pandemic and talks are resumed to normalize relations with Kosovo, whose President appears before the KSC. North Macedonia holds parliamentary elections. Albania modifies its electoral system. Greece approves a public safety bill and tensions rise with Turkey over territorial waters. Turkey orders the Hagia Sophia Museum be converted into a mosque and the Parliament approves a law that grants the authorities greater control over social media. In Syria, fighting continues for control of Idlib and parliamentary elections are held. In Lebanon, the Central Bank subsidises hundreds of basic goods. Jordan dissolves the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Egypt reinstates the Senate and the Court of Cassation ratifies the life sentence handed down to the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. In Tunisia, the Prime Minister resigns. In Algeria, two former Prime Ministers Ahmed Ouyahia and Abdelmalek Sellal are handed down new prison sentences.

Portugal

- On 27-28 July the government declares a national state of alert over the wildfires sweeping across the country.

Spain

- On 1 July lockdown is lifted and borders are gradually reopened.
- On 12 July Galicia and the Basque Country hold regional elections, postponed since March due to the pandemic. In Galicia, the People's Party (PP, conservative) wins, Alberto Nuñez Feijoo obtaining his fourth consecutive absolute majority. The Galician Nationalist Bloc (BNG) is the second most voted party. In the Basque Country, Iñigo Urkullu's Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) wins, although it needs to form a coalition to govern.

France

- On 3 July the Court of Justice of the Republic opens an investigation into the

former Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, and the Minister and former Minister of Health, Olivier Veran and Agnes Buzyn, over their handling of the COVID-19 crisis.

- On 6 July the President Emmanuel Macron reshuffles the cabinet. Jean Castex replaces Edouard Philippe as Prime Minister. Gerald Darmanin replaces Christophe Castaner as Interior Minister and Eric Dupond-Moretti replaces Nicole Belloubet as Justice Minister.
- On 10 July the public health state of emergency is lifted.

Italy

- On 1 July Italian police in Naples seize 14 tons of amphetamines, produced by Daesh in Syria, in the world's largest seizure of the drug.
- On 5 July the authorities allow the 180 migrants aboard the Ocean Viking to disembark at Sicily's Porto Empedocle.
- On 6 July the government unveils its economic recovery plan, which includes 32 billion euros to spend on healthcare infrastructure, 7 billion euros on education and research and 3 billion euros on the renovation and digitalization of school infrastructures.
- On 9 July Italy bans entry to all travellers from 13 countries outside of the EU.
- On 14 July the government extends the measures for easing restrictions adopted on 11 June until the end of the month.
- On 21 July 75 people accused of having links with the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta are arrested in a joint Italian-Swiss operation. Another 83 people are investigated over their ties with the mafia.
- On 27 July the Interior Minister Luciana Lamorgese sends a large military contingent to Sicily and Lampedusa in view of the high levels of tension sparked by the overcrowding in migrant centres, three days after some 30 migrants escape from a centre in Brindisi.
- On 28 July the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announces an extension of the state of emergency and a partial border closure until October for the numerous new COVID-19 flare-ups.
- On 30 July the Senate strips the League's leader Matteo Salvini of his immunity as a senator so he can be

tried in the case of the Open Arms rescue ship, which was left stranded in Italian waters for 19 days after Salvini, the then Interior Minister, refused to allow the 160 migrants aboard to disembark.

Malta

- On 27 July Malta rescues 95 migrants adrift at sea, 65 of whom test positive for coronavirus.

Croatia

- On 5 July Croatia holds early parliamentary elections. The Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic's HDZ wins taking 66 of the 151 seats. The Restart Coalition, led by the social democrats, wins 41 seats. On 23 July, the Parliament approves Plenkovic's new government.
- On 10 July the Eurogroup and ECB approve the incorporation of Croatia and Bulgaria into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM-II) ahead of their adoption of the euro in 2023.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 7 July the Bosnian Serb police arrest 10 members of the Movement of Justice as they try to hold a press conference in Banja Luka. The group demands explanations be given for the 2018 death of the student David Dragicevic, for which they blame the police.
- On 11 July 25 years after the Srebrenica massacre, the remains of nine victims are buried in the Potocari cemetery, adding to the 6,610 identified bodies so far, from a massacre in which at least 8,372 Bosniaks were murdered at the hands of the Bosnian Serb army.
- On 29 July Salko Bukvarevic, Minister of Veterans for the Bosniak-Croat entity, dies from COVID-19.
- On 29 July the Parliament adopts the 2020 budget set at 1.8 billion marks, 42 million of which is to help alleviate the economic impact of the coronavirus.

Montenegro

- On 21 July after negotiations over the Freedom of Religion Law fail, the Serbian Orthodox Church accuses the government of using the dialogue for

electoral gain ahead of the elections set for 30 August.

Serbia

- On 7-8 July thousands take to the streets of Belgrade to protest against the government's handling of the pandemic, and clashes break out throughout the month with security forces over the curfew decreed from 10 to 13 July, which the government is finally forced to suspend.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 6 July Kosovo brings back the curfew in Pristina and other cities in light of an increase in COVID-19 infections.
- On 16 July the Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Kosovo's Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti resume talks in Brussels to normalize the two countries' relations.
- On 21 July the temporary board of Kosovo Telecom resigns after the court rules to seize 26 million euros in assets to settle a debt with the operator DardaPhone, plunging the state-owned company into bankruptcy.
- On 20 and 22 July rival protests take place over the construction of the new Central Mosque of Pristina, funded by Turkey.
- On 30 July the EU appoints the Czech Tomas Szunyog as its new Special Representative for Kosovo from 1 September, to replace the Bulgarian Natalya Apostolova.

North Macedonia

- On 7 July the North Macedonian security forces find 211 migrants crammed into a lorry near Gevgelija.
- On 15 July in accordance with the agreement on 15 June, North Macedonia holds early parliamentary elections, postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. With 36.13% of the vote, victory is claimed by the ruling pro-European Social Democratic Union, although it will have to form a coalition to govern. The main opposition party, VMRO-DPMNE, obtains 34.65%.
- On 22 July VMRO-DPMNE scraps the post of honorary president, oc-

cupied until now by the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, who has fled to Hungary after being implicated in a corruption scandal.

Albania

- On 28 July the Special Prosecution against Corruption announces the arrest of 20 election officials after identifying three cases of vote manipulation in the 2017 elections, won by PSS and whose results, among other reasons, have been the cause since 2019 of the parliamentary boycott of most DPS MPs.
- On 30 July the socialist majority in the Parliament approves a constitutional amendment that modifies the electoral system and removes the parties' right to run as coalitions in an effort to generate less fragmented parliamentary compositions. Although this reform is a requirement set by Brussels to advance in the accession process, its approval comes following an agreement on principle reached on 5 June with the opposition, something which the EC also requires.

Greece

- On 1 July Greece resumes activity in the tourism sector after authorizing the reopening of the leisure sector.
- On 7 July Greece reports more than 50 violations of its airspace by Turkey in a single day.
- On 9 July the Parliament approves a controversial public safety law met with demonstrations in Athens which end in unrest.
- On 21 July the army goes on its highest alert after a Turkish ship begins exploration activities close to the Greek island of Kastellorizo, which continue until 2 August.

Turkey

- On 3 July Taner Kilic, the honorary chair of the Turkish branch of Amnesty International, is sentenced to six years in prison on terrorism-related charges.
- On 3 July the trial *in absentia* is held against the men accused of the assassination of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.
- On 7 July the Turkish coast guard intercepts a vessel in the Aegean Sea

with 276 migrants aboard attempting to reach Greece.

- On 9 July the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan orders the reclassification of the Church of Hagia Sophia as a mosque, after Turkey's highest administrative court annuls the 1934 decree to secularize it. On 24 July, Hagia Sophia officially reopens for Muslim prayer, for the first time since 1931.
- On 11 July the Parliament passes a law that allows provincial bar associations with over 5,000 members to split. The measure is rejected by the opposition and bar associations accusing the AKP of looking to divide up bar associations along political lines and create groupings that give government politics their unconditional support.
- On 13 July the EU calls on Turkey to respect the arms embargo on Libya and put an end to the illegal drilling in Cypriot waters. It also condemns Turkey's decision to reclassify the Church of Hagia Sophia as a mosque.
- On 22 July Turkey rescues 110 migrants in the Aegean Sea on their way to Lesbos.
- On 29 July the Parliament approves a law pushed forward by the AKP and MHP, which gives the authorities greater control over social media.

Cyprus

- On 10 July the new Energy, Commerce and Industry Minister Natasa Pilides takes office, replacing Yiorkos Lakkotrypis.
- On 28 July the UN Security Council decides to extend the mandate of UNFICYP for another six months.

Syria

- On 7 July 10 Syrian soldiers and 13 jihadists die in clashes with Daesh at the border triangle between Aleppo, Hama and Raqqqa.
- On 7 July the United Nations releases a report once again denouncing war crimes committed in Syria against civilians in 52 attacks in Idlib between November 2019 and June 2020. The report places the blame on Syria, Russia and HTS.
- On 8 July Syria and Iran sign an agreement to expand their military cooperation.

- On 8-9 July the United Nations Security Council fails to approve the renewal of a resolution which, since 2014, has delivered food and healthcare to millions of Syrians in the north of the country.
- On 9 July the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) confirms the first five cases of Palestinian refugees in Syria, coinciding with the first case reported in the rebel stronghold of Idlib.
- On 13 July Russian warplanes bomb Daesh positions in Syria after a new attack by the jihadist group on the Syrian army in Homs.
- On 19 July the regime holds parliamentary elections in areas under its control.

Lebanon

- On 7 July the government announces an agreement with the Central Bank to subsidise around 300 basic goods, faced with the financial crisis and surge in protests.

Jordan

- On 15 July the Court of Cassation orders the definitive dissolution of the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood for failing to resolve its legal status since it was originally shut down in 2016. All that remains is the more moderate offshoot, the Muslim Brotherhood Society.
- On 16 July the government announces plans to reopen schools at the beginning of September.
- On 18 July the murder of a young woman at the hands of her father in the al-Basha province sparks a wave of protests calling for tougher penalties for domestic violence against women.
- On 26 July Jordan orders the two-year closure of the Teachers Syndicate after arresting its leading members for corruption and incitement against the government.

Egypt

- On 1 July Egypt reopens its airports to international traffic, suspended since 19 March.

- On 2 July the President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi ratifies the new laws for legislative elections and the recovery of the Senate.
- On 6 July the Parliament approves a law banning army officers from running for election without the approval of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.
- On 14 July the Court of Cassation upholds the life sentence handed down to the leader of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, Mohammed Badie, for the violent episodes that broke out after the coup that overthrew Mohamed Morsi.
- On 14 July Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan conclude another negotiation round without reaching an agreement on the water management of the Nile following the construction and imminent filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.
- On 20 July the Parliament gives the President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi authorization for a military intervention in Libya, risking a direct confrontation with Turkey.

Libya

- On 1 July France announces its temporary withdrawal from NATO's Operation Sea Guardian for Libya amid tensions with Turkey, which it accuses of illegal interference in the Libyan conflict.
- On 2 July 172 migrants are intercepted in the Mediterranean and returned to Libya.
- On 5 July Russia announces the reopening of its embassy in Libya, which will be temporarily located in Tunisia.
- On 7 July the GNA says that the International Criminal Court (ICC) has agreed to send a team to investigate the perpetration of war crimes by Khalifa Haftar's forces.
- On 7 July the GNA approves extending the curfew for another 10 days in view of the rise in COVID-19 infections.
- On 11 July the LNA commander in chief Khalifa Haftar shuts down oil facilities again, just a day after the state-owned oil company NOC announces that exports can be resumed.
- On 14 July the House of Representatives in Tobruk, which supports general Khalifa Haftar, calls on Egypt to intervene directly to counter Turkey's open support for the GNA. On the same day, the US and Turkey agree to coordinate to stabilize the situation in Libya. For their part, Russia and the UAE continue

to insist on the need for the GNA to respond to the call to dialogue made by Egypt and Haftar.

- On 19 July Egypt threatens for the first time to intervene directly in Libya if the foreign interference in the conflict continues and especially if Turkish troops take Sirte.
- On 20 July Algeria announces a new Algerian-Tunisian initiative to find a negotiated solution to the Libyan crisis and criticizes Egypt for trying to involve Libyan tribes to justify a military intervention in Libya.

Tunisia

- On 3 July a general strike in Tataouine is staged against the economic crisis and unemployment.
- On 7 July HRW condemns the Tunisian judiciary for violating the rights laid out in the Constitution in its persecution of homosexuality, following the two-year prison sentence handed down to two men for sodomy.
- On 8-9 July tensions rise in Tataouine after residents from the town of Remada accuse the army of unlawfully killing a young local man who was driving in a restricted area.
- On 10 July the Parliament announces the creation of a committee to investigate allegations against the Prime Minister Elies Fajfaj regarding conflicts of interest in relation to companies in which he is a shareholder. On 13 July, Fajfaj announces a partial cabinet shuffle, and the Islamist party Ennahda calls for a new Prime Minister. On 15 July, Fajfaj announces his resignation after several parties call for a no-confidence vote.
- On 30 July the Parliament rejects a no-confidence vote tabled against the Parliament Speaker, Rachid Ghanouchi, leader of Ennahda, over corruption accusations.

Algeria

- On 1 July the former chairman of the business owners' association Ali Haddad was sentenced to 18 years in prison for corruption, together with the former Prime Ministers Ahmed Ouyahia and Abdelmalek Sellal, both sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment.

- On 2 July Karim Tabbou, Amira Bouraoui, Samir Benlarbi and Sliman Hamitouche, four leaders of the popular movement that succeeding in ousting Abdelaziz Bouteflika, are released after spending between three and 10 months behind bars.
- On 15 July the former prime ministers Ahmed Ouyahia and Abdelmalek Sellal are sentenced to a further 10 years in prison for corruption in the case against the businessman Mahiedine Tahkout, sentenced to 16 years. In the same case, the former ministers Amar Ghoul and Youcef Yousfi are also sentenced to three and two years in prison respectively.

Morocco

- On 8 July Morocco announces the partial opening of its borders on 14 July to allow entry to Moroccans resident abroad for the summer holidays. Entry is allowed exclusively by plane or from the ports of Sete and Genoa.
- On 13 July Morocco enforces lockdown in Tangier following the rise in COVID-19 infections. On 27 July, movement is limited between Tangier, Tetouan, Fez, Marrakech and Casablanca due to the increasing spread of the coronavirus.
- On 29 July Mohammed VI orders a commission of inquiry into the dysfunctions of the Competition Council, following the confusion generated by the submission of two contradicting reports from its director, Driss Guerraoui.
- On 30 July the journalist Omar Radi, already under investigation for suspected espionage, is taken into custody on rape charges.

Mauritania

- On 9 July the former President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz fails to appear before a parliamentary inquiry set up to shed light on his years in power.

European Union

- On 1 July Germany takes over the six-month Presidency of the Union at a crucial moment, prioritizing the economic recovery, fundamental rights, solidarity and cohesion, climate change,

the digital transition and Europe's role in the world.

- On 8 July the Parliament appoints Frenchman François-Louis Michaud as executive director of the European Banking Authority.
- On 9 July the Irish Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe is elected President of the Eurogroup, taking over from the Portuguese Mario Centeno.
- On 13 July the European Vice-President for Values and Transparency Vera Jourova calls on the 27 to join forces to fight against disinformation campaigns, which she describes as attacks on the EU.
- On 14 July the Council adopts measures to facilitate and accelerate the development of a vaccine against COVID-19.
- On 21 July a five-day European Heads of State and Government summit ends with an agreement between the southern countries plus the Franco-German axis and so-called "frugal countries" on the 750-billion-euro recovery plan, finally comprising 390 billion euros in grants and 360 billion euros in low-interest loans. They also agree on the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework, which amounts to 1.74 trillion euros.

August 2020

New measures are brought back in most countries faced with a second wave of COVID-19 infections. France steps up its military presence in the eastern Mediterranean because of the escalation between Turkey and Greece. Migration pressure increases in southern Italy. The appeal begins of the former Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladic, who was convicted of genocide for the Srebrenica massacre. Montenegro holds parliamentary elections. Greece and Egypt agree on their maritime border. Turkey announces new oil and gas exploration activities in the eastern Mediterranean. In Syria, the regime unveils a new government and talks resume in Geneva between the government and the opposition. In Lebanon, two explosions destroy the Port of Beirut and the government resigns. In Egypt, a prominent member of the Muslim Brotherhood is

arrested and the Senate elections are held. Libya signs memorandum of understanding with Turkey to boost trade and economic ties, and the Interior Minister is dismissed. Mauritania appoints a new Prime Minister.

Portugal

- On 13 August the government announces a 15-day extension on restrictions in Lisbon faced with the rising number of COVID-19 infections. On 27 August, it is announced that the containment measures will apply throughout the country from mid-September.

Spain

- On 21 August an outbreak of the West Nile virus is detected in the province of Seville, which, until November, spreads through to other areas, especially Andalusia and Extremadura, leaving at least 72 people in hospital and seven dead.

France

- On 7 August the Constitutional Court rules against the legislation approved in July for the monitoring and surveillance of people convicted of terrorism, stating that many of its clauses are unconstitutional.
- On 13 August France steps up its military presence in the eastern Mediterranean over the escalation between Turkey and Greece.

Italy

- On 24 August the president of Sicily Nello Musumeci threatens to take legal action against the government if it does not comply with his order to close the region's migrant reception centres.
- On 30 August the mayor of Lampedusa announces a general strike from 31 August against the relentless migrant arrivals.
- On 30 August the Louise Michel rescue ship transfers some of the 200 migrants it is carrying to the Sea-Watch 4, after previously requesting coast guard assistance to evacuate some of its passengers due to the vessel being overloaded.

Malta

- On 19 August the government announces the mandatory use of face masks in public spaces and a new closure of hotels and recreational centres, faced with the second wave of COVID-19.

Slovenia

- On 23 August hundred of tourists are held up at the border with Austria after Vienna tightens border controls to halt the pandemic.

Croatia

- On 14 August the government upholds its plans to reopen to avoid economic collapse, despite the onslaught of a second wave of COVID-19. On 26 August, after reporting the highest number of confirmed new cases to date in the Pandemic, restrictions and closures are reintroduced in the worst affected counties.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 24 August the appeal hearing begins of the former Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladic, for the Srebrenica massacre.

Montenegro

- On 30 August Montenegro holds parliamentary elections in which the alliance between For the Future of Montenegro, Peace is Our Nation and United Reform Action wins taking 43 of the 81 seats. The ruling DPS wins 30 seats, thereby becoming the opposition after being in power for 30 years.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 27 August the EU reactivates the Serbia-Kosovo dialogue with a meeting between the Special Envoy for Dialogue, Miroslav Lajcak, and the coordinators from Belgrade and Pristina.

Greece

- On 6 August Egypt and Greece sign an agreement on maritime boundaries and the creation of an EEZ.

- On 7 August seven people are reported to have died from torrential rains in Eubea.
- On 7 August Poros goes into lockdown after 13 test positive for COVID-19.
- On 15 August Greece announces the closure of hotels in Athens, Thessaloniki and several islands and limits gatherings to a maximum of 50 people, in view of the second wave of COVID-19.
- On 21 August UNHCR expresses its deep concern over the increase in migrant pushbacks from Greece to Turkey.
- On 26 August Greece announces the extension of its territorial waters in the Ionian Sea after the agreements reached with Italy and Egypt.
- On 26 August Greece, France, Italy and Cyprus begin joint aeronautical manoeuvres amid the escalation with Turkey.

Turkey

- On 7 August the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces the resumption of oil and gas prospecting activities in the eastern Mediterranean. On 12 August, the CHP shows its support for the President's policy in the area.
- On 12 August 33 women are arrested in Ankara at a demonstration in favour of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating domestic violence.
- On 13 August Turkey states that it will continue its operations against the PKK terrorist organization in Iraq as long as its presence is tolerated there, after Bagdad issues a complaint to Ankara over the death of two Border Guard commanders during a Turkish airstrike.
- On 21 August Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces the discovery of a 320 billion m³ gas reserve in the Black Sea.
- On 21 August Recep Tayyip Erdogan orders the conversion of the Byzantine Church of San Salvador de Chora, in Istanbul, into a mosque.
- On 22 August human rights groups and bar associations call for the release of the lawyers Ebru Timtik and Aytac Unsal, on hunger strike since February against being sentenced to jail for their links with the terrorist organization the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP-C).

- On 31 August Turkey calls on Greece to withdraw its troops from the island of Kastellorizo.

Syria

- On 2 August Syria and Iran condemn the agreement between the SDF and the US-based oil company Delta Crescent on the development of oil fields controlled by the Kurdish authorities.
- On 23 August an explosion that strikes a gas pipeline close to Damascus, branded by regime as an act of terrorism, causes power cuts all over Syria.
- On 27 August after a nine-month break, talks resume in Geneva between the Syrian government, the opposition and civil society to negotiate the drafting of the new Constitution.
- On 30 August Bashar al-Assad confirms the formation of a new government led by Hussein Arnous in which the main ministerial posts remain unchanged.

Lebanon

- On 4 August around 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, seized from a ship in 2014 following a court order, explode triggering two massive blasts measuring between 3.3 and 4.5 on the Richter scale at the Port of Beirut and leaving 202 people dead and at least 6,500 injured. On 8 August, 175 members of the security forces are wounded during protests in Beirut against negligence and corruption, which are stoked by the blasts and come to an end on 10 August with the resignation of Hassan Diab's government. On 12 August, the Parliament extends the state of emergency in Beirut and the President Michel Aoun says the blasts are estimated to have caused at least 12.72 billion euros in damages.
- On 18 August the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) convicts Hezbollah-linked Salim Ayyash for the bomb attack on 14 February 2005, which claimed the life of the former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and 21 others.
- On 27 August at least two people are killed and a further eight injured in armed clashes in Khaldeh between members of Hezbollah and supporters of the Sunni cleric Omar Ghosn.
- On 31 August the diplomat Mustapha Adib is appointed Prime Minister.

On the same day, the Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri expresses his support for the President Michel Aoun's proposal to modify the current political system of confessionalism and replace it with a secular one.

Jordan

- On 12 August Jordan orders the one-week closure of the border with Syria due to the spike in coronavirus infections in the area.

Egypt

- On 13 August Essam el-Erian, a leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood who was arrested in 2013 following a coup against the President Mohamed Morsi, dies in prison from a heart attack.
- On 24 August the Parliament postpones until after the October elections a draft law that would give the government authority over Dar al-Ifta, the country's main body responsible for issuing religious guidelines, which answers to al-Azhar, the leading Sunni institution of Islamic learning.
- On 25 August the human rights activist Bahey el-Din Hassan is sentenced *in absentia* to 15 years in prison, charged with spreading fake news.
- On 26 August the National Elections Authority says it will fine the almost 54 million voters who failed to turn out for the elections on 11 August to elect 200 of the Senate's 300 members, an institution that has been revived after its abolishment six years ago amid corruption allegations.
- On 28 August Mahmoud Ezzat, one of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders sentenced to death *in absentia*, is arrested.

Libya

- On 6 August the US announces financial sanctions against members of a human-trafficking network operating in Libya, including a company based in Malta.
- On 7 August the GNA announces a new ten-day extension on the overnight curfew.
- On 14 August Turkey and the GNA sign a memorandum of understanding to boost trade and economic ties.
- On 19 August the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bache-

let designates a mission of experts to document human rights violations in Libya.

- On 21 August the GNA declares a ceasefire, confirmed hours later by Libya's eastern forces.
- On 26 August the GNA declares a 24-hour curfew for the next four days in Tripoli to halt the spread of COVID-19 infections.
- On 27 August the GNA accuses Khalifa Hafter's forces of violating the ceasefire announced on 21 August.
- On 28 August the Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj suspends the Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha, following the protests in Tripoli against corruption, replacing him temporarily with Khaled Ahmed al-Tijani. On 29 August, he appoints Salah al-Namroush as Defence Minister, until now the Deputy Minister of the same ministry, and Mohamed al-Haddad as chief of staff of the army.
- On 30 August operations resume at Brega Port thanks to the ceasefire agreement.

Tunisia

- On 11 August Tunisia announces the mandatory use of face masks in public spaces.

Algeria

- On 4 August Algeria approves the gradual reopening of cultural and recreational centres.
- On 10 August the journalist Khaled Drareni is sentenced to three years in prison for his coverage of the protests that ousted Abdelaziz Bouteflika.
- On 18 August the government unveils an ambitious economic plan to reduce dependence on oil and gas, based on cutting back on imports, stimulating small and medium-size enterprises and promoting the African market and Islamic finance.

Morocco

- On 6 August the government extends the health state of emergency until 10 September.

Mauritania

- On 6 August the government of Ismail Ould Bede Ould Chejj Sidaya resigns,

amid investigations by the parliamentary committee set up in January over the allegations of corruption made against the former President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz and which could involve several members of Sidaya's cabinet. Hours later, the President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, appoints Mohamed Ould Bilal as the new Prime Minister. On 10 August, Ould Gahzouani names the new cabinet.

- On 24 August the police release the former President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz on conditional bail, after his arrest on corruption charges on 18 August.

September 2020

In Spain, the regional President of Catalonia is banned from office by the Supreme Court. In France, elections for the senate are held, clashes break out during a yellow vest demonstration and al-Qaeda threatens the magazine Charlie Hebdo over the republication of the Muhammad caricatures. In Italy, elections are held in six regions, the reduction of parliamentary seats is approved in a referendum and, like in Croatia, there are demonstrations against the government's handling of the pandemic. In Malta, the former cabinet chief of the former Prime Minister is arrested for money laundering. Serbia and Kosovo sign an agreement on economic normalization and Israel recognizes Kosovo's independence. There is a rise in incidents in migrant reception centres on the Greek islands. In Turkey, several HDP members are arrested. The Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot armed forces begin joint manoeuvres amid the escalation in the eastern Mediterranean. The US ends the arms embargo on Cyprus. In Syria, Russia steps up its bombing campaign against Daesh and the US announces new sanctions against the regime. In Lebanon, Mustapha Adib gives up efforts to form a government. Jordan announces the reinstatement of mandatory military service. Anti-government demonstrations are staged in Egypt and six members of the Muslim Brotherhood are sentenced to death. In Libya, the GNA reappoints the Interior Minister while the demonstrations against corruption continue. In Tunisia, the Parliament approves the new

government and Daesh carries out an attack in Sousse. In Algeria, the Parliament approves the new draft Constitution and four businessmen close to Abdelaziz Bouteflika are convicted for corruption. Morocco imposes a lockdown in Casablanca.

Portugal

- On 10 September Portugal limits gatherings to 10 people and regulates opening hours for shops to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

Spain

- On 1 September students begin their gradual return to face-to-face classes.
- On 28 September the regional President of Catalonia Quim Torra is banned from office by the Supreme Court for disobedience. Catalonia's Vice-President Pere Aragonés takes over as caretaker President until the 2021 regional elections.

France

- On 1 September teaching centres resume their activities after months of closure due to COVID-19.
- On 3 September the government unveils its 100-billion-euro economic recovery plan, 40 billion of which will be financed by the European Recovery Plan.
- On 10 September the Summit of southern EU countries in Corsica agrees on a fresh drive for European politics in the Mediterranean and calls on Turkey to halt its unilateral activities in Greek waters.
- On 11 September al-Qaeda threatens the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* again for republishing the Muhammad caricatures.
- On 12 September at least 256 demonstrators are arrested during a new day of Yellow Vest protests, calling for changes in the political system.
- On 24 September judges and prosecutors demonstrate against the new Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti, after he launches an inquiry into three prosecutors and former prosecutors.
- On 24 September the court rejects the appeal lodged by the former Presi-

dent Nicolas Sarkozy against an investigation into the alleged financing of his 2007 presidential campaign by Muammar Gaddafi.

- On 27 September France holds indirect elections to renew 172 of the 348 seats in the Senate. LR and the environmentalists from Europe Ecology-The Greens (EELV) are the parties with the best results.

Italy

- On 5 September thousands of people demonstrate in Rome over the government's handling of the pandemic in protests backed by far-right and denialist groups.
- On 13 September the 27 migrants rescued on 4 August by the cargo ship Etienne in Tunisian waters disembark in Pozzallo, days after being transferred to the ship Mare Jonio from the NGO Mediterranean Saving Humans.
- On 14 September teaching centres resume activity after months of closure due to COVID-19.
- On 18 September around 50 migrants rescued by Open Arms throw themselves into the sea in response to the delay in authorization to disembark, a day after more than 70 others did the same and were rescued by the Italian Coast Guard. Finally, on 24 September, Italy allows them to disembark in Arbatax, Sardinia.
- On 20 and 21 September, in a public referendum, 69.55% of Italian voters agree to reduce the members of the Chamber of Deputies from 630 to 400 and the Senate from 315 to 200, one of M5E's central election promises. On the same day, regional elections are held in Marcas, Veneto and Liguria, where the centre-right wins, and in Apulia, Campania and Toscana, where the centre-left takes most votes.

Malta

- On 22 September Keith Schembri, former chief of staff of the former Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, is arrested under suspicion of money laundering.
- On 23 September the Alan Kurdi rescue ship sets a course for Marseille after Malta and Italy both refuse to allow the migrants onboard to disembark.

Croatia

- On 6 September some 3,000 persons demonstrate in Zagreb against the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, in an act supported by far-right and denialist groups.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 15 September Momcilo Krajisnik, the former Bosnian Serb leader convicted in 2006 for war crimes, dies from COVID-19.

Montenegro

- On 30 September more than 300 people file lawsuits against the State for publishing their names on lists of people ordered to self-isolate, saying it violated their privacy and constitutional rights.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 4 September Serbia and Kosovo sign a bilateral agreement on economic normalization.
- On 4 September Israel recognizes Kosovo's independence.
- On 26 September officers from the EU's Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) arrest several UÇK war veterans, including the party's president Hysni Gucati, on charges of war crimes.

Albania

- On 7 September the President Ilir Meta sets 25 April 2021 as the date for the next parliamentary elections.

Greece

- On 15 September the authorities confirm that a fire has broken out at a refugee camp in Samos, days after, on 11 September, another fire, started deliberately, devastates the Moria camp in Lesbos, and migrants protest against their detention. On 19 September the police announce the transfer of 9,000 of the 12,000 migrants in Moria to the Kara Tepe camp.

Turkey

- On 1 September the Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu announces the arrest in Adana of Mahmut Ozden, the leader of Daesh in Turkey.
- On 5 September a Turkish frigate takes part in a joint military exercise with the Northern Cypriot coast guard after escorting the Barbaros Hayrettin Pasa oil and gas exploration vessel in August and before the beginning of a new exploration mission by the Yavuz in the eastern Mediterranean.
- On 11 September the MP Remziye Tosun (HDP) is sentenced to 10 years in prison accused of being a member of a terrorist organization.
- On 14 September the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) condemns Turkey for the arbitrary arrest in 2012 of the author Ragip Zarakolu charged with membership of a terrorist organization.
- On 17 September the Constitutional Court orders the retrial of the MP Enis Berberoglu (CHP) sentenced in 2018 to more than five years in prison for leaking state secrets.
- On 21 September education centres reopen after months of closure for the pandemic.
- On 25 September the authorities arrest a dozen senior members of the HDP as part of the investigations into the clashes in 2014, which left at least 40 people dead in southeastern Turkey.

Cyprus

- On 1 September the US announces it will allow the sale of non-lethal military goods to Cyprus, thereby ending the embargo imposed in 1987, amid the escalation with Turkey.

Syria

- On 24 September Russia steps up its bombing campaign against Daesh in Hama, Raqqa and Homs, in response to the increase in jihadist attacks on Syrian government forces.
- On 26 September at least seven civilians are killed in an attack in Ras al-Ayn. The Syrian National Army (SNA), which controls the area, accuses the SDF.

- On 29 September some 30 people are killed in al-Quraya, Sweida, in fighting between local militias and members of the 5th Corps, a militia created in 2014 and affiliated with the Free Syrian Army (FSA), but which later switched to support the Syrian army.
- On 30 September the US announces sanctions against 13 entities and six Syrian nationals, including the intelligence chief and governor of the Central Bank, for their links with Bashar al-Assad.

Lebanon

- On 2 September Mustapha Adib, the Prime Minister-designate, begins talks with the parliamentary groups to form a government, a day after the second visit since the August explosions in Beirut of the French President Emmanuel Macron, during which the Lebanese parties give their commitment to forming a government within the next two weeks. Macron's visit is met with clashes between police and demonstrators protesting against France and the republication of the Muhammad caricatures in the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine.
- On 8 September the US announces sanctions against the former ministers Ali Hassan Khalil and Yusuf Finianus, which it accuses of supporting Hezbollah.
- On 10 September the army says it has shot down an Israeli drone which entered its airspace near Ayta ash-Shab. The incident comes three weeks after Hezbollah shot down and captured another Israeli drone in the same area.
- On 17 September the US imposes sanctions on the companies Arch Consulting and Meamar Construction and an individual, Sultan Khalifa Asad, for alleged links to Hezbollah.
- On 26 September Mustapha Adib abandons efforts to form a government, faced with the difficulties in forming a cabinet of independent ministers, especially in Finance.

Jordan

- On 9 September Jordan announces the reinstatement of mandatory military service to deal with rising unemployment and the effects of COVID-19.

- On 14 September the government announces that it will close mosques, markets and restaurants for two weeks because of a spike in infections.
- On 22 September the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, announces it will participate in November's parliamentary elections, despite July's court order for its dissolution.

Egypt

- On 19 September demonstrations break out against the government's failure to implement democratic and socio-economic reforms, which continue throughout the month.
- On 23 September at least four police officers and four prisoners and members of Ansar al-Sharia and Daesh are killed during an escape attempt at Tora prison.
- On 25 September several demonstrators are arrested on charges of vandalism during an anti-government protest in several locations in Egypt, including Cairo, Damietta and Luxor.
- On 30 September six members of the Muslim Brotherhood are sentenced to death for the murder of a police officer in Sharqiya in 2016.

Libya

- On 4 September the GNA restores Fathi Bashagha to his post as Interior Minister, after his suspension in August over the anti-corruption demonstrations, which continue throughout September.
- On 13 September at least five people are injured by shots fired by members of the LNA against demonstrators in al-Marj, a day after protests and unrest in Benghazi over the situation of violence in Libya.
- On 16 September the LNA announces it has killed the Daesh leader in Libya, Abu Abdullah al-Libi, during fighting in Sabha.
- On 18 September Khalifa Haftar announces an agreement to resume production in the country's oil fields, which have been shut down by his militias since January.
- On 21 September the Defence Minister Salah al-Namrush rejects any political deal that involves Khalifa Haftar.

- On 21 September Turkey reiterates its support for the GNA reacting to the Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj's announcement of his resignation at the end of October to facilitate the formation of a new government based on the talks being held in Morocco and Switzerland.
- On 22 September the EU announces sanctions against Kazakhstan's airline Sigma Airlines and the shipping companies Avrasya (Turkish) and Med Wave (Jordanian) for violating the military embargo on Libya. Mahmoud al-Werfalli, leader of a military brigade in Benghazi, accused of murders and executions, is also sanctioned.
- On 30 September the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) reports the readiness of the warring parties in Libya, meeting in Hurgada, to resume military contact and exchange prisoners.

Tunisia

- On 1 September the Parliament approves the government of the Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi, thereby avoiding new elections.
- On 6 September a member of the National Guard is killed in a Daesh attack in Sousse.

Algeria

- On 10 September the Parliament approves the government-backed draft Constitution.
- On 23 September four businessmen and members of the Kouninef family, close to the former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, are handed down jail sentences for corruption.

Morocco

- On 7 September Morocco imposes lockdown in Casablanca for COVID-19. On 9 September, the health state of emergency is extended until 10 October.
- On 10 September Morocco announces the arrest of five suspected members of a cell linked to Daesh, in an operation in Tangier, Termara, Tiflet and Sjira.

Mauritania

- On 25 September the Mauritanian public prosecution issues an order banning the former President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz from leaving Nouakchott, while he is under a court investigation.

European Union

- On 23 September the EC unveils a draft proposal for a new pact on migration and asylum whose central elements are the pre-entry examination of asylum applications at the Union's external borders and a new division of the work between the Member States, which in the future will be able to choose between accepting asylum applications and returning those that have been rejected.
- On 28 September the European Public Prosecutor's Office begins operations, which will be entrusted with investigating, prosecuting and taking to trial perpetrators of crimes that affect the financial interests of the Union.

Arab League

- On 9 September the Arab League votes down a draft resolution proposed by the Palestinian National Authority condemning the agreement between Israel and UAE.

October 2020

In Spain and Italy there is unrest in response to the measures to contain the pandemic. New Caledonia votes in favour of remaining part of France. After the murder of the teacher Samuel Paty and a jihadist attack in Nice, France announces measures to combat radical Islamism. The EC launches infringement procedures against Malta and Cyprus. In Serbia, the new government takes office. The North Macedonian Parliament approves the anti-discrimination law and the EC recommends the opening of accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania. Greece outlaws the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party. The EC advises upholding its suspension on Turkey's accession process and tensions rise with Greece and Cyprus over the waters of

the eastern Mediterranean and Northern Cyprus' announcement of a unilateral plan to reopen Varosha, where elections are also held. An earthquake measuring 6.7 on the Richter scale affects Turkey and Greece. In Lebanon, massive protests reject the Central Bank's announcement to lift its subsidies on basic products and Saad Hariri is appointed as Prime Minister. Jordan appoints a new Prime Minister. Egypt holds the first phase of its legislative elections. In Libya, the state-owned oil company resumes operations at the Sharara and al-Fil oil fields, the rival powers of Tripoli and Tobruk sign a ceasefire agreement and talks begin for the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum. Tunisia deploys troops in Sbeitla. In Algeria, new prison sentences are handed down to people linked to Abdelaziz Bouteflika's entourage.

Portugal

- On 24 October the Parliament approves the mandatory use of face masks in public spaces.

Spain

- On 29 October, coinciding with the parliamentary approval of the extension of the state of alarm until May 2021, the autonomous regions order the closure of their borders and overnight curfews.
- On 31 October there is unrest in Barcelona over the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, which over the ensuing days spreads to other Spanish cities.

France

- On 4 October New Caledonia votes in favour of remaining part of France in a new referendum that backs up the results from the 2018 referendum.
- On 10 October the Champigny-sur-Marne police station is attacked with mortar shots, after which there are fierce clashes. Over the last six months, 60 other police stations have been attacked in towns across France.
- On 14 October France imposes the state of emergency again.
- On 21 October the teacher Samuel Paty is beheaded near Paris after a fatwa was issued against him for showing caricatures of Muhammed to his pupils.

- On 29 October the National Assembly approves the new national lockdown as of 30 October and until 1 December, which adds to the lockdown in place since the middle of the month in areas with high infection levels.
- On 29 October three people have their throats slit in a jihadist attack at the Notre-Dame de l'Assomption Basilica, in Nice. On the same day, the police kill a man armed with a knife in Avignon and arrest another in Lyon. Emmanuel Macron announces Opération Sentinelle, doubling the country's military deployment to protect churches and schools.

Italy

- On 6 October the government approves a decree-law that modifies the anti-migration laws established by the previous government and which puts an end to the fines for NGOs carrying out rescues in accordance with the Law of the Sea and in coordination with the national authorities.
- On 19 October the government introduces stricter measures against COVID-19. On 23 October Lombardy and Campania impose overnight curfews. On 26 October, new restrictions are approved, faced with the sharp rise in infections. On 27 October, there are protests and unrest in the big cities against the adopted measures.

Malta

- On 4 October Bernard Grech is voted leader of the PN after beating Adrian Delia in the party's leadership election.
- On 20 October the EC announces it is launching infringement procedures against Cyprus and Malta, in the belief that their systems of issuing passports to citizens from outside the Union in exchange for investments is incompatible with EU principles.
- On 26 October the closure of hotels and restrictions on gatherings are announced to halt the spread of the pandemic.

Slovenia

- On 26 October the government imposes a ban on movement between

municipalities. The measure is adopted three days after the government orders the closure of all non-essential establishments, as part of the new state of epidemic decreed on 19 October.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 2 October the forcible removal of 350 people from a reception centre on the border with Croatia brings the number of migrants sleeping rough to 2,800 according to the IOM.

Serbia

- On 20 October the Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic is appointed Parliament Speaker.
- On 28 October the Parliament approves the new coalition government, led by the outgoing Prime Minister Ana Brnabic (SNS).

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 8 October the EC urges Kosovo to speed up the reforms needed for visa liberalization.

North Macedonia

- On 27 October the Parliament approves the anti-discrimination law again, which includes sexual orientation and identity as grounds for discrimination, after it was repealed in May by the Constitutional Court for failing to attain a constitutional majority.

Albania

- On 6 October the EC recommends the opening of accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia.
- On 27 October the EC expresses its satisfaction with the Prime Minister Edi Rama's decision to refer the electoral code reform, needed for the accession process to move forward, to the Venice Commission.

Greece

- On 1 October Greece and Turkey agree to set up a military hotline through NATO to ease tensions in the eastern

Mediterranean. Germany and France insist on maintaining dialogue with Turkey contrary to Cyprus' insistence on imposing sanctions on the country.

- On 18 October Greece condemns Turkey's unilateral expansion of its migrant search and rescue area in the Aegean Sea.
- On 22 October a court in Athens orders the immediate imprisonment of the leadership of Golden Dawn – a party outlawed by the Athens Appeals Court on 7 October – to start their 13-year jail term, handed down on 14 October.
- On 23 October Greece imposes overnight curfews in the areas worst affected by the coronavirus and the mandatory use of face masks in public spaces.

Turkey

- On 1 October universities reopen after their six-month closure.
- On 6 October the EC advises upholding the suspension of Turkey's accession process, issuing a warning over the country's backsliding in the area of democracy. Added to this ruling is Brussels' warning against Ankara's decision to boycott French products, over France's "hostile stance to Islam."
- On 8 October the Parliament ratifies a motion for a one-year extension on its authorization to conduct cross-border counter-terrorism operations in Iraq and Syria against the PKK and the People's Protection Units (YPG).
- On 9 October a court approves a new indictment against the philanthropist Osman Kavala for his involvement in the 2016 failed coup attempt.
- On 17 October the US and NATO warn Turkey of serious consequences if it uses the S-400 air defence system it purchased from Russia, despite Turkey's membership of the Atlantic Alliance.
- On 25 October the government announces a new extension of its natural gas exploration mission in the eastern Mediterranean, close to the Greek island of Rhodes.
- On 27 October the ECHR rules that Turkey has violated article 10 of the European Human Rights Convention, which guarantees freedom of expression, following a number of Turkish court rulings against Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the leader of the opposition CHP party.

- On 29 October 27 people are sentenced to prison in connection with an arms shipment to Syrian rebels by the Intelligence Agency (MIT), which came to light after the lorries were intercepted and inspected in 2014 on the border with Syria. Among those convicted are 11 people accused of having ties with the Islamist preacher Fethullah Gulen.
- On 30 October an earthquake measuring 6.7 on the Richter scale in the Aegean Sea leaves at least 115 dead in Turkey and two dead in Greece. Izmir and Samos are the worst affected areas.

Cyprus

- On 13 October Cyprus announces the suspension of the measure that grants citizenship to foreign investors injecting at least two million euros into the country's economy.
- On 13 October the EU calls on the leaders of Northern Cyprus to suspend their unilateral plan to reopen Varosha, a district of Famagusta that has been closed to the public since the conflict in 1974.
- On 19 October Ersin Tatar, from the National Unity Party (UBP, Turkish nationalist), is elected the new Turkish Cypriot leader in the second round of the presidential elections. Tatar announces his willingness to resume reunification talks based on "sovereign equality."

Syria

- On 5 October Oman becomes the first country in the Persian Gulf to reopen its embassy in Syria after the closure of diplomatic delegations in 2012, in protest against the repression of demonstrations against the regime.
- On 15 October the SDF releases 631 prisoners held in the al-Hola camp and accused of having links with Daesh, in an amnesty that includes people convicted of terrorism, but who were deceived and have not shed blood.
- On 20 October Turkish forces begin their withdrawal from the strategic observation post in Murek, Hama, in an area under Syrian government control.
- On 22 October the Mufti of Damascus Mohammad Adnan Afionni is killed in a bomb attack in Qudsaya.
- On 30 October the US-led international coalition declares that more than

1,400 civilians have been killed in airstrikes against Daesh in Syria and Iraq since 2014.

Lebanon

- On 11 October Lebanon closes its bars and nightclubs and orders a lockdown in 169 towns and villages due to COVID-19.
- On 14 October massive protests are staged against the Central Bank's announcement to remove its subsidies on basic products at the end of 2020 to stem the rising public debt, amid the country's worst economic crisis in decades and an 80% devaluation of the Lebanese pound against the dollar.
- On 22 October Saad Hariri is appointed Prime Minister tasked with forming a government, nearly a year after his resignation amid a wave of protests against corruption and the economic crisis.
- On 30 October clashes break out in Beirut between the police and demonstrators protesting against France and the republication of caricatures of Muhammad by the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine.

Jordan

- On 8 October Abdullah II appoints the diplomat and palace aide Bisher al-Khasawneh as the Prime Minister-designate tasked with forming a government, following the resignation of Omar Razzaz's cabinet. On 12 October, al-Khasawneh and his cabinet take office.

Egypt

- On 6 October the journalist Basma Mostafa, arrested in Luxor where he was covering the protests against police brutality, is released pending trial.
- On 18 October the blogger Shadi Abu Zeid is released after spending two years in jail on charges of spreading false news and terrorism.
- On 24 October Egypt holds the first phase of its legislative elections in 14 of its 27 governorates. Around 65 million Egyptians are called to the urns to elect 568 seats in the two electoral phases, with more than 4,500 candidates running for election. A further 28

seats will be designated directly by the President el-Sisi. The National List for Egypt, which comprises 12 parties loyal to the President, obtains 142 of the 284 seats at stake in this first phase.

- On 26 October the President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi approves a three-month extension of the state of emergency decreed in 2017, following the bombings at two Coptic churches in Alexandria and Tanta.
- On 31 October Abdel Fattah el-Sisi announces a plan to inaugurate the world's biggest agricultural wastewater treatment plant in Bahr el-Baqar in June 2021.

Libya

- On 7 October Libya's rival governments reach an agreement on the criteria for appointing key posts in the country's future institutions.
- On 15 October the GNA announces the arrest of the people smuggler Abd al-Rahman al-Milad, sanctioned by the UN Security Council in 2018.
- On 16 October UNHCR resumes humanitarian flights to evacuate migrants and asylum seekers from Libya after a seven-month suspension due to COVID-19.
- On 21 October the warring parties in Libya agree to reopen land and air border crossings.
- On 23 October the warring parties in Libya sign a ceasefire agreement in Geneva.
- On 26 October the EU's Operation Irini reports the inspection of a Turkish merchant ship heading for Misrata which may have violated the arms embargo on Libya.
- On 26 October, following the ceasefire agreement, the state-owned oil company announces the reopening of the al-Fil oil field, the last to remain closed due to the armed conflict.
- On 30 October the GNA Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj takes back his decision to resign at the end of October to avoid a power vacuum.

Tunisia

- On 13 October the government deploys troops in Sbeitla after fierce clashes between police and demonstra-

tors protesting against the Kasserine provincial authorities' previous day's demolition of a tobacco kiosk, killing its owner who was sleeping inside. The incident prompts the Prime Minister Hichem Mchichi to dismiss the governor of Kasserine province and his local delegate, as well as the security chief of the district and the police chief in Sbeitla.

- On 22 October Tunisia announces the extension of the overnight curfew imposed in the capital and several adjacent provinces on 19 October until 6 November due to the spike in COVID-19 infections. On 29 October, Tunisia extends the curfew to the rest of the country.

Algeria

- On 14 October the businesswoman Nachinachi Zoulikha-Chafika is sentenced to 12 years in prison in the corruption investigations into the entourage of the former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. The former National Security director-general Abdelghani Hamel and former governors of Chlef, Mohamed el Ghazi, and Oran, Abdelghani Zaalane, are sentenced to 10 years in prison.
- On 29 October the overnight curfew for COVID-19 is extended to another nine provinces, bringing the number of provinces affected by this measure to 20 out of a total of 58.

Morocco

- On 5 October Morocco announces the dismantling of a Daesh cell in Tangier.

Mauritania

- On 18 October the opposition figure Mustapha Ould Limam Chafi returns to Mauritania.

European Union

- On 1 October the EC sanctions the United Kingdom for violating the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement after London's refusal to withdraw its internal market bill from 15 September, which contradicts the current agreement with regard to the situation in Northern Ireland.

▪ On 1-2 October the EU Heads of State and Government urge Turkey to stop drilling in Cypriot and Greek waters and call for an immediate ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

- On 6 October the CJEU rules against Hungary's higher education law under which educational institutions from outside the EU can only operate in Hungary if an international treaty existed between Hungary and their state of origin.
- On 6 October the ECHR announces that, after the escalation in tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh, it will apply article 39 against any state directly or indirectly involved in the conflict.
- On 7 October the Parliament approves the restructuring of the Commission. The Executive Vice-President, Latvian Valdis Dombrovskis, takes over as Trade Commissioner and the Irish Mairead McGuinness is appointed Commissioner of Financial Services, Financial Stability and the Capital Markets Union.
- On 8 October the head of the French Treasury Odile Renaud-Basso is elected president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.
- On 17 October the European Council sets as priorities for its relations with Africa, migration and the fight against people smuggling.
- On 19 October the EU renews sanctions on individuals and companies with links to Daesh and al-Qaeda until October 2021.
- On 28 October the Austrian Christa Schweng is elected president of the European Economic and Social Committee.
- On 30 October the EC sanctions Hungary over its migration reforms which prevent irregular migrants from seeking asylum.

November 2020

In Spain, the Canary Islands face mass migrant arrivals, the education law reform is approved and the Constitutional Court upholds the Public Safety Law. France announces a sharp increase in the measures against radical Islamism and approves the Global Security Law. Slovenia announces its support for Poland and Hungary's initiative to veto the

European budget. In Croatia, the former Prime Minister Ivo Sanader is sentenced to prison. Bosnia and Herzegovina holds local elections. Montenegro unveils its new government. Serbia and Albania agree on the free movement of citizens between its territories. Kosovo's Parliament Speaker takes over the Presidency following Hashim Thaci's resignation. Bulgaria vetoes the beginning of accession talks with North Macedonia. The Berlin Process agrees to establish a common market in the Western Balkans. Greece announces the construction of a new naval base in Crete. In Turkey, the Finance Minister resigns and 337 people are convicted in a mass trial for the 2016 failed coup attempt. The EU and US announce new sanctions against the Syrian regime. Lebanon continues without a government amid the ongoing protests and the US imposes sanctions on the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement. Jordan and Egypt hold parliamentary elections. In Libya, the Political Dialogue ends without an agreement. In Tunisia, there are demonstrations in Gafsa. Algeria holds a referendum on the new Constitution.

Portugal

- On 4 November a partial lockdown comes into effect in 121 municipalities, including Lisbon and Porto, thereby affecting 70% of the population, to deal with the spike in COVID-19 infections. On 14 November, the weekend curfew is expanded. On 21 November, the government announces a ban on national travel and the closure of schools between 27 November and 9 December.

Spain

- On 7 November around 900 people arrive in the Canary Islands aboard 17 vessels, amid an increase in migrant arrivals to the archipelago in recent weeks. On 10 November, the government resumes the return of migrants arriving in the Canary Islands. The migrant landings on the archipelago has increased by 1,019% so far this year compared with 2019, becoming the most unsustainable situation since the Cayuco crisis in 2006. By the end of the month, more than 8,000 migrants have

reached the islands and are temporarily sheltered in the port of Arguineguin.

- On 19 November the Constitutional Court upholds the Public Safety Law approved by the PP in 2015.
- On 19 November the Parliament approves the Education Law that bolsters public education, places restrictions on the semi-private model, allows failing students to go on to their next year, gives the autonomous regions practically exclusive authority and removes Spanish as the vehicular language in regions where it has co-official status.

France

- On 3 November the Internal Security Service arrests a retired nurse and member of a far-right group for plotting an attack to assassinate Emmanuel Macron.
- On 4 November France outlaws a Turkish ultra-nationalist group called the Grey Wolves, following incidents during an anti-Armenia protest near Isere.
- On 5 November the President Emmanuel Macron announces increased measures to control irregular immigration and jihadist terrorism.
- On 21 November the images of three police officers brutally beating the music producer Michel Zecler scandalizes French society, amid the crisis over the identity debate and the Global Security Law.
- On 23 November the trial begins against Nicolas Sarkozy, France's first former President to appear in the dock, who faces a possible 10-year prison sentence for corruption and influence peddling.
- On 24 November Emmanuel Macron announces a gradual easing of lockdown across three phases, after the peak of the second wave of COVID-19 infections is believed to have passed.
- On 24 November the National Assembly approves the controversial Global Security Law, whose article 24 makes it a criminal offence to share images that identify police officers in operation, which could carry up to a year's prison sentence. The text sparks citizen and left-wing protests that condemn the article's authoritarian nature and the danger it poses for the freedom of information. On 28 November, the first

day of the new easing of restrictions for the health crisis, there are a number of demonstrations in different towns and cities against the new law, which end in violent clashes and force the government to announce the reformulation of article 24.

Italy

- On 5 November the government imposes restrictions throughout Italy until 4 December, including an overnight curfew, the closure of most of the hospitality sector and recreational centres and the closure of Lombardy, Piamonte, the Aosta Valley and Calabria to curb the second wave of COVID-19. On 30 November, the government announces the restrictions will remain in place throughout the Christmas holiday.
- On 17 November Eugenio Gaudio, the recently appointed health chief for the COVID-19 pandemic for Calabria, steps down from the post citing personal reasons. He is the third person to have resigned from the post in just 10 days, following Saverio Coticelli and Giuseppe Zuccatelli.
- On 19 November the police arrest 19 people linked to the 'Ndrangheta's Grande Aracri clan, including the president of the regional council of Calabria, Domenico Tallini (FI), accused of allowing money-laundering activities through a chain of 23 pharmacies in exchange for votes in the 2014 regional elections.

Malta

- On 12 November Roberta Metsola (PN) is appointed the First Vice-President of the European Parliament.
- On 21 November Justyne Caruana replaces Owen Bonnici as Education Minister, who replaced Evarist Bartolo in January.

Slovenia

- On 6 November clashes break out in Ljubljana during an anti-government protest called by the Slovenian branch of the *Anonymous* activist group.
- On 18 November Slovenia announces its support of Poland and Hungary's initiative to veto the 1.82-trillion-euro

COVID-19 economic stimulus package, as well as the EU budget, both of which were approved on 10 November by the Council and the Parliament, in opposition to the inclusion of a mechanism that allows the Union to cut funding to countries that violate the rule of law.

Croatia

- On 13 November the County Court of Zagreb sentences the former Prime Minister and former leader of the ruling HDZ Ivo Sanader to eight years in prison for corruption.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 15 November Bosnia and Herzegovina holds local elections, postponed since 4 October over the delay in approving the state budget. In the Sarajevo Canton, the conservative SDA loses the power to the coalition of moderate parties. In Banja Luka, the opposition Party of Democratic Progress (PDP) wins the mayoralty from the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD). Similar situations arise in another 16 towns, where moderate options oust the traditional nationalist parties.

Montenegro

- On 13 November the deputy ombudsman Snezana Armenko urges the authorities to clarify the quarantine or self-isolation measures, believing the current apparently arbitrary rules pose a threat to people's human rights.
- On 17 November the parties of the Albanian and Bosniak minorities refuse to join the government coalition, in a situation that has not arisen since 1998 and which owes to the concern of said parties over the nationalist drift of the pro-Serbian parties in the incoming coalition.
- On 28 November Montenegro declares the Serbian ambassador Vladimir Bozovic persona non grata for his declarations about the country's history and statehood, which Podgorica views as unacceptable. In response, Belgrade expels Montenegro's ambassador Tarzan Milosevic, although on 29 November the measure is revoked by the Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic.

Serbia

- On 9 November Serbia and Albania sign an agreement that allows the free movement of their citizens between their respective territories.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 4 November the KSC reports the arrest of the former Parliament Speaker and Kosovo's former President Jakup Krasniqi for war crimes.
- On 5 November the Parliament Speaker Vjosa Osmani takes over Kosovo's Presidency following the resignation of Hashim Thaci after the KSC confirms his indictment for war crimes when he was the UÇK leader.
- On 29 November extraordinary local elections are held in two municipalities, after their mayors assume posts in the central government. In Podujeva, Shpejtim Bulliqi (Vetevendosje) wins, taking over from Agim Veliu (LDK), appointed Interior Minister. In North Mitrovica, Milan Radojevic, (Srpska List) wins, taking over from his colleague Goran Rakic, the new Deputy Prime Minister.

North Macedonia

- On 10 November at the seventh Summit of the Berlin Process, an agreement is reached to set up a common market in the Western Balkans aligned with the European Single Market and a green agenda to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, with the support of a European investment plan of 9 billion euros.
- On 17 November, at the EU Council of Ministers, Bulgaria vetoes the start of accession talks with North Macedonia, while the differences regarding their shared history and the Macedonian language remain unresolved.
- On 20 November North Macedonia declares a month-long state of emergency faced with the rise in COVID-19 infections.

Greece

- On 1 November a fire is reported to have broken out at the Vathy migrant camp on Samos.

- On 5 November Greece announces the creation of a naval base in Crete as a cornerstone of its security policy in the eastern Mediterranean, amid tensions with Turkey.
- On 7 November stricter social distancing measures for COVID-19 come into force until 30 November, in addition to the total lockdown in Thessalonica, partial lockdown in Athens and the overnight curfew throughout Greece.
- On 17 November as part of the government ban on gatherings to curb the spread of COVID-19 infections, riot police disperse a demonstration outside the University of Athens to commemorate the 1973 student uprising against the Regime of the Colonels.
- On 26 November the Greek civil servants trade union, Adedy, leads a 24-hour national strike across the country to demand greater protection against the pandemic for workers in the sector.

Turkey

- On 10 November Lutfi Elvan is appointed Treasury and Finance Minister after the sudden resignation on 9 November of the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's son-in-law, Berat Albayrak, and the firing of the governor of the Central Bank Murat Uysal, replaced by Naci Agbal.
- On 10 November the ECHR condemns Turkey for violating the freedom of expression of the newspaper Cumhuriyet.
- On 11 November the Constitutional Court rejects a request by CHP to annul the decree that grants immunity to civilians that acted against the 2016 failed coup attempt.
- On 18 November the opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu presses charges before Istanbul's chief prosecutor's office against a notorious Turkish mafia boss, Alaattin Cakici, after receiving a letter in which Cakici threatens the CHP leader for suggesting that he was recently released from prison thanks to pressure on the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan from his far-right, nationalist partner, Devlet Bahceli.
- On 21 November Turkey extends the exploration activities of the ship Oruc Reis until 29 November in an area of the

eastern Mediterranean under dispute with Greece, coinciding with Egypt, Greece and Cyprus' preparations for the Medusa 10 joint military exercises at the start of December.

- On 26 November 333 army officers and four civilians are handed down life sentences in a mass trial which began in August in Ankara against 475 people accused of taking part in the 2016 failed coup attempt. A further 60 people are given lighter sentences and 75 are acquitted.

Cyprus

- On 5 November the overnight curfew for COVID-19 comes into effect, which in Paphos and Limassol, where infection levels are highest, is more strictly enforced. On 17 November, shopkeepers in Limassol demonstrate to call for more help from the government.

Syria

- On 6 November the EU adds eight Syrian government ministers to its sanctions blacklist against the regime and its supporters.

- On 9 November the US announces sanctions against 19 Syrian individuals and entities, among them the National Defence Forces, which it accuses of abuses and obstructing a peaceful end to the Syrian conflict.

- On 16 November the Syrian Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Walid al-Moallem dies.

- On 18 November Syria condemns the killing of three of its soldiers in Israeli airstrikes, after an Israeli military spokesperson reports that during the night, warplanes attacked military targets of the Iranian al-Quds Force and Syrian armed forces.

- On 23 November the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces backtracked on its decision, announced three days ago, to form a national elections commission entrusted with preparing for parliamentary elections during the transition phase and a constitutional referendum. The decision comes following a wave of criticisms from large parts of the opposition that believe such a commission would perpetuate Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Lebanon

- On 5 November a man burns himself to death in Bir Hassan in protest against the effects of the economic crisis. Since the beginning of the year, there have been a number of acts of suicide. On the same day, a Syrian refugee sets himself alight outside the UNHCR reception centre in Beirut faced with being unable to afford his daughter's medical treatment.

- On 6 November the US imposes sanctions against the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement Gebran Bassil, for corruption, embezzlement and links to Hezbollah activities. The Former Minister of Telecommunications, Energy and Foreign Affairs, a Maronite Christian and son-in-law of the President Michel Aoun, Bassil is one of the country's most influential politicians.

- On 13 November Lebanon reimposes the nationwide lockdown until 30 November, faced with the increase in COVID-19 cases. On 16 November, the protests are resumed, particularly in Tripoli and Sidon, calling for support to survive the damages caused by the lockdown.

Jordan

- On 10 November Jordan holds parliamentary elections with a turnout of below 30%. The independent and pro-government candidates retain their majority in the Lower Chamber, just 16% of which comprises members of political parties. After the closure of the voting stations, a four-night overnight curfew is introduced against COVID-19.

- On 12 November the Interior Minister Tawfiq al-Halalmeh resigns over his violations of the curfew imposed on 10 November.

Egypt

- On 2 November Germany approves a agreement on selling naval arms to Egypt amid escalating tensions in the eastern Mediterranean.

- On 5 November more than 60 people are sentenced to prison for their involvement in a sit-in protest in 2013 in support of the overthrown President Mohamed Morsi.

- On 7 November Egypt holds the second phase of the legislative elections in 13 governorates, including Cairo, to elect the remaining 284 seats, most of which are won by supporters of the President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

- On 14 November Egypt and Sudan begin joint military drills that last until 26 November.

Libya

- On 1 November paramilitary groups loyal to the GNA ask for entry into a future National Guard.

- On 2 November the military delegations of the warring parties in Libya, hold their first meeting in Ghadames, as part of the first round of the UN-sponsored Libyan Political Dialogue to discuss, from 7 November in Tunis, the application of the 23 October permanent ceasefire agreement, the creation of a new unity government and holding parliamentary elections within the next 18 months.

- On 10 November the lawyer and activist Hanan al-Barassi is murdered in Benghazi having spoken out over the years against cases of corruption and sexual assault against women by members of Khalifa Haftar's forces.

- On 11 November OPEC reports an increase in crude oil production of 322,000 barrels a day, as a consequence of Libya's ceasefire agreement.

- On 12 November more than 70 migrants lose their lives when the vessel they were using to attempt the crossing to Europe sinks off the Libyan coast.

- On 21 November Qatar signs a military training deal with the GNA, which Egypt condemns for undermining the negotiations in progress to reach a political solution in Libya.

Tunisia

- On 9 November Lofti Zitoun, the former Minister of Local Affairs and the Environment resigns from the Shura Council, Ennahda's legislative body, confirming the rifts within the party.

- On 25 November security forces in Om Laarayes, Gafsa, disperse a group of demonstrators who had entered the local offices of the Revenue Agency

after a day of protest against the government's inadequate socio-economic measures.

Algeria

- On 1 November Algeria holds a referendum in which the Constitution is approved by 67% of voters, although turnout stood at just 23.7%. In Bouira, Tizi Ouzou and Bougie, the voting stations cannot open due to reported unrest. On 11 November, the Constitutional Court ratifies the referendum and the victory for the yes vote.
- On 9 November an overnight curfew for COVID-19 is imposed in another nine Algerian provinces, the measure now being enforced in half of Algeria's provinces.

Morocco

- On 5 November Morocco extends the state of emergency again until 10 December, faced with the increase in COVID-19 infections.

Mauritania

- On 22 November the death is announced of Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, Mauritania's first democratically elected president, who came to power in 2007.

European Union

- On 10 November the EC rules that Amazon is abusing its dominant position and distorting the competition in online retail markets.
- On 11 November the EC signs a contract with the German and US pharmaceutical companies BioNTech and Pfizer for the purchase of 300 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. This is the fourth contract signed by the Commission after those of AstraZeneca, Sanofi-GSK and Janssen Pharmaceuticals. On 17 November, the Commission signs a fifth deal with the European pharmaceutical company CureVac for the purchase of 405 million doses and on 24 November closes a deal with the US company Moderna for the purchase of a further 160 million doses.
- On 12 November, at the Paris Peace Forum, the EC announces an increase in

the Union's contribution to the WHO's COVAX mechanism from 400 to 500 million euros to ensure that countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific have access to the COVID-19 vaccination.

- On 12 November the EC proposes that European Law cover hate crimes against LGBTIQ citizens and that funding be withdrawn from administrations that discriminate against them, faced with the rise in homophobia in countries like Poland and Hungary.
- On 16 November the European Interior Ministers approve a common declaration to strengthen external border protection and the fight against jihadist terrorism, following France's call for a "coordinated and rapid response against terrorism" following the attacks in France and Austria and the "development of common databases" and "stronger criminal policies."
- On 18 November Frontex announces that the illegal border crossings into the European Union have dropped by 21% in the first 10 months of 2020, compared with the first 10 months of 2019.

December 2020

Spain legalizes euthanasia. In France, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing dies, there are protests against the Global Security Law and new measures are announced against radical Islamism. Slovenia declares Hezbollah a terrorist organization and DeSUS abandons the coalition government. Croatia is hit by more earthquakes. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mostar holds local elections. In Montenegro, the Parliament approves the new government, the country's main airline closes down, and the president of the Supreme Court resigns. A Constitutional Court ruling leads to new elections. The Albanian Interior Minister resigns. In Turkey, there are new arrests in connection with the 2016 failed coup attempt, and tensions mount with the US over the purchase of the S-400 air defence system from Russia, and with the EU over the situation in the eastern Mediterranean. The US announces fresh sanctions on the Syrian regime. In Lebanon, the protests continue and the

STL sentences a member of Hezbollah to life imprisonment for the assassination of Rafik Hariri. In Egypt, arrests are made of prominent businessmen accused of having links with the Muslim Brotherhood. In Libya, Turkey approves extending its military deployment. A Tunisian court issues a new arrest warrant for the former presidential candidate Nabil Karoui. Morocco normalizes its relations with Israel in the same month that the US recognizes Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.

Portugal

- On 17 December the Parliament extends the state of emergency until 7 January 2021.

Spain

- On 4 December the EC calls on the Spanish government to consult with the opposition, judicial associations and the European Council's Venice Commission regarding the judicial reform it is preparing.
- On 17 December the Parliament approves the legalization of euthanasia.
- On 17 December the High Court of Justice of Catalonia rules that all teaching centres must teach 25% of its classes in Spanish.
- On 22 December Spain summons the Moroccan ambassador in Madrid to ask him for clarification of the Moroccan Prime Minister Saadedine Othmani's statement regarding alleged Moroccan sovereignty over the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.
- On 22 December the Senate approves the country's 2021 general budget.

France

- On 2 December Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the 20th President of the French Republic and one of the main architects of European integration, dies from COVID-19.
- On 5 December thousands demonstrate against the Global Security Law and police violence, joining the workers' demonstrations against precarious working conditions, sparking violent unrest in Paris.

- On 7 December the Agricultural Social Mutual Organization reveals that suicides among French farmers will have exceeded 375 in 2020 due to the crisis caused by COVID-19.
- On 9 December the Prime Minister Jean Castex presents a draft law he says will strengthen the State against any attempt of cultural or religious, particularly Islamist, "separatism." The bill comes after on 2 December, the Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin announces the monitoring of 76 mosques suspected of radicalization.
- On 14 December Emmanuel Macron announces the upcoming national referendum to approve or reject the inclusion of environmental protection in the Constitution.
- On 17 December the National Assembly approves the finance bill for 2021, which includes the 100-billion-euro economic recovery plan presented in September.

Italy

- On 18 December the Senate approves a decree that paves the way towards the removal of the migration reforms introduced by the former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini.
- On 18 December the government announces a nationwide lockdown for the Christmas and New Year period.
- On 24 December Italy detects the first case of the UK variant of COVID-19 in Venice, which is more contagious than the original virus and quickly spreads to other EU countries during the month.
- On 30 December the Senate endorses the 2021 state budget, approved two days before by the Parliament's lower house.

Malta

- On 30 December the former Labour Finance Minister Edward Scicluna gives up his parliamentary seat to take over as governor of the Central Bank on 1 January 2021.

Slovenia

- On 7 December Slovenia declares Hezbollah a terrorist organization.

- On 17 December DeSUS abandons the right-wing coalition led by Janez Janša (SDS) to back its new leader Karl Erjavec as candidate for Prime Minister-designate.
- On 29 December Slovenia temporarily closes its nuclear power plant as a precaution, as the country feels the effects of an earthquake in neighbouring Croatia.

Croatia

- On 28-29 December earthquakes measuring 5.2 and 6.3 on the Richter scale, with its epicentre in Petrinja, leaves at least seven dead and causes widespread damage.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 4 December the public prosecutor files an indictment against the Prime Minister of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation Fadil Novalic, in a corruption scandal over the purchase of ventilators.
- On 8 December seven people are arrested near Banja Luka for the unlawful detention, torture and abuse of some 150 Bosniak and Croat civilians in Donji Vakuf in 1992.
- On 10 December Milan Tegeltija, the head of the Bosnian High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, resigns after being investigated for influence-peddling.
- On 18 December the IOM closes down the Lipa migrant camp, after the Bosnian-Herzegovinian authorities ignore the organization's repeated calls to supply basic services and road access.
- On 20 December Mostar holds municipal elections for the first time in 12 years. The Croat and Bosniak nationalist parties, HDZ-BiH and SDA, win the majority of the votes.
- On 23 December migrants from the Lipa camp, close to Bihac, set the centre alight in protest against their detention and the living conditions there.

Montenegro

- On 4 December after three decades of socialist rule, the Parliament approves the government of the Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapic, who enjoys the sup-

port of the pro-Serb, centre-right and green parties.

- On 18 December the new government proposes major changes to the previous government's Religion Law, which triggered a wave of protests and clashes with the Serbian Orthodox Church.
- On 24 December the government announces the closure of Montenegro Airlines citing its massive debt and announces the creation of a new national flag carrier.
- On 30 December the president of the Supreme Court Vesna Medinica resigns after her third consecutive mandate is questioned in the EC's report on the progress of accession talks and by Montenegrin civil society organizations.

Serbia

- On 8 December the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals calls on Serbia to arrest the members of the Serbian Radical Party, Petar Jojic and Vjerica Radeta, to be tried at the Hague Tribunal charged with contempt of court during the trial against the party leader Vojislav Seselj.
- On 24 December Serbia begins its mass vaccination campaign against COVID-19.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 3 December families of the victims of the massacre at Krusha e Madhe and Krusha e Vogel at the hands of Serb forces in 1999 protest outside the Appeals Court in Pristina after the only person convicted for the massacre, Darko Tasic, has his prison sentence reduced from 22 to 11 years.
- On 21 December the Constitutional Court rules that the parliamentary vote to appoint the government of Avdullah Hoti in June was unconstitutional as lawmaker Etem Arifi, who voted in favour of the new government, had served time in jail. As a result, Kosovo has to call new elections.

North Macedonia

- On 1 December a demonstration in Skopje calls for the resignation of

the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev over his stance on Bulgaria, which has recently blocked the country's accession talks.

Albania

- On 3 December the Venice Commission criticizes the PSS-led government for rushing through approval for constitutional changes and the electoral system reform without waiting for the ruling from the advisory body to the Council of Europe, and considering that the approved reforms are designed to benefit the ruling party in the parliamentary elections set for April 2021.
- On 10 December the Interior Minister Sander Lleshaj resigns, over the demonstrations for the death on 8 December of a young man at the hands of the police, after violating the curfew. Despite the resignation, the protests continue over the following days.

Greece

- On 15 December the Parliament approves the 2021 state budget, which earmarks 2.5 billion euros to spend on defence, five times more than in 2020.

Turkey

- On 1 December the Turkish authorities order the arrest of 82 military personnel in a new operation against supporters of Fethullah Gulen and the 2016 failed coup attempt.
- On 4 December, after two years of construction works, Turkey completes an 81-kilometre security wall along the Iranian border in its fight against the PKK terrorist organization, adding to the wall built along a large part of the Syrian border.
- On 8 December 304 army officers and ex-army officers are arrested charged with having ties to the movement of Fethullah Gulen and the 2016 failed coup attempt.
- On 11 December the European Heads of State and Government agree to respond to Turkey's actions in the eastern Mediterranean extending the sanctions list over the country's gas exploration activities.
- On 14 December the US imposes sanctions on Turkey over the purchase

from Russia of the S-400 anti-aircraft system in 2019.

- On 18 December the leader of AKP's coalition partner MHP, Devlet Bahçeli, defends a constitutional amendment that outlaws the HDP.
- On 18 December the philanthropist and businessman Osman Kavala is acquitted for his involvement in the anti-government protests in 2013, although he remains in prison on charges of espionage and in relation to the 2016 failed coup attempt. On 29 December, the Constitutional Court rejects an appeal for his release.
- On 21 December former HDP lawmaker Leyla Guven, whose parliamentary seat and immunity were stripped in June, is sentenced to 22 years in prison for terrorism.
- On 27 December the Parliament approves AKP's draft law that increases the monitoring of foundations and associations.
- On 29 December Turkey and the United Kingdom sign a free trade deal that ensures the flow of goods between the two countries will continue after the UK's formal withdrawal from the EU.

Cyprus

- On 9 December the government approves a new closure, from 11 December, of all non-essential shops to contain the spread of COVID-19.
- On 11 December the EU calls on Turkey to resume Cypriot reunification negotiations and respect United Nations resolutions in response to Turkish plans to reopen the Varosha district.

Syria

- On 12 December the director-general of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fernando Arias tells the UN Security Council there are unresolved "gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies" regarding Syria's declaration of its chemical weapons arsenal.
- On 18 December several days of fighting erupt leaving 30 people dead, due to a Turkish-backed rebel offensive on SDF positions in Raqqa.
- On 22 December the US announces fresh sanctions on senior Syrian offi-

cial, which affect the First Lady Asma al-Asad, the Central Bank and the Syrian intelligence service.

- On 30 December the UN calls on the US to lift sanctions on Syria to enable the country's reconstruction.
- On 31 December the SOHR reports that at least 6,817 people have died in the Syrian conflict in 2020, the lowest recorded figure since the country's civil war broke out in March 2011.

Lebanon

- On 7 December protests are staged in different towns against the government plans to remove subsidies on certain essential goods.
- On 10 December the judge investigating the explosions at the Port of Beirut charges the caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab and the former Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil and Public Works Ministers Youseff Finyanos and Ghazi Zaiter.
- On 11 December the STL sentences the Hezbollah member Salim Jamil Ayash *in absentia* to life imprisonment for the assassination of the Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005.
- On 20 December clashes break out in Beirut between the police and demonstrators protesting against the hike in university fees.
- On 21 December the Parliament endorses a landmark law that penalizes sexual harassment with up to four years in prison.
- On 21 December the Parliament approves a bill suspending the banking secrecy law to enable an audit of the Central Bank, one of the central demands of international donors for delivering aid to the country following the blasts in the Port of Beirut.
- On 25 December Lebanon confirms its first case of the new coronavirus variant, on a flight from the United Kingdom.

Egypt

- On 3 December Gasser Abdel-Razek, director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Kareem Ennarah, the organization's director of criminal justice and Mohammed Basheer, its office manager, are freed weeks after their arrest and following intense pres-

sure from the international community for their release.

Libya

- On 3 December the UN acting Special Envoy to Libya Stephanie Williams reports that some 20,000 mercenaries and foreign soldiers remain in Libya, despite October's ceasefire agreement.
- On 16 December the UN Security Council appoints Bulgarian Nikolai Mladenov Special Envoy to Libya, 10 months after the resignation of his predecessor, Ghassan Salameh. The Norwegian Tor Wennesland will replace Mladenov as the United Nations Middle East Envoy.
- On 22 December the Turkish Parliament votes in favour of extending its military deployment in Libya.
- On 31 December the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres proposes deploying international observers to monitor the ceasefire in Libya.

Tunisia

- On 15 December Tunisia intercept around 100 migrants trying to reach European shores.
- On 20 December Fadhel Abdelkefi is elected leader of the Afek Tounes party, to succeed Yassine Brahimi.
- On 24 December a new arrest warrant is issued for the media mogul and former presidential candidate Nabil Karoui for corruption.

Algeria

- On 12 December Algeria rejects the US' recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.
- On 16 December the authorities declare a two-week extension on the curfew in place in 34 provinces due to COVID-19.
- On 30 December the President Abdelmayid Tebboune returns to Algeria after spending two months in hospital in Germany after COVID-19 complications.

Morocco

- On 12 December the US moves forward with a deal to sell arms to Morocco to the value of around 825 million euros following the US' recognition of Morocco's

sovereignty over Western Sahara and after ties are normalized between Israel and Morocco. On 22 December, the first commercial flight arrives in Rabat from Tel Aviv carrying an Israeli-US delegation led by Jared Kushner, son-in-law and advisor of the outgoing US President Donald Trump.

Mauritania

- On 31 December a migrant trafficking network in Rosso is dismantled.

European Union

- On 9 December the Council and the Parliament agree on the details for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), which will amount to 9.6 billion euros in the next financial framework, three times more than in 2014-2020.
- On 10 December after weeks of negotiation, the German EU Presidency reaches an agreement to unblock Poland and Hungary's veto on the Union's budget for the next seven years and the 750-billion-euro recovery fund to alleviate the effects of the pandemic. In exchange, Budapest and Warsaw's demands are met for the Rule-of-Law Mechanism to only be used as a last resort and subject to a CJEU ruling as a condition for a Member State to receive funding.
- On 14 December the Council and Parliament agree on the details of the European Defence Fund (EDF) which amounts to 7.9 billion euros.
- On 17 December the CJEU condemns Hungary for violating the right to asylum by keeping asylum seekers detained while their cases are under examination and for failing to offer special protection to vulnerable refugees.
- On 17 December the Council formally adopts the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, approved by the Parliament the previous day, standing at a total of 1.8 trillion euros, including 672.5 billion euros for the recovery mechanism and 47.5 billion euros for the React-EU instrument.
- On 18 December the Parliament approves the budgets for the Union for 2021 -164.3 billion euros in commitment appropriations and 166.1 billion euros in payment appropriations-,

based on an agreement reached with the Council.

- On 21 December the European Medicines Agency and the EC authorize the vaccination against COVID-19 developed by Pfizer and BioNTech. Between 26-29 December, all the Member States start the mass vaccination of their populations.
- On 24 December the EU and the United Kingdom reach an agreement to define their relationship after 1 January 2021, when Brexit comes into effect. On 30 December, the EC President Ursula von der Leyen and Council leader Charles Michel sign an agreement, which, on 31 December, is also ratified by Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom.

Gibraltar

- On 30 January Spain gives Europe's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier its red lines with respect to Gibraltar, which include Spain maintaining its right to veto any agreement with the British colony, fishing rights and migrant rights. On 12 February, the European Parliament explicitly includes this Spanish prerogative in a resolution that outlines the EU's negotiating objectives on its new relationship with the United Kingdom.
- On 12 February *Moneyval*, the European Council's body against money-laundering and the financing of terrorism, says that Gibraltar needs to step up its efforts in the investigation and prosecution of money-laundering offences.
- On 4 March Gibraltar confirms the territory's first case of COVID-19. Mid-month, the government on the Rock acts ahead of the British government and decrees an overnight curfew, advises against gatherings of over 50 people and bans the arrival of cruise ships.
- On 21 December the United Kingdom confirms the detection on Gibraltar of at least one case of the new COVID-19 variant, coming from England, and which prompts the Rock to enforce stricter lockdown measures, as well as the closure of EU borders with the United Kingdom.
- On 31 December Spain and the United Kingdom reach an agreement to avoid an imminent hard border in Gi-

braltar, allowing Gibraltarians to remain in the Schengen Area during the four-year transition.

Western Sahara

- On 1 April Morocco reports the detection of the first two COVID-19 cases in Western Sahara.
- On 13 August the UN Human Rights Committee condemns the forced disappearance of the Polisario leader Ahmed El Khalil, arrested in 2009 allegedly by Algerian security forces and seen for the last time in 2011 in an Algerian prison.
- On 30 October the UN Security Council renews the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for another year and underlines the need to appoint a special envoy to replace Horst Koehler, who resigned in May 2019.
- On 9 November the Polisario condemns the deployment of Moroccan forces in Guerguerat and says it will respond to any “aggression” and warns that this would mean “the end of the ceasefire” agreed in 1991. Rabat justifies the deployment citing the need to ensure free movement after a weeks-long blockade by Sahrawi activists in the area, which is under the control of UN peacekeeping forces. On 13 November, the Polisario announces the end of the ceasefire with Morocco and declares a “state of war.” On the same day, the Polisario claims to have fired on four Moroccan military bases and

two of its surveillance posts along the separation wall in response to a Moroccan attack in Guerguerat.

- On 25 November the Court of Cassation upholds the convictions against the separatist Sahrawis sentenced to between 20 years and life in prison in the 2017 trial for the clashes in Gdeim Izik.
- On 11 December the US recognizes Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara in exchange for full diplomatic ties being established between Morocco and Israel.
- On 15 December Bahrain announces its intention to open a consulate in Laayoune, joining Jordan and UAE, countries that also have peace deals with Israel and which made the same announcement in November.

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