

Chronology of Major Conflicts and Political Events

January 2021

The year begins with the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic which, in parallel to the start of the vaccination campaigns, gives rise to tougher preventive measures. Portugal takes over the six-month European Presidency and holds presidential elections. Spain is affected by heavy snowfall and approves the economic recovery plan in response to the pandemic. The Italian government resigns. Montenegro amends the Religious Freedom Law. Kosovo calls early elections. Greece reshuffles its cabinet and extends its territorial waters. There are new arrests in Turkey of members of the network of the preacher Fethullah Gulen, and tougher laws on public order are introduced. Cyprus extends its defensive connections. In Lebanon, there is unrest in Tripoli. In Libya, the warring parties move forwards towards an agreement for a new government. In Tunisia, citizen protests lead to a government reshuffle. In Algeria, senior officials close to the former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika are convicted.

Portugal

- On 1 January Portugal takes over the six-month European Presidency with the challenges of combating the Covid-19 pandemic, progressing on a health union within Europe and on the Union's social pillar, refocusing relations with the United Kingdom, leading a recovery of global multilateralism and addressing Europe's economic recovery.
- On 15 January, after Covid-19 infections surpass half a million, a month-long nationwide lockdown enters into force.
- On 24 January Portugal holds presidential elections. The conservative Mar-

celo Rebelo de Sousa is reelected with 60.7% of the vote.

- On 29 January the Parliament approves legalizing euthanasia.

Spain

- From 6-11 January Storm Filomena causes the heaviest snowfall in Spain since 1971, which is especially intense in Madrid, the two Castiles and Aragon, causing millions of euros of damage and leaving at least six dead.
- On 23 January the Chief of Defence Staff Miguel Angel Villarroya resigns after it is revealed that he and other military commanders had been vaccinated for Covid-19, despite not forming part of the priority immunization groups.
- On 27 January Miquel Iceta takes over as Territorial Policy Minister to replace Carolina Darias, who in turn succeeds Salvador Illa as Health Minister, who leaves the ministry to run in February's elections in Catalonia.
- On 28 January the Parliament approves the 140-billion-euro economic recovery plan presented in October 2020 by the government, funded by the European NextGenerationEU support package.

France

- On 14 January the government announces that as of 16 January and for two weeks the curfew between 6 pm and 6 am will be extended to halt the third wave of Covid-19.

Italy

- On 6 January the Open Arms, a search and rescue vessel, disembarks 265 migrants in Porto Empedocle.

- On 7 January Italy reopens its education centres for face-to-face teaching.
- On 13 January the former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, leader of Italia Viva (social liberal), withdraws the party's two ministers – of Agriculture and Family – from the coalition cabinet, over disagreements with decisions made by the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's, leaving the government on the brink of collapse.
- On 13 January the large-scale trial begins of 355 members of the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta clan, the biggest criminal proceedings since the trial opened by the judges Falcone and Borsellino in 1986 against 475 members of Cosa Nostra.
- On 18 January Giuseppe Conte survives a confidence vote in the Parliament thanks to the support of the government coalition parties – the 5 Star Movement (M5S, populist), Democratic Party (PD, social democrat) and Free and Equal (LeU, leftist) – and the Mixed Group.
- On 21 January Operation "Low Profile" ends with the arrest of 48 people for collaborating with the 'Ndrangheta clan, among them the secretary of the Union of Christian and Centre Democrats (UDC) party Lorenzo Cesa and Calabria's Councillor for the Budget Francesco Talarico.
- On 26 January the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigns in a bid to form a new government, the third since 2018, which will give him the support needed to implement the 222.9-billion-euro plan to reactivate the economy in the wake of the pandemic, which was unveiled on 13 January.

Malta

- On 14 January the National Statistics Office reports that tourist arrivals to Malta fell by 75.2% in the first 11 months

of 2020 as compared with the same period in 2019, as an effect of the pandemic.

Slovenia

- On 13 January the Prime Minister Janez Jansa announces that the measures against Covid-19 will remain in place until the end of spring.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 15 January the European Commission (EC) warns of consequences in its membership process if Bosnia and Herzegovina does not fulfil its international obligations to solve the humanitarian crisis in the Lipa migrant camp.
- On 20 January serious unrest erupts at the Blazuj migrant camp in Sarajevo, which plays host to over 3,000 people.

Montenegro

- On 20 January in a vote boycotted by the opposition Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), the pro-Serbia parliamentary majority approves the Law on Religious Freedoms, which halts the nationalization of assets belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church in the country. Thousands gathered in Podgorica to protest against the Law, which was rejected on 2 January by the President Milo Djukanovic in a first reading and which has been causing protests and clashes for the last year.

Serbia

- On 19 January vaccination against Covid-19 begins after, on 16 January, Serbia becomes the first European country to receive the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 6 January the acting President Vjosa Osmani announces early elections to be held on 14 February, following a ruling by the Constitutional Court that considers the current government of Avdullah Hoti to be illegitimate having been elected with the help of an invalid vote cast by an MP with a criminal record.

- On 19 January the former Prime Minister Agim Ceku and another 11 defendants are acquitted on charges of falsifying a Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK) veterans' list to enable non-combatants to claim benefits as war veterans.

- On 26 January the Electoral Committee bars the former Prime Minister and leader of Vetëvendosje (leftist, pro-independence), Albin Kurti, from running in the parliamentary elections due to his suspended prison sentence from 2018 for firing tear gas in the Parliament.

Albania

- On 11 January Albania begins its vaccination against Covid-19 with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.
- On 29 January the Special Prosecutor against Corruption and Organized Crime begins an investigation into wiretaps by the Anti-mafia Prosecution Office in Catanzaro, Italy, which have revealed 'Ndrangheta bribes of Albanian senior officials.

Greece

- On 4 January the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis reorganizes his government with the aim of improving its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. On the same day, strict lockdown measures enter into effect, which are eased on 18 January and defied by the Orthodox Church.
- On 20 January the Parliament approves extending the territorial waters in the Ionian Sea from six to 12 nautical miles.
- On 25 January Greece signs a deal with France for the purchase of 18 fighter jets for 3 billion dollars, in a bid to strengthen ties between Athens and Paris amid tensions with Turkey.
- On 25 January talks resume at the NATO headquarters between Turkey and Greece to establish a dialogue that can ease tensions in the eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey

- On 7 January the law enters into force that empowers the police and the National Intelligence Agency (MIT) to use military equipment and heavy arms

against demonstrations and terrorist attacks. The legislation comes in response to the student protests against the appointment, on 1 January, of a member of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP, Islamist) as rector of the Bogazici University.

- On 12 January the televangelist Adnan Oktar is sentenced to over a thousand years' imprisonment for heading a criminal organization, abuse of minors, espionage and collaboration with the organization of the preacher Fethullah Gulen.

- On 14 January Turkey begins Covid-19 vaccination with China's Sinovac vaccine.

- On 19 January Turkey orders the arrest of 238 army members with alleged ties to Fethullah Gulen and the failed coup attempt in 2016.

- On 19 January the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) condemns Turkey for violating the right to freedom of expression and liberty and security of the European Convention on Human Rights over the terrorism-related conviction handed down to the singer and columnist Atilla Tas.

- On 26 January there are 71 new arrests of people suspected of having ties with the network of Fethullah Gulen and the 2016 attempted coup.

Cyprus

- On 12 January the UAE and Cyprus sign a defence cooperation agreement which adds to those signed by Nicosia with Greece, Israel, Jordan and Egypt, amid tensions with Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean.

- On 28 January Cyprus begins a campaign of mandatory testing for Covid-19 for those people returning to face-to-face work.

Syria

- On 4 January the death toll rises to 15 from an attack attributed to Daesh on a convoy of fuel tankers and passenger buses in Hama.

- On 4 January new protests in the governorate of Deir ez-Zor condemn the lack of services, arbitrary arrests and discrimination by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic forces (FDS). The protests,

which continue throughout the month, have been taking place since 2019.

- On 13 January according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), at least 57 people have been killed in the second Israeli airstrike in less than a week on targets of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard on the Syrian-Iraqi border.

- On 15 January flights resume between Aleppo and Beirut after a 10-year interruption.

- On 15 January the European Council adds the Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad to the list of persons subject to European sanctions.

- On 3 and 16 January the Ansar Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Brigade, created in September 2020 as an independent militia, are blamed for attacks on Turkish army targets in Kafraya and Batbu.

- On 21 January four civilians are killed during Israeli airstrikes, which are responded to with Syrian anti-aircraft fire in Kuzu, Hama, where Hezbollah and Iranian weapons stores have been found.

- On 24 January clashes break out between the Syrian army and Islamist fighters in Daraa in the fiercest fighting since the regime took control of the governorate in 2018.

- On 25 January a fifth round of UN-mediated talks begins in Geneva between the Syrian regime, the opposition and representatives of civil society, to draft a new constitution.

- On 29 January the SOHR warns of an intensification of Daesh activity in the Aleppo-Hama-Raqa triangle and in areas of Homs and Deir ez-Zor, at the same time as the Syrian army and Russia step up operations to quash the terrorist presence.

- On 30 January at least six people are killed on the outskirts of Afrin in a truck-bomb attack, responsibility for which goes unclaimed but which is attributed by Turkey to the People's Protection Units (YPG), the Syrian branch of the PKK terrorist organization.

Lebanon

- On 14 January a new lockdown with a 24-hour curfew comes into effect until 25 January, following the state of health emergency decreed on 11 January in response to the third wave of Covid-19.

- On 27 January clashes during anti-government protests in Tripoli over the crisis and its worsening because of the lockdown measures leave one dead and over 220 injured. The unrest continues over the following days.

Jordan

- On 13 January Jordan begins vaccination against Covid-19 with the Sinopharm and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines.

Egypt

- On 3 January Egypt authorizes the Sinopharm vaccine against Covid-19. On 24 January vaccinations begin.

- On 4 January a commercial ship docks at the al-Arish port for the first time in years due to the suspension of activity there in the context of the military offensive against Daesh in Sinai. The reopening is part of the plan to connect this port, under military control since July 2019, with the Suez Canal.

- On 21 January a Daesh attack kills an Egyptian official in North Sinai, where the Egyptian army has been carrying out an offensive against the jihadist insurgency since 2011.

Libya

- On 15 January Libyan political dialogue, under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva, advances towards an agreement for a new transitional government to oversee the period in the run-up to the elections scheduled for December 2021.

- On 18 January the European Operation IRINI and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) agree to expand cooperation to exchange information in relation to the supervision of the arms embargo in Libya.

- On 19 January 43 people are killed in Libyan waters while trying to reach Europe, in the first shipwreck reported in the Mediterranean in 2021.

- On 21 January the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) praises the decision taken at a meeting in Hurgada, Egypt, by the Constitutional Committee, comprising the House of Representatives from Tobruk and the High Council of State from Tripoli, to

hold a constitutional referendum ahead of the general elections scheduled for December 2021.

- On 21 January the Ocean Viking search and rescue vessel, belonging to the NGO SOS Méditerranée, rescues 120 migrants off the Libyan coastline.

Tunisia

- On 15 January days of protest begin throughout Tunisia which, over the course of the following days, call for greater socioeconomic and democratic improvements, forcing a reshuffle on 25 January of Hichem Mchichi's government. On 25 January, the President Kais Saied expresses his disapproval of Mchichi's government reorganization in view of the dismissal of the Interior Minister Taoufik Charfeddine a close ally of Saied, who accuses Mchichi of appointing ministerial posts with possible conflicts of interest and not following the basic law stipulating that the Head of State must be consulted for any changes. In the absence of a Constitutional Court, which has yet to be formed, the confrontation between the Presidency and the government threatens to become a serious institutional crisis.

Algeria

- On 2 January Said Bouteflika, brother of the former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the generals Mohamed Mediene and Athmane Tartag and the general secretary of the Workers' Party (PT), Louisa Hanoune, are cleared on appeal of charges of conspiracy against the army, for which they were convicted in September 2019. Bouteflika and Tartag will remain in prison awaiting a decision regarding other charges of which they have been accused. On 25 January, the former internal security director Smail Serhoud is arrested in Algiers, in relation to the cases that affect Tartag.

- On 30 January Algeria begins vaccination against Covid-19 with vaccines from Russia and China.

Morocco

- On 28 January Mohammed VI authorizes the start of the country's Covid-19

immunization campaign with batches of AstraZeneca and Sinopharm.

EU

- On 1 January the Trade and Cooperation Agreement of 24 December 2020 between the EU and the United Kingdom comes into force, which establishes the absence of customs duties and import quotas on agricultural and industrial goods; regulations on state aid, mechanisms for settling disputes, reciprocal access to territorial waters and a 25% reduction on the Union's fishing quotas in British waters for 2026.
- On 8 January Frontex reports that the number of illegal entries into the Union saw a 13% reduction in 2020, as compared with 2019, standing at 124,000.
- On 11 January the Council approves the extension of the European civil mission EUCAP-Sahel-Mali for the period ending in January 2023.
- On 12 January the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) announces the opening of an investigation against Frontex over allegations that they colluded with migrant pushbacks in the Aegean Sea.
- On 12 January the Commission reaches an agreement with the European company Valneva on the purchase of 60 million doses of a possible Covid-19 vaccine.
- On 21 January the European Parliament votes to continue to make additional resources available to provide basic assistance to those most affected by the pandemic, allowing Member States to continue to use additional funds under the REACT-EU initiative in 2021 and 2022.
- On 26 January the Commission adopts the Union's humanitarian aid budget for 2021 which stands at 1.4 billion euros, a 60% increase with respect to 2020.
- On 29 January the European Medicines Agency (EMA) recommends marketing for the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine, as the third authorized vaccine after Pfizer/BioNtech and Moderna.

February 2021

In Spain, Catalonia holds regional elections. In France, the law on reinforcing

respect for the principles of the Republic is approved and, like in Greece, several cases of sexual abuse affecting senior officials come to light. Italy approves the national unity government of Mario Draghi. In Malta, the first sentence is handed down for the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia. In Slovenia, the government survives a confidence motion. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, repeat local elections are held in Srebrenica. Kosovo holds early legislative elections. In North Macedonia, the sentences handed down in the Monster case ignite interethnic tensions and the former secret police chief is jailed. In Greece, an historic snowfall brings Athens to a halt. In Cyprus, there is unrest over the government's handling of the pandemic. In Syria, the US launches its first military operation under the Biden Administration. Lebanon begins vaccination against Covid-19. There are ministerial dismissals in Jordan and Tunisia. The Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) elects the head of the Presidency Council and the prime minister of the future government. Algeria calls early elections.

Spain

- On 14 February Catalonia holds regional elections in which the Socialists' Party of Catalonia (PSC) wins most votes, but obtains 33 seats, on a par with the Republic Left of Catalonia (ERC, pro-independence). Noteworthy is the break through of VOX (far-right) with 11 seats and the collapse of Citizens (Cs, socioliberal) which drops from 36 to 6 MPs.

France

- On 4 February the leader of the Popular Republican Union (UPR, Eurosceptic) and former presidential candidate François Asselineau is placed under police custody in an investigation into sexual harassment and sexual assault. On 18 February, the former Secretary of Public Affairs Georges Tron is sentenced to three years' imprisonment for sexual abuse and rape. The conviction coincides with revelations since October 2020 of other sex scandals affecting political figures like Olivier Du-

hamel, accused of incest and sexual abuse, and the Parisian councillors, Maxime Cochard, Christophe Girard and Pierre Aidenbaum.

- On 16 February the parliamentary majority of the Republic on the Move (LREM, social liberal) in the National Assembly approves the bill to "reinforce respect for the principles of the Republic" and combat radical Islamism.
- On 19 February the manager of a refugee reception centre in Pau is stabbed to death by a Sudanese asylum seeker.

Italy

- On 1 February the President Sergio Mattarella asks Mario Draghi, the former head of the European Central Bank (ECB) to form a government. On 18 February, the new pro-European and Atlanticist government receives parliamentary approval. It comprises eight technocrats in the key ministries and a further 15 representatives from across the broad spectrum of parliamentary parties. Worthy of note are Vittorio Colao in Technological Innovation and Digital Transition; Roberto Cingolani in Ecological Transition and Daniele Franco in Economy and Finance. Renewing their ministerial posts are Luciana Lamorgese as Interior Minister, Lorenzo Guerini in Defence and Luigi Di Maio as Foreign Minister.
- On 18 February the M5S announces the expulsion from its party of MPs that have opposed Mario Draghi's government. These expulsions, added to the parliamentary defections arising from internal dissension, brings the number of M5S senators down from 92 to 20 and M5S MPs from 190 to 36.

Malta

- On 23 February Vince Muscat, one of the men charged with the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia in 2017, is sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment after pleading guilty.

Slovenia

- On 15 February the government of Janez Jansa from the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS, conservative) sur-

vives a confidence vote proposed by the parties of the Constitutional Arch Coalition (KUL).

- On 26 February the government suspends January's financing of the Slovenian Press Agency (STA) as it also did for October and November's funds in 2020, which were eventually authorized on 15 January.

Croatia

- On 27 February the mayor of Zagreb Milan Bandic passes away. Jelena Pavić Vukicević takes over as mayor until the local elections in May.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 21 February Srebrenica holds repeat local elections after the Election Commission annulled the results of the November 2020 elections due to irregularities. The Bosniak parties boycott the vote, claiming that there are still not the minimum guarantees to ensure a fair vote. The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD, Bosnian Serb nationalist) of Milorad Dodik wins the election.
- On 12 February vaccination begins against Covid-19, a week after the delivery of the first Russian Sputnik-V vaccines.

Montenegro

- On 4 February the police arrest the former head of the Investment Development Fund Zoran Vukčević and three others for misuse of a loan for agricultural development, from the Abu Dhabi Development Fund (ADFD).
- On 5 February the Appeal Court annuls the first instance verdicts issued in May 2019 for the 2016 coup plot citing procedural violations, and orders a retrial.
- On 15 February the State Prosecutor Žilko Šavović accuses the Special State Prosecutor Milivoje Katnić of halting an investigation into the former Transport Minister Ivan Brajović, suspected of corruption.

Serbia

- On 4 February the police close the Red Star and Partizan football stadiums

as part of an operation in Belgrade that ends with 17 arrests of members of a powerful criminal organization.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 1 February Israel and Kosovo establish diplomatic ties.
- On 14 February Kosovo holds early legislative elections which Vetevendosje wins with 41% of the votes.

North Macedonia

- On 14 February Serbia delivers the first 4,680 doses of the 8,000 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines it has promised North Macedonia, which is struggling to secure supplies.
- On 23 February three Albanian Macedonians are handed down life sentences for terrorism for the murder of five Slav Macedonians in 2012, in a case that has inflamed interethnic tensions in the country. Another two defendants are sentenced to 15 and nine years' imprisonment. The ruling provokes protests and unrest in the Macedonian Albanian community.
- On 26 February the former secret police chief Saso Mijalkov begins serving his 12-year prison sentence for massive illegal wiretapping between 2008 and 2015.

Albania

- On 11 February the judge Enkeleida Hoxha and another 12 people are arrested for reducing or lifting sentences in exchange for bribes.

Greece

- On 16 February Greece temporarily halts vaccination against Covid-19 in Athens faced with the severe snowfall affecting Attica, the heaviest in a decade.
- On 18 February Greece protests against the presence in Greek waters of the Turkish research vessel *Cesme*.
- On 20 February the former director of the National Theatre Dimitris Lignadis is arrested on charges of raping at least two under-age girls. The arrest comes amid a wave of cases that began in

January when the Olympic medalist Sophia Bekatorou reported having been raped by the vice-president of the Greek Sailing Federation in 1998. Other athletes like Mania Bikoff, Rabea Iatridou, Marina Psychogiou and Niki Bakoyianni also reported having suffered sexual abuse.

- On 23 February a nationwide strike by healthcare and maritime workers calls for salary hikes, unemployment benefits and the reinstatement of the social benefits that were suspended during the pandemic.

Turkey

- On 14 February Turkey accuses the PKK of the murder of 13 abducted Turkish soldiers, whose bodies are found during a military operation in Gara, northern Iraq, against the terrorist organization, which ended with the death of at least 48 of its members. On 15 February, the Interior Ministry reports the arrest of 718 members of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) and Ankara condemns the US' support of Kurdish terrorism.
- On 24 February Turkey begins mass vaccination of its teachers with the Chinese Sinovac vaccine, ahead of the return to face-to-face teaching scheduled to begin on 1 March and coinciding with the start of the gradual lifting of restrictions.

Cyprus

- On 13 February the police disperse a protest in Nicosia against the government's handling of the pandemic and corruption, after the country suspends its programme for issuing passports in exchange for million-dollar investments, following a newspaper investigation into alleged kickbacks affecting senior officials, among them the Parliament Speaker Demetris Syllouris.

Syria

- On 2 February the Syrian army and the SDF allied with the Syrian Kurdish Federation of Northern Syria, agree under Russian mediation to put an end to a 20-day siege imposed by the SDF on regime-controlled areas in Hasakah and

Aleppo, amid increasing tensions between the groups.

- On 15 February airstrikes attributed to Israel on positions of the Syrian army and pro-government militias in Rif Dimashq leave nine dead according to the SOHR. The action coincides with an Israeli air force drill along the Blue Line.
- On 25 February the US carries out its first military operation in Syria under the Biden Administration, targeting Iranian-backed militias, in response to recent attacks on International Coalition personnel.

Lebanon

- On 5 February Hezbollah condemns the murder of the intellectual and activist Loqman Slim, whose body was found the previous day in southern Lebanon. Slim had for many years been an outspoken critic of the Shiite movements and its allies.
- On 14 February Lebanon begins vaccination against Covid-19 with Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines.
- On 18 February, due to a possible conflict of interests, the judge Fadi Sawan is removed from the investigation into the Beirut port explosion in 2020.

Jordan

- On 28 February the Interior Minister Samir Mobaideen and Justice Minister Bassam Talhuni are dismissed for breaching preventive measures against the pandemic, put in place on 24 February.

Egypt

- On 4 February Mahmoud Hussein, an al-Jazeera journalist in detention since December 2018 for "spreading fake news," is released.
- On 9 February the governor of South Sinai Khaled Fouda announces the end of the construction of a 36-kilometre security fence around Sharm el-Sheikh.
- On 16 February despite the Biden Administration's commitment to adopt a tough stance towards its partners in the Middle East on human rights abuses, the US announces plans to sell missiles to Egypt, hours after the Egyptian authorities arrest two relatives of the Egyptian-American activist Mohamed Soltan, who

had already been detained in 2020 and then released following Biden's election in the US. Soltan, the son of a jailed Muslim Brotherhood leader, filed a lawsuit in June 2020 against the former Prime Minister Hazem el-Beblawi in a US federal court for his alleged involvement in the torture Soltan underwent while under arrest in 2013, following the downfall of Mohamed Morsi.

Libya

- On 1 February el LDPF meets to elect the members of the interim executive council tasked with leading the country to elections scheduled for December. On 5 February, Mohammad Younes Menfi is elected head of the Presidency Council of the future government and Abdulhamid Dbeibah as Prime Minister.
- On 4 February the UN Security Council requests the deployment of observers in Libya to monitor compliance with the ceasefire.
- On 21 February the Interior Minister Fathi Bachagha escapes an assassination attempt near Tripoli.

Tunisia

- On 6 February some 2,000 people demonstrate in Tunis to condemn a repressive security policy.
- On 12 February the army arrests a group of demonstrators trying to block supplies from the el-Kamur oil field in Tataouine, in protest against the government breaking its promises to create thousands of new jobs and increase development in the governorate.
- On 15 February the Prime Minister Hichem Mchichi announces the dismissal of five ministers from his new government, who are yet to be named, following criticism from the President Kais Saied and the surge in citizen protests.
- On 19 February Tunisair workers go on strike to demand that the government save the airline from bankruptcy following the decision by its Turkish partner company TAV-Tunisia to freeze its accounts in light of a report on the airline's unpaid debts.
- On 27 February the country's largest political party, the Islamist Ennahda (Renaissance), leads a large-scale rally in

support of Hichem Mchichi's cabinet and his standoff with the President Kais Saied.

Algeria

- On 15 February Algeria announces the reopening of mosques and bars, restaurants and hotels, as part of the progressive easing of measures to contain Covid-19.
- On 16 February a mass demonstration in Kherrata marks the second anniversary of the Hirak movement street protests, which ended with the fall of Abdelaziz Bouteflika.
- On 18 February the President Abdelmajid Tebboune calls early legislative elections.
- On 19 February a presidential pardon affecting 59 prisoners includes the release of Khaled Drareni, a prominent journalist in the coverage of the fall of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who has been in jail for 11 months.
- On 21 February Abdelaziz Djerad reshuffles his government. Mohamed Bacha replaces Ferhat Ait Ali as Industry Minister; Mohamed Arkab replaces Abdelmadjid Attar as Energy Minister; Moustapha Kamel Mihoubi replaces Arezki Berraki as Water Resources Minister; Mohamed Ali Boughazi replaces Mohamed Hamidou as Tourism Minister; Kamel Nacéri replaces Farouk Chiali as Public Works and Transport Minister; and Dalila Boujemaa replaces Nassira Benharrats as Environment Minister.

Morocco

- On 5 and 12 February protests over the closure of the border with Spain due to the pandemic lead to the deployment of riot police.
- On 14 February Nasser Zafzafi, an activist from the Rif Movement (Hirak) arrested and sentenced in 2017 to 20 years' imprisonment, begins a hunger strike that ends on 23 February after his success in bringing Hirak prisoners out of isolation.

EU

- On 3 February the Commission Vice-President Maros Sefcovic and British Cabinet Office Minister Michael Gove

debate the application of customs checks in Northern Ireland, after the Commission announces the withdrawal of EU staff in charge of controlling the Northern Irish border due to safety concerns.

- On 9 February the Commission approves a joint statement to relaunch and strengthen the partnership between the Union and its southern partners to address common challenges, through a revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the next Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).

- On 13 February the Portuguese Presidency and the Commission reach an agreement on the European Regional Development and Cohesion Funds for a total of 240 billion euros for investments until 2027.

- On 15-16 February the EU and the countries of the G5-Sahel agree on increasing Europe's military presence in the Sahel, in view of the rise in jihadist activity, which, in 2020, left 6,000 people dead.

- On 22 February the European Foreign Ministers agree to extend sanctions imposed against Russia in 2014 over the persecution and jailing of the opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

- On 26 February the European Council commits to strengthening the Union's defensive capabilities, while maintaining its special relationship with NATO.

Arab League

- On 28 February the Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmed Aboul Gheit reiterates his backing of Saudi Arabia after the country's Crown Prince, Mohamed Bin Salman, is implicated by the US in the murder of the journalist and dissident Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018.

March 2021

During March, several countries introduce tougher Covid-19 restrictions. In Spain, there is a government reshuffle. In France, the former President Sarkozy is sentenced in the Bismuth case. In Italy, the Democratic Party (PD) elects

its secretary general. In Slovenia, the Parliament Speaker survives a confidence vote. In Kosovo, Albin Kurti is appointed Prime Minister. The North Macedonian Prime Minister survives a confidence vote. Turkey withdraws from the Istanbul Convention and the President sacks the governor and deputy governor of the country's central bank. Anti-government protests take place in Lebanon, Jordan and Tunisia. In Egypt, passage through the Suez Canal is blocked. In Libya, the Parliament approves a new government.

Portugal

- On 15 March Portugal begins the first phase of lifting lockdown in view of the drop in Covid-19 infections.

Spain

- On 8 March the European Parliament votes in favour of lifting the immunity of three of its members, Carles Puigdemont, Antoni Comin and Clara Ponsati, who are facing charges in Spain for their responsibility in the unilateral referendum on Catalan independence in 2017.

- On 12 March the government approves 11 billion euros to support businesses affected by the pandemic.

- On 10 March the President of Madrid Isabel Diaz Ayuso calls early regional elections for 4 May, thereby breaking the pact between the People's Party (PP, conservative) government and the Citizens party (Cs), the same day that the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and Cs propose two confidence votes against the PP-led regional government of Murcia, which are unsuccessful as a result of three Citizens MPs moving over to the PP. On 15 March, the second Vice-President and Social Rights Minister Pablo Iglesias announces his withdrawal from the government to contest the Madrid elections for United We Can (UP, leftist). Ione Belarra (UP) takes over as Social Rights Minister and the Economy Minister Nadia Calviño (PSOE) assumes the second Vice-Presidency, leaving the third Vice-Presidency in the hands of the Labour Minister Yolanda Diaz (UP).

- On 18 March, despite right-wing MPs vetoing the bill, the Parliament ap-

proves the new euthanasia law, which will come into force in June.

France

- On 1 March the former President Nicolas Sarkozy is sentenced to one year of house arrest and given another two years' suspended sentence for corruption and influence peddling in the Bismuth case. On 17 March, the trial begins against Sarkozy in the Bygmalion case for the illegal financing of his 2012 election campaign.

- On 4 March the CJR acquits the former Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, for crimes of corruption and influence peddling in the sale of arms to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. However, the court hands down a two-year suspended prison sentence to his former Defence Minister François Leotard for the same crimes in the Karachi case.

- On 18 March the National Union of Students of France (UNEF), the main student union close to the Socialist Party (PS), admits it held meetings "for white students only," sparking a national controversy over possible "anti-white racism."

- On 27 March the official report prepared by the commission led by the historian Vincent Duclert at the request of the Elysee Palace concludes that François Mitterrand's foreign policy bears an "overwhelming" responsibility for the crisis in Rwanda in 1994, which led to the genocide of 800,000 people.
- On 31 March the President Emmanuel Macron announces a four-week nationwide lockdown, faced with the rise in Covid-19 infections.

Italy

- On 14 March the former Prime Minister Enrico Letta is elected secretary general of the PD after Nicola Zingaretti's resignation on 4 March.

- On 15 March Italy returns to a strict nationwide Covid-19 lockdown.

- On 19 March the Prime Minister Mario Draghi approves 32 billion euros in stimulus measures to address the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus.

- On 30 March an Italian Navy officer is arrested after being caught delivering secret Italian and NATO documents to a Russian military attaché from the Rus-

sian embassy in Rome. On 31 March, the Foreign Minister Luigi Di announces the immediate expulsion of two officials from the Russian embassy.

- On 31 March Italy extends restrictions against the pandemic until 30 April.

Malta

- On 30 March Karol Aquilina resigns as the shadow Justice Minister, pending a court case over a driving incident from 2019.

Slovenia

- On 30 March the Parliament Speaker Igor Zorcic survives a confidence vote proposed by the SDS of Prime Minister Janez Jansa, New Slovenia (NSi) and the Modern Centre Party (SMC) after Zorcic and two other MPs left the SMC on 26 March over differences regarding the party's role in the government. The result of the motion prompts opposition parties to call for early elections.

Croatia

- On 16 March Austria, Croatia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Latvia ask the EC for a "correction mechanism" for EU vaccine distribution.
- On 31 March Croatia introduces tighter Covid-19 restrictions.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 10 March the Parliament of the Republika Srpska calls for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, the international body overseeing the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Montenegro

- On 4 March Montenegro receives a first batch of the Chinese Sinopharm Covid-19 vaccine.
- On 11 March the ECHR rules that Montenegro's Special Police Unit used excessive force in the repression of opposition protests in October 2015.
- On 14 March the President Milo Djukanovic's DPS party loses the local elections in Niksic against the coalition headed by the pro-Serbian Democratic Front (DF).

Serbia

- On 27-28 March almost 20,000 citizens from neighbouring countries are vaccinated against Covid-19 in Serbia.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 12 March two suspects charged with electoral fraud and bribery are detained in a case involving the husband of the Foreign Minister Meliza Haradinaj Stublla. On the same day, the mayor of Klokot Bozidar Dejanovic is arrested in connection with the case.
- On 22 March Albin Kurti is sworn in as Prime Minister.
- On 29 March Kosovo begins vaccination against Covid-19 after receiving its first AstraZeneca vaccines through the Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access Fund (COVAX).
- On 29 March Srpska Lista (Serbian nationalist) brings the government of Albin Kurti before the Constitutional Court, demanding their ministers in the cabinet be increased from one to two, in accordance with the representation guarantees laid down in Kosovo's Constitution.

North Macedonia

- On 3 March the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev survives a confidence vote that he requested himself, faced with declarations by the opposition Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE, conservative), that it would soon have enough support to defeat the current government led by the Social Democratic Union of North Macedonia (SDSM).

Albania

- On 1 March the EC asks the EU27 to call the first intergovernmental conference to formally begin accession negotiations with Albania.

Greece

- On 16 March exploratory talks between Greece and Turkey continue in Athens, following on from those held in

Istanbul in January, to normalize the situation in the eastern Mediterranean.

- On 20 March Greece, Spain, Italy, Malta and Cyprus sign a joint statement in Athens asking the EU to ensure the fair distribution among states of the responsibility for managing migration. On 29 March, the Commission allocates 155 million euros to Greece to build new reception centres in Lesbos and Chios.

Turkey

- On 4 March the trial in absentia resumes against the 26 suspects charged with the murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.
- On 8 March Levent Gultekin, a host at Halk TV, is attacked in Istanbul in what has become a series of assaults against journalists critical of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP, far-right).
- On 10 March Turkey and Russia inaugurate the construction works of the third reactor of Turkey's first nuclear plant in Akkuyu.
- On 17 March the Chief Prosecutor files a case with the Constitutional Court to outlaw the pro-Kurdish HDP. On the same day, the Parliament strips the HDP deputy Omer Faruk Gergerliglu of his seat, after the court decides to uphold his two-year prison sentence for spreading terrorist propaganda.
- On 20 March Turkey withdraws from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).
- On 20 March Recep Tayyip Erdogan sacks the governor of the central bank, Naci Agbal, after four months in the post. On 29 March the deputy governor Murat Cetinkaya is also sacked. The two dismissals lead the Turkish lira to drop sharply against the dollar.
- On 23 March more than 150 people are arrested suspected of ties with the cleric Fetullah Gulen.
- On 24 March President Erdogan announces that drafting will begin of the new Constitution in mid-2022.

Cyprus

- On 10 March the government approves the bill for the creation of a Min-

istry of Culture separate from the Education Ministry.

Syria

- On 1 March Israel attacks Iranian positions close to Damascus after the Israeli Prime Minister accuses Iran of being behind an explosion on 26 February on an Israeli ship in the Gulf of Oman. On 16 March, Syria reports more Israeli missile attacks close to Damascus, fired from the Golan Heights.
- On 12 March the European Parliament votes by an absolute majority to maintain the programme of sanctions on Syria while there are no noteworthy advances towards peace or democratization in the country.
- On 15 March it is 10 years since the beginning of the civil war, which has already left almost 400,000 people dead and six million internally displaced people and refugees.
- On 26 March the 5th International Conference on Syria begins, which ends on 30 March with a commitment from the international community to donate 5.3 billion euros.
- On 28 March Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria conduct a raid on the al-Hol camp, home to some 62,000 people, some of whom are linked, to differing degrees, to Daesh. They arrest the jihadist leader Saad al-Iraqi.

Lebanon

- On 3-4 March new protests condemn the failure of the political system to revert the country's worst economic crisis in 30 years. The protests intensify during the month with the devaluation of the Lebanese lira to all-time lows.
- On 17 March the activist and outspoken Hezbollah critic Kinda Khatib is released after nine months in prison on charges of collaborating with Israel.

Jordan

- On 15 March the in Amman police disperse demonstrations against the severe measures in place since 9 March to address the sharpest increase in Covid-19 infections since the beginning of the pandemic and following the death of six people due to oxygen shortages

in Salt Hospital, which led to the dismissal on 13 March of the Health Minister Nathir Obeidat.

- On 17 March the State Security Court sentences six people to death after finding them guilty for the kidnapping and torture in October 2020 of a young man in Zarqa, as revenge for a confrontation between gangs.

Egypt

- On 2 March coinciding with the signing of a bilateral military cooperation agreement, Egypt announces its support for Sudan's proposal to develop a Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) negotiation mechanism through an international quartet, aimed at getting Ethiopia to sign a binding agreement and avoid an imminent and unilateral filling of the dam. The EU and UAE offer to mediate.
- On 4 March Egypt begins its Covid-19 immunization campaign with Sinopharm and AstraZeneca vaccines.
- On 10 March Egypt announces its intention to sign an agreement with Libya and Chad to build a road that links the three countries, as part of a multi-sectoral cooperation strategy with its neighbours which counterbalances Turkish influence.
- On 12 March Turkey and Egypt resume diplomatic ties, which have been frozen since the fall of Mohamed Morsi.
- On 23 March traffic through the Suez Canal is blocked after the Taiwanese container ship Ever Given runs aground. On 29 March, the ship is freed, thereby ending the canal's worst crisis since the Yom Kippur war.
- On 30 March an Egyptian court drops charges against 20 NGOs accused in 2011 of illegal foreign funding. The decision follows another similar ruling in favour of 20 NGOs in December 2020.

Libya

- On 10 March the Parliament approves the Government of National Unity (GNU) of the Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, which succeeds the Government of National Accord (GNA) of Fayez al-Sarraj.
- On 10 March around 120 migrants are released, most of them Egyptian, af-

ter being held and tortured by traffickers in Bani Walid.

- On 24 March the military commander and Khalifa Haftar ally Mahmoud al-Werfalli, wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC), is assassinated in Benghazi.

Tunisia

- On 13 March Tunisia begins vaccination against Covid-19 with the Russian Sputnik-V vaccine.
- On 22 March Tunisia becomes the first Maghreb country to launch its own satellite, Challenge-1, from Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.
- On 31 March there are clashes in Tataouine during protests calling for the implementation of clauses in the 2017 el-Kamur agreement and the resignation of the provincial governor.

Algeria

- On 2 March the French President Emmanuel Macron recognizes that the Algerian national leader Ali Boumendjel was "tortured and murdered" by the French army in 1957, during the Algerian War of Independence, following a report drafted by the historian Benjamin Stora, at the request of the Elysee.
- On 12 February Algeria announces that it will receive 40 million doses of the Sputnik-V vaccine and that it has reached a deal with Russia to manufacture the vaccine on Algerian soil.

Morocco

- On 14 March the newspaper Akhbar al-Yaoum, which was critical of the Royal Palace, shuts down, citing difficulties arising from the 2018 jailing of its former director and owner Taoufik Bouachrine and "harassment" from the government along with its refusal provide the aid given to other media during the pandemic.
- On 22 March Mohammed VI appoints Ahmed Rahhou president of the Competition Council; Zineb el-Adaoui, the first president of the Court of Accounts; Mohamed Abdennabaoui, the first president of the Court of Cassation; and Moulay el-Hassan Daki as the King's Prosecutor.

- On 23 March the historian Maati Monjib is provisionally released after a 20-day hunger strike. Monjib had been held in custody since 29 December 2020 in two trials, one of them related with a project led by the Dutch NGO Free Press Unlimited to promote the StoryMaker application that enables anonymous citizen journalism.
- On 30 March the Prime Minister Saadeddine Othmani blocks the law on legalizing cannabis, two weeks after the government unveils a plan to allow the therapeutic use of marijuana, further deepening the internal divisions in the ruling Justice and Development Party (PJD, Islamist).
- On 31 March Morocco is one of the top ten countries in the world in terms of vaccination rates, after having immunized 12% of its population in two months, mostly with AstraZeneca through the Indian Vaccine Maitri programme.

Mauritania

- On 22 March Mauritania reestablishes diplomatic ties with Qatar after the Gulf States end their blockade on the Middle Eastern country.
- On 26 March Mauritania begins vaccination against Covid-19 with the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine.

EU

- On 1 March the 2017 EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Association Agreement enters into force.
- On 2 March the EU Court of Justice (CJEU) rules that the regulations Poland adopted in 2018 for appointing Supreme Court judges violate EU Law.
- On 4 March the Austrian and Danish prime ministers travel to Israel to formalize a strategy for the joint production of a Covid-19 vaccine, in a decision that breaks with Europe's joint vaccine procurement strategy and which adds to requests from Poland, Hungary and Slovakia for Chinese or Russian vaccines which have not been approved by the EMA.
- On 3 March the Council of the EU approves 330 billion euros for local and regional projects through the structural funds to reduce the impact of the pandemic in the 2021-2027 multiannual framework.

- On 3 March the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban decides to withdraw his party, Fidezs, from the People's group in the European Parliament immediately after the bloc approved a statue reform that allows the expulsion of parliamentary delegations, designed specifically to address the growing discrepancies between Orban and the European people's parties.

- On 3 March the Council approves the regulations governing the cohesion policy, with a budget of 330 billion euros for 2021-2027.
- On 12 March the European Interior Ministers decide to restrict visas for countries that do not cooperate on the readmission of illegal migrants.
- On 15 March the EC announces the opening of infringement proceedings against the United Kingdom for London's unilateral decision in early March to extend the grace period before beginning Irish Sea border checks until October.
- On 22 March the Council of the EU approves sanctions for human rights violations against China, North Korea, Libya, Chechnya, South Sudan and Eritrea.
- On 24 March the EU tightens its mechanism for controlling vaccine exports to ensure pharmaceutical companies comply with the contracts they have signed with the Union, coinciding with the discovery in Anagni in Italy of 29 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine ready for export to the United Kingdom and other destinations, despite the company not having complied with supply terms with the EU.
- On 30 March the WHO and the EU unveil a high-level initiative to create a treaty that addresses global pandemics through international cooperation, backed by France, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Serbia, Albania and Tunisia, as well as 16 other countries.
- On 31 March the Commission take Poland to the CJEU over the country's disciplinary procedures against judges and the lifting of their immunity under Polish law.

Arab League

- On 10 March Russia, Turkey and Qatar advocate a political solution to the Syrian war during talks in Doha, which includes the end of Syria's suspension

from Arab League membership, in place since 2011.

April 2021

Throughout April, most European countries begin gradually easing lockdown restrictions, faced with the moderate downturn in infections and the progress in vaccination rollouts. In Portugal, a court rules that the former Prime Minister Jose Socrates must stand trial. France introduces tougher anti-terror legislation. In Italy, Mario Draghi unveils a post-pandemic recovery plan. Slovenia becomes embroiled in a diplomatic conflict with Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani is elected President. In North Macedonia, the former secret police chief is sentenced. Albania holds parliamentary elections. In Turkey, 10 admirals are arrested and the US recognizes the Armenian genocide. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) suspends Syria. Lebanon announces the extension of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In Jordan, the former Crown Prince Hamzah Bin Hussein is arrested. In Tunisia, President Saied refused to ratify the creation of the Constitutional Court. The Protests continue in Algeria.

Portugal

- On 9 April the courts decide that the former Prime Minister Jose Socrates is to stand trial on charges of falsifying documents and money laundering in Operation Marquis, an investigation into his alleged fraudulent connections with the former head of Banco Espirito Santo.
- On 18 April hundreds demonstrate in Lisbon against a request to outlaw the far-right Chega party, set in motion by the former socialist presidential candidate Ana Gomes.

France

- On 8 April the Parliament adopts a law to protect regional languages.
- On 8 April the President Emmanuel Macron announces that he will replace the National School of Administration (ENA) with the Public Service Institute

(ISP), which will be more flexible, diverse and open to society.

- On 15 April the Parliament approves the National Security law, pushed forwards by Emmanuel Macron, which sparked protests in late 2020 by journalists and civil society organizations.
- On 21 April 20 retired generals condemn the “disintegration” of France due to a failure to uphold republican values and the risk of a “racial war.”
- On 23 April a police employee is stabbed in the throat and killed in Rambouillet, in the Ile-de-France, by a radicalized Tunisian, who is shot dead by police. After the attack, the government announces tougher anti-terror legislation.
- On 28 April France arrests seven former members of the Red Brigades and other radical groups convicted in Italy for terrorism.

Italy

- On 1 April the government approves a decree in an effort to ban big ships from the waters around Venice, to protect the city’s foundations from erosion.
- On 1 April the ship Open Arms docks in Pozzallo with 209 migrants.
- On 3, 4 and 5 April Italy imposes another lockdown to prevent an increase in Covid-19 infections during Easter week.
- On 5 April the coast guard rescues 160 migrants trying to reach Lampedusa.
- On 6 April there are demonstrations against the government’s Covid-19 restrictions. On 12 April, clashes break out in Rome between demonstrators from the lo Apro (I Open) movement and militants from the far-right Casapound group.
- On 26 April 99 members of the Sacra Corona Unita’s Strisciuglio clan are arrested in an operation in Bari.
- On 26 April the gradual opening begins of activity suspended due to the pandemic.
- On 26-27 April the Prime Minister Mario Draghi presents his 221.5-billion-euro post-pandemic recovery plan to the Parliament, which has been previously negotiated with the EC.

Malta

- On 7 April the government announces its calendar for the country’s pro-

gressive reactivation following a drop in Covid-19 infections.

- On 20 April the CJEU rules in favour of Malta’s system for appointing judges, in which the Prime Minister can participate in their designation, thereby dismissing an objection filed by the Repubblica association.
- On 29 April the European Parliament call for those people implicated in the murder of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia to be tried and highlights the need for guaranteeing press freedoms in Malta.

Slovenia

- On 12 April the Bosnian Presidency summons the Slovenian ambassador in Sarajevo over statements allegedly made by the Slovenian President Borut Pahor and an alleged non-paper sent to the EU by the Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa in which a proposal was made to “redraw” the borders of the Balkans and “dissolve” Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- On 27 April thousands gather in Ljubljana to condemn the authoritarian drift of Janez Jansa’s government.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 7 April at least 55 migrants in quarantine for possible Covid-19 infections escape from the Miral reception centre in Velika Kladusa.
- On 8 April Jovan Divjak, the Serbian general who fought with the Bosnian troops to defend Sarajevo against the Bosnian Serb seige in 1992, dies.

Montenegro

- On 8 April the government postpones the approval of a law that would facilitate obtaining citizenship, following protests by nationalist organizations.
- On 20 April the police arrest Slobodan Kascelan, the alleged boss of the so-called Kavac drug gang from Kotor.
- On 26 April the Economy Minister Branko Vujovic is arrested in connection with guarantees given to the bankrupt Podgorica Aluminium Plant (KAP) in 2009.
- On 28 April Zdravko Krivokapic announces that his government will form a

commission to negotiate the dispute with Croatia over the Prevlaka peninsula.

Serbia

- On 10 April thousands gather in Belgrade to call for an “ecological uprising” against environmental pollution and construction works next to rivers.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 2 April Vetevendosje’s parliamentary majority proposes an amendment to the Election Law to allow the diaspora to vote in embassies instead of by post.
- On 4 April the Parliament elects Vjosa Osmani, from the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK, liberal nationalist), as President of Kosovo.

North Macedonia

- On 13 April the former secret police chief Saso Mijalkov is convicted for abuse of power and the illegal procurement of surveillance equipment.

Albania

- On 8 April Tirana-Rinas airport is brought to a standstill because of an air traffic controllers strike demanding salary hikes.
- On 19 April five people are stabbed by a man in a mosque in Tirana.
- On 25 April Albania holds legislative elections won by Edi Rama’s Socialist Party (PS) with 48.62% of the votes, followed by Lulzim Basha’s Democratic Party (PD), which took 39.47% of the votes.

Greece

- On 2 April six vessels carrying 300 people try to leave Turkish shores and reach Lesbos without Turkish patrols making any attempt to stop them, sparking yet another confrontation with Greece.
- On 9 April the journalist Giorgos Karaivaz, a specialist in criminal investigation, is assassinated in Athens.
- On 24 April the eviction begins of the Kara Tepe-1 migrant camp, in Lesbos.

- On 26 April the European Parliament strips the MEP Ioannis Lagos from the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn Party of his immunity over his imprisonment for forming and running a criminal organization.

Turkey

- El 1 April the Council of State rules that the stricter regulations on issuing press accreditation, introduced in 2018, breach media freedom.
- On 5 April 10 retired navy admirals are arrested for criticizing the country's possible withdrawal from the Montreux Convention, which regulates the passage between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, and praising the army's role as guarantor of the Constitution and the secular State.
- On 7 April 38 people are sentenced to life imprisonment and a further hundred to between six and 16 years in jail in the large-scale trial for the 2016 attempted coup.
- On 8 April Turkey summons the Italian ambassador in Ankara after the Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi describes Recep Tayyip Erdogan as a "dictator" over the diplomatic incident known as *sofagate*, in which the EC President Ursula Von der Leyen had to sit on a sofa set apart from the armchairs reserved for the European Council President Charles Michel and Erdogan himself, during a visit to Ankara on 6 April to offer Turkey a modernization of the Customs Union, mobility facilities and aid for integrating Syrian refugees in exchange for easing tensions in the eastern Mediterranean and compliance with the 2015 Migration Agreement. On 11 April, Turkey announces the suspension of several contracts with Italian companies.
- On 13 April the ECHR condemns Turkey for the arrest of the journalist Ahmet Altan for his alleged participation in the 2016 coup attempt. On 14 April, the Court of Cassation orders Altan's release.
- On 21 April President Erdogan replaces Ruhsar Pekcan as Trade Minister, appointing Mehmet Mus, after it is confirmed that Pekcan's family-owned company was favoured in the sale of medical supplies to the Ministry.
- On 21 April the US removes Turkey from its F-35 fighter jet programme after having suspended its participation in

2019, when Turkey purchased the Russian S-400 missile system.

- On 24 April the US recognizes the death of more than a million and a half Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Empire in 1915 as "genocide."
- On 26 April Turkey announces that it will produce the Russian Sputnik-V Covid-19 vaccine.
- On 26 April the trial begins against 108 HDP members, including Figen Yuksekdag and Selahattin Demirtas – jailed since 2016 –, for instigating the 2014 protests against Ankara's failure to act in the Daesh siege on the Syrian Kurdish city of Kobani.
- On 26 April arrest warrants are issued for 532 people with ties to Fethullah Gulen and the 2016 coup attempt.
- On 29 April a new curfew enters into force until 17 May, to halt Covid-19 infections.

Cyprus

- On 5 April the government presents its supplementary budget of 250 million euros to address the consequences of the pandemic.
- On 29 April a new attempt in Geneva to unblock four years of paralysis in the Cypriot reunification talks ends without an agreement.

Syria

- On 4 April the SDF agrees to supply oil to areas controlled by the Syrian regime in exchange for a commitment from Damascus to allow imports of basic goods to areas controlled by Syrian Kurdish forces.
- On 8 April Syria blames Israel for a missile attack close to Damascus.
- On 21 April Bashar al-Assad appoints Muhammad Issam Hazima governor of the central bank to replace Hazem Karfoul, amid continued depreciation of the pound.
- On 22 April Syria receives its first batch of 256,800 doses of Covid-19 vaccines, through the COVAX mechanism. On 24 April, Syria receives its first 150,000 doses of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine.
- On 21 April despite Russian, Chinese, and Iranian opposition, the OPCW suspends Syria's rights and privileges

for the repeated use of chlorine gas and the nerve agent sarin against civilians.

- On 21 April clashes break out in Qamishli after an attack by the National Defence Forces (NDF) on a checkpoint manned by Kurdish security forces.

Lebanon

- On 12 April Lebanon announces the extension of its EEZ, despite the ongoing dispute with Israel over the demarcation of territorial waters, which are rich in gas reserves. On 14 April, the US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale arrives in Beirut to reactivate negotiations.

Jordan

- On 3 April the former Crown Prince and Abdullah II's half-brother Hamzah Bin Hussein is arrested, along with another 20 people, for his alleged involvement in a plot against "the stability" of the kingdom. On 10 April, the King and his half-brother appear together to commemorate the 100th anniversary since the founding of the kingdom and after the Royal House confirms Prince Hamzah's loyalty. On 22 April, the State Security Court releases 16 suspects in the alleged plot.

Egypt

- On 3 April the Parliament gives its preliminary approval to a bill that introduces tougher sentences for female genital mutilation, coinciding with the death of the writer Nawal el-Saadawi, who fought against this practice, and of which she herself was a victim.
- On 5 April Egypt and Sudan conclude a military exercise in Merowe, a day after both countries resume talks with Ethiopia in Kinshasa on the GERD, which end on 6 April without an agreement.
- On 19 April the security forces kill three Daesh members linked with the execution of the Christian businessman Nabil Habashi Salama, accused by the terrorist group of collaborating with security forces in Sinai.

Libya

- On 1 April Ali Mahmoud Hassan is dismissed as chairman of the Investment

Authority, which controls the Libyan sovereign wealth fund, who has been criticized for his lack of transparency.

- On 10 April Libya begins vaccination against Covid-19 with the Russian Sputnik-V vaccine.
- On 14 April the Prime Minister Abdelhamid Dbeibah announces during a visit to Turkey that he will lift visa requirements for Turkish citizens to foster Turkish investment in Libya.
- On 27 April the Ocean Viking rescues 236 migrants off the coast of Libya. A day later the Libyan coast guard reports the interception of another 108 migrants.

Tunisia

- On 2 April the government announces the death of three terrorists, among them a prominent member of the Daesh-linked Jund al-Khilafah group (Soldiers of the Caliphate), in Kasserine.
- On 3 April the President Kais Saied refuses to sign in the bill on the formation of the Constitutional Court, saying that the Constitution specifies that the High Court must be created in the year following the first legislative elections, i.e., in 2014.
- On 13 April clashes break out between the police and journalists who have been protesting since 6 April against the Prime Minister Hichem Mchichi's appointment of Kamel Ben Younes as director-general of the Tunis Afrique Presse.

Algeria

- On 1 April the military court of Blida sentences the former head of interior security Wassini Bouazza to 16 years in prison for corruption.
- On 4 April the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune removes an amendment to the nationality law presented in March, under which Algerians from the diaspora accused of acts that are "harmful to the State" can be stripped of their citizenship.
- On 5-6 April the National Council of the Social Forces Front (FFS) and the Forces of the Democratic Alternative Alliance (FDA) announce their boycott of June's legislative elections, claiming they fail to meet acceptable conditions.

- On 6 April Morocco confirms that the former leader of the National Liberation Front (FLN) Amar Saadani has sought refuge in the country after leaving France fearing extradition to Algeria, where he has a number of pending cases in connection with investigations into the entourage of the former President Bouteflika and after defending Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.

▪ On 7 April a nationwide strike by healthcare workers demands improvements in the sector.

▪ On 7 April 23 prisoners held in preventive detention since 3 April for their participation in the HIRAK Movement's anti-government protests, which have been taking place since February, begin a hunger strike. On 16 April, thousands gather in Algiers to call for their release.

▪ On 12 April a postal strike begins calling for the payment of delayed salaries, which continues for several days. On 12-13 April, teaching staff begin a nationwide strike demanding better welfare and working conditions.

Morocco

▪ On 14 April the Economy and Finance Minister Mohamed Benchaaboun meets with Mohammed VI to present the guidelines for the future generalization of basic compulsory health insurance in Morocco.

EU

▪ On 12 April the Council extends sanctions until April 2022 for human rights violations in Iran and adds eight people and three entities to the list for their role in the repression of the protest movement in 2019.

▪ On 20 April the EMA endorses the use of Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine against Covid-19.

▪ On 27 April the European Parliament ratifies the post-Brexit EU-UK trade deal.

May 2021

Various European countries lift Covid-19 restrictions with the vaccine rollout progressing. In Spain, Madrid holds early elections and troops are deployed in Ceuta faced with mass migrant arrivals.

France enters into a crisis with the United Kingdom. Migrant arrivals surge in Italy. In Slovenia, the Prime Minister survives a confidence vote and the Justice Minister resigns. Croatia holds local elections. In Albania, a former chief prosecutor is sentenced to prison and the US bars the former Prime Minister Sali Berisha from entering US territory. Authorities in Greece report the country's biggest wildfire in decades. There are arrests in Turkey following protests against a decree that prohibits filming police interventions and the new Taksim Mosque in Istanbul is inaugurated. Cyprus and Syria hold elections. In Lebanon, workers stage a one-day strike. In Libya the Presidency Council is attacked.

Portugal

▪ On 1 May the state of emergency for Covid-19 is lifted.

Spain

▪ On 4 May Madrid holds early regional elections called on 10 March by the regional president Isabel Diaz Ayuso (PP), thereby avoiding a confidence vote from her government partner, Cs, and PSOE. The PP wins, increasing its seats from 30 to 65. More Madrid (leftist) overtakes PSOE as the second biggest party, Cs disappears from the hemicycle and after the poor results for United-We Can (leftist), the party's candidate and former Social Rights Minister Pablo Iglesias steps down from politics.

▪ On 9 May the lifting of the state of alarm for Covid-19, decreed in March 2020, enters into force.

▪ On 18 May Spain deploys troops on the border with Morocco in Ceuta, faced with the arrival of thousands of migrants, amid diplomatic tensions between both countries over the presence of the leader of the Polisario Front in Spain, to be treated for coronavirus. The EU calls on Morocco to stand by its commitment to halt irregular immigration into Europe.

France

▪ On 3 May the progressive lifting of Covid-19 restrictions on mobility enters into effect.

- On 6 May the United Kingdom sends patrol vessels to Jersey following French threats to block the port and cut off the power supply to the British territory, because of a dispute over fishing rights in British waters following Brexit, which has prompted flotilla protests by French fishermen in the English Channel.
- On 16 May Marine Le Pen is accused by the French anti-fraud unit of embezzling 6.8 million euros from the European Parliament for her party, National Rally (AN, far-right) and its predecessor, the National Front (FN).
- On 19 May 35,000 police officers gather in Paris to demand more resources and a tougher response to the aggression they face.
- On 28 May the President Emmanuel Macron recognizes France's responsibility in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

Italy

- On 9-10 May more than 2,000 migrants arrive in Lampedusa.
- On 14 May the leader of the League (populist) Matteo Salvini is cleared of charges of kidnapping 131 migrants when he refused to allow the ship they were travelling in to dock. The incident lasted for several days in 2019, while he was the Interior Minister.

Malta

- On 10 May restaurants partially reopen as part of the measures to reactivate the economy and ease restrictions due to the pandemic.

Slovenia

- On 26 May the Prime Minister Janez Jansa survives an impeachment motion tabled by the parliamentary opposition over his handling of the pandemic and press freedom violations. On 28 May, thousands of people rally in Ljubljana against Jansa's government.
- On 27 May the Justice Minister Lilijana Kozlovic resigns in protest against her government's decision to annul the appointment of two Slovenian prosecutors to the European Public Prosecutor's Office.

Croatia

- On 16 and 30 May Croatia holds local elections. The environmental activist Tomislav Tomasevic, leader of the Mozemo (We Can) platform, wins in Zagreb.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 17 May Republika Srpska and Serbia begin construction of the Buk Bijela hydroelectric dam, despite opposition from Bosnia's state government.
- On 26 May the former President of Republika Srpska Radovan Karadzic is transferred to the United Kingdom to serve his life sentence for crimes against humanity, handed down in March 2019 by the ICTY.
- On 31 May the former Interior Minister Sadik Ahmetovic is sentenced to six months in prison for abuse of power.

Montenegro

- On 19 May the President Milo Djukanovic refuses to ratify the Prosecution Law reforms approved in the Parliament and accuses the ruling majority of exerting political pressure on the prosecution.

Serbia

- On 16 May the municipal boards of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS, right-wing) call for the resignation of the Defence Minister, Nebojsa Stefanovic and Health Minister Zlatibor Loncar over alleged corruption and amid dissension in the party's leadership.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 19 May the President Vjosa Osmani sacks 12 ambassadors in accordance with the Foreign Ministry's proposal to recall all Kosovo's politically appointed diplomats.

Albania

- On 5 May the Constitutional Court abolishes the provision in the penal code that deems rallies held without police authorization illegal.

- On 19 May the US announces it is barring the former President and former Prime Minister Sali Berisha from entering US territory over accusations of "significant corruption."

Greece

- The Greek coast guard rescues 170 migrants close to the Peloponnese.
- On 3 May bars and restaurants reopen after a six-month closure due to Covid-19.
- On 19 May the most serious wildfire in the last three decades is reported in the Geraneia mountains, burning 7,000 hectares in three days.

Turkey

- On 1 May during a Workers' Day rally, hundreds are arrested in clashes with the police, coinciding with the ministerial decree banning citizens from filming or taking photographs of police officers during demonstrations or public events.
- On 18 May the Interior Minister Sulayman Soylu files a criminal complaint against the Turkish mafia boss Sedat Peker for "insults and defamation," following Peker's video posts accusing Soylu of corruption.
- On 19 May the European Parliament proposes suspending Turkey's stalled accession talks until the country reverses its domestic and foreign policy trends.
- On 29 May the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan inaugurates the new Taksim Mosque located in a square that is a symbol of secular Istanbul and stage of the 2013 Gezi Park protests.
- On 30 May Turkey reports that 1,162 terrorists have been "neutralized" in military operations in Syria and Iraq so far in 2021.

Cyprus

- On 10 May the document that certifies Covid-19 vaccination needed to access indoor public spaces enters into effect.
- On 30 May Cyprus holds parliamentary elections in which the Democratic Rally (DISY, conservative) of Averof Neophytou and the President Nicos Anastasiades wins with 27.8% of the votes and 17 seats.

Syria

- On 1 May Covid-19 vaccination begins in the rebel stronghold of Idlib, with doses of AstraZeneca.
- On 5 and 10 May Syria condemns attacks in Latakia and Quneitra, respectively, as part of Israel's systematic bombing campaign of Iranian soldiers in Syria.
- On 19 May the SDF opens fire on civilians in two majority Arab towns in Hasakah during protests against the decision announced two days previous by the Kurds to increase fuel prices amid widespread shortages of essential services. The incidents continue throughout the month.
- On 26 May the regime holds presidential elections in areas under its control. Candidates are Bashar al-Assad, Abdullah Sallum Abdullah, former deputy cabinet minister and candidate from the Socialist Unionist Party and Mahmoud Marai, from the Democratic Arab Socialist Union, after, on 3 May, the Constitutional Court annulled another 48 aspiring candidates. Al-Assad is declared the winner with 95.1% of the votes. On 27 May, the EU extends its sanctions for another year, believing the elections to be fraudulent.

Lebanon

- On 5 May the media reports that the central bank's reserves have dropped by a total of 513 million dollars, endangering subsidies on basic necessities.
- On 6 May the French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian travels to Lebanon for talks with leaders aimed at ending the country's political paralysis, where there is still no government since Hassan Diab's resignation in August 2020 following the explosions at the Beirut port.
- On 26 May a nationwide strike denounces the government's impotence in the face of the country's worst economic crisis in the last 30 years, which has already left more than 50% of the population below the poverty line.

Jordan

- On 17 May the Parliament unanimously calls for the expulsion of the

Israeli ambassador over the current fighting between Israel and Gaza. On 25 May, Jordan summons the Israeli ambassador over the arrest of two Jordanians on the border between the two countries.

Egypt

- On 4 May Egypt confirms the purchase from France of 30 fighter jets for 4.75 billion euros, as part of an anti-terror strategic partnership.
- On 26 May Egypt and Sudan begin the "Nile Protectors" military exercise, the same day that Kenya announces it has signed a military cooperation agreement with Egypt, amid an escalation with Ethiopia over the filling of the GERD.

Libya

- On 5 May the United Nations delivers its Legal Committee's proposal for holding elections in December to the LPDF.
- On 7 May the GNU announces the creation of sovereign funds for the reconstruction of Tripoli, Benghazi and Derna.
- On 8 May the Presidency Council in Tripoli is attacked by militias loyal to the former GNA Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, calling for the resignation of the head of the Intelligence Service Hussein al-Aib – appointed the previous day and considered an ally to General Khalifa Haftar – and of the Foreign Minister Najla Mangush, over her opposition to the presence of foreign troops in Libya.

Tunisia

- On 4 May Salmane Rezig, leader of the Daesh-linked jihadist group Ajnad al-Khilafa al-Ifrikiya (Soldiers of the Caliphate in Africa), is sentenced to more than 35 years in jail.
- On 17 May the main suspect of the Bardo Museum attack in 2015 is arrested on a migrant vessel in the Gulf of Hammamet.
- On 6 May 38 migrants are rescued off the coast of Sfax. On 17 May, at least 50 migrants drown in waters near Sfax. On 25 May, around a hundred migrants are intercepted in waters near Zarzis.

On 29 May, the authorities announce the rescue of 158 migrants off the coast of Sfax.

- On 31 May the blogger Salim Jabali is arrested for insulting the President Kais Saied.

Algeria

- On 2 May a fire fighters' demonstration in Algiers calling for better wages and working conditions ends in clashes with the security forces.
- On 5 May the activist Amira Bouraoui is sentenced to two years' imprisonment for offending Islam and insulting the President in the context of the anti-government demonstrations that have been taking place weekly since 2019.
- On 18 May the High Security Council includes the Movement for the Self-determination of the Kabylie (MAK) and Rachad Movement on the country's list of terrorist organizations.
- On 30 May the High Council of Magistracy dismisses the judge Sadedin Merzoug, a figure close to the Hirak movement and outspoken critic of the lack of independence of the judiciary.

Morocco

- On 13 May Mohammed VI grants pardon to 810 prisoners on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, including 17 jailed over the Al Hoceima protests, which began in 2016.
- On 27 May the Parliament approves a bill to legalize growing and selling cannabis for medical and industrial purposes.

EU

- On 5 May the United Kingdom grants the EU representative in London ambassador status, thereby putting an end to the first diplomatic incident after Brexit, which began in January.
- On 9 May the Commission announces that it will not renew its contract with the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca after June over the company's failure to meet delivery targets.
- On 9 May the Conference on the Future of Europe is launched, a joint undertaking of the Parliament, the

Council and the Commission aimed at adapting European legislation and treaties to the new challenges of the future, and which until 2022 will also involve civil society through a broad participatory process.

- On 11 May the Foreign Affairs Council announces a 28-billion-euro enlargement support package for the Balkans to counter the growing presence of China, Russia and Turkey.
- On 17 May Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia sign a memorandum formalizing their cooperation on a joint path towards EU membership.
- On 20 May the EU reopens its external borders to travellers from third countries with good Covid-19-related epidemiological situations.
- On 23 May the Ryanair flight between Athens and Vilnius is forced to land in Minsk while flying over Belarusian airspace to enable the arrest of the dissident journalist Roman Protasevich, sparking a crisis between the EU and Belarus and Russia.
- On 26 May Switzerland rejects the new institutional framework agreement with the EU, negotiations for which began in 2014.

June 2021

Portugal is the first country to receive the EU's approval for its recovery plan. The crisis continues between Spain and Morocco and the Spanish government pardons nine Catalan pro-independence leaders. France holds regional elections. In Italy, Forza Italia (FI, liberal conservative) and the League announce that they will join forces and run together in the coming elections. The ICC upholds the life sentence handed down to the former Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladic. Two former Serbian secret service heads are convicted by the ICC. The Albanian Parliament dismisses the country's President. Greece approves the labour reform bill. The Turkish Constitutional Court accepts the indictment on outlawing the HDP. The political and economic crisis in Lebanon continues to worsen. In Jordan, Abdullah II orders a reform of the political system. In Egypt, death sentences

are upheld for 12 Muslim Brotherhood members. Berlin hosts the 2nd Conference on Libya. Algeria holds legislative elections. In Mauritania, the former President Ould Abdel Aziz is jailed.

Portugal

- On 16 June Portugal's recovery plan becomes the first to receive EC approval, thereby securing 16.6 billion euros in grants for the country from Europe's post-pandemic recovery fund.
- On 18 June the Lisbon City Hall admits to having sent personal data of protesters demonstrating outside embassies in 2011, following the controversy over the sending of data to the Russian Foreign Ministry on demonstrators rallying in support of the jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

Spain

- On 13 June the Social Rights Minister Ione Belarra is elected leader of Podemos.
- On 22 June the government pardons nine Catalan pro-independence leaders, jailed over the self-determination referendum in 2017 and the unilateral declaration of Catalan independence.

France

- On 9 June bars, cafés and restaurants reopen and tourists are allowed entry with a Covid passport as part of the measures to ease the lockdown for Covid-19. On 17 June, face masks are no longer mandatory in open spaces. On 20 June, the curfew is brought to an end.
- On 20 and 27 June France holds regional elections, delayed since March because of the pandemic, in which the Gaullist, centre-right The Republicans (LR) party wins most votes, ahead of RN and LREM.

Italy

- On 1 June the Cosa Nostra boss Giovanni Brusca is released after serving 25 years in jail and having collaborated with the authorities.

- On 17 June the government publishes data that reveal that in the last year the number of migrant arrivals in Italy have tripled, standing at 18,170, as compared with 5,696 for the same period in 2020.
- On 22 June Silvio Berlusconi and Matteo Salvini agree that FI and the League are to run together for the 2023 elections.
- On 28 June the International Coalition against Daesh, meeting in Rome, decides to shift the main focus in its fight against terrorism to Africa.
- On 29 June the M5S co-founder Beppe Grillo's opposition to the candidacy of the former Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte to lead the party hampers efforts to revamp the party in order to overcome its internal crisis.

Malta

- On 23 June the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) includes Malta on its grey list of countries monitored for money laundering and terrorist financing.

Slovenia

- On 4 June the Parliament approves an amendment to the penal code, redefining the crime of rape to include sexual acts without explicit consent.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 8 June the ICC upholds the life sentence handed down in 2007 to the former Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladic for war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated between 1992 and 1995.

Serbia

- On 4 June Russia and Serbia announce the start of production in Serbia of the Sputnik-V Covid-19 vaccine.
- On 30 June Nikola Bozic, director of the Petnica Research Station, resigns following sexual harassment accusations from five former students.
- On 30 June Jovica Stanisic, the former state security chief, and his deputy, Franko Simatovic, are sentenced by the ICC to 12 years' imprisonment for supporting paramilitary death squads in the wars in Yugoslavia.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 15 June Serbia and Kosovo resume EU-mediated talks to normalize their relations.

North Macedonia

- On 10 June Russia reports the expulsion of the North Macedonian diplomat in response to a similar measure taken by Skopje on 18 May.

Albania

- On 9 June the Parliament approves the impeachment of the President Ilir Meta for violating the Constitution in his active participation in April's election campaign, and brings the case before the Constitutional Court for its final ruling.
- On 11 June Albania is elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Greece

- On 10 June thousands of Greeks march in Athens against a labour reform bill during a one-day nationwide strike. On 16 June, the Parliament approves the bill, presented by the Prime Minister Kiriakos Mitsotakis, with an absolute majority.
- On 17 June the EC gives Greece the go ahead for its recovery plan, opening the door to the 30.5-billion-euro disbursement the country has requested from the European recovery fund.

Turkey

- On 1 June the media reports that Selahaddin Gulen, the nephew of the cleric accused by Ankara of plotting the 2016 coup, was arrested in May by the Turkish intelligence service in Kenya.
- On 1 June Turkey eases Covid-19 restrictions faced with the drop in infections.
- On 3 June the coast guard releases the figures on rescues in the Aegean Sea, which amount to 5,369 migrants and asylum seekers so far this year.
- On 5 June the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces the discov-

ery of 135 billion m³ of natural gas in the Sakarya field, raising the total discovery in the Black Sea since 2020 to 540 billion m³.

- On 7 June the clean-up begins of an unprecedented outbreak of mucilage which, due to rising sea temperatures and contamination, has been affecting the Sea of Marmara and areas close to the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea in recent weeks.
- On 17 June a man is arrested after forcing his way into the HDP offices in Izmir and killing a worker there. The HDP accuses the AKP government of instigating the action.
- On 21 June the Constitutional Court accepts the Chief Prosecutor's request to start the trial to outlaw the HDP, the second biggest opposition party in the Parliament. The party is accused of acting as the political wing of the PKK terrorist organization.
- On 26 June the Gay Pride march in Istanbul ends with a police intervention and 35 arrests.

Syria

- On 1 June the SOHR sets the death toll since the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011 to be 494,438, of which 159,774 were civilians.
- On 14 June more than a thousand people flee from Jabal al-Zawiya after the regime steps up its airstrikes on areas of Idlib under rebel and Turkish control.
- On 28 June the US carries out major strikes on Iranian militia positions on the Syria-Iraq border.

Lebanon

- On 1 June the World Bank estimates that the Lebanese financial crisis is one of the world's three worst since the mid-19th century, with a 40% fall in GDP.
- On 4 June the central bank says banks must allow customers to withdraw 400 dollars a month plus the equivalent in Lebanese pounds, after, on 3 June, its decision to stop all withdrawals sparked fierce protests.
- On 7 June several streets in Beirut, Sidon and Tripoli are blocked by demonstrators protesting against poor living conditions and electricity, fuel and medicine shortages.

▪ On 17 June the President Michel Aoun and the Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri accuse each other of boycotting the efforts of the Prime Minister Saad Hariri to form a government since October 2020. On the same day, a one-day nationwide strike protests against government incompetence and corruption.

- On 24 June France hosts a conference in support of the Lebanese army, in which 20 countries pledge aid in response to the Lebanese army's call for assistance to survive the economic collapse and guarantee the country's stability. More than 3,000 of its 80,000 soldiers have quit over salary cuts following the depreciation of the pound by 90% against the dollar and faced with inflation rates that have already reached 200% of GDP.
- On 25-26 June clashes increase in the anti-government demonstrations following yet another drop of the Lebanese pound to up to 17,500 to the dollar.
- On 30 June the Parliament approves a ration card law that allocates 556 million dollars to supporting vulnerable families and replaces the subsidy system.

Jordan

- On 5 June security forces clash in Amman with supporters of the lawmaker Osama al-Ajarma, expelled from the Parliament in May for insulting the security forces and inciting protests.
- On 10 June Abdullah II asks the former Prime Minister Samir Rifai to chair a 92-member committee to modernize the political and electoral system.

Egypt

- On 14 June the Court of Cassation upholds death sentences for 12 members of the Muslim Brotherhood as part of a large-scale trial involving hundreds of defendants following the 2013 anti-government protests.
- On 24 June the armies of Sudan and Egypt sign a bilateral cooperation agreement amid tensions that have brought the two countries together against Ethiopia over the filling of the GERD. On 12 June, Cairo makes a formal request for the UN Security Council to intervene in the dispute.

Libya

- On 12 June more than 1,000 migrants are returned to Libya in two operations, coinciding with the sea rescue of another 119 people.
- On 23 June Berlin hosts the 2nd Conference on Libya, in which the US and Germany push for more involvement in the country's democratization, to guarantee elections in December and the withdrawal of foreign troops and mercenaries.

Tunisia

- On 10 June the circulation of a video showing a man in police custody being beaten to death in Sidi Hassine, a day after the funeral of another man who died under the same circumstances, sparks protests and unrest against police brutality, which spread to other working-class neighbourhoods of the Tunisian capital during the week.
- On 14 and 24 June the coast guard rescues 110 and 267 migrants, respectively, adrift at sea.

Algeria

- On 1 June Algeria partially reopens its borders, which have been closed since March 2020 due to the pandemic.
- On 1 June the Court of Tebessa decides to keep the Hirak Movement lawyer Abderraouf Arslane in prison, accused of circulating a video about the May 1945 massacres in Kherrata, prompting the boycott of the legislative elections on 12 June. On the same day, the FDA parties reiterate their demands for the immediate release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.
- On 6 June the former Tourism and Craft Industry Minister Abdelkader Benmessoud is arrested in connection with a corruption case involving the businessman Mahieddine Tahkout, currently being held in detention.
- On 10 June the amendment to the Penal Code is introduced that broadens the definition of terrorism and creates a list of people and entities considered to be terrorist organizations.
- On 12 June Algeria holds early legislative elections that are boycotted by a large part of the opposition, with a

turnout of a little over 23% and amid weekly anti-government protests that have been taking place since 2019, parallel to an increase in repressive measures. The pro-system FLN party wins, securing 98 of the 407 seats, followed by the independent candidates (84 seats) and the Islamist Movement of Society for Peace (MSP, 65 seats).

- On 16 June Menad Nouba, the former head of the National Gendarmerie, is sentenced to 15 years in prison for illicit enrichment and abuse of office.
- On 30 June the Finance Minister Aimen Benabderrahmane is appointed Prime Minister, following the resignation of Abdelaziz Djerad after the 12 June elections.

Morocco

- On 1 June Mohammed VI orders the Interior and Foreign Ministries to readmit unaccompanied Moroccan minors residing in Spain and other European countries, two weeks after the Ceuta crisis.
- On 23 June the Rabat Court of Cassation rejects the appeal presented by the last eight Hirak prisoners to be jailed and upholds the sentence handed down in June 2019.

Mauritania

- On 19 June the police use tear gas to disperse an Islamist protest against a rise in criminal violence in Nouakchott.
- On 23 June the former President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz is jailed in connection with an investigation into corruption, for which he had been under house arrest since 12 May.

EU

- On 1 June the new European Public Prosecutor starts work.
- On 1 June the Commission announces the launch of the NextGenerationEU recovery plan following its ratification by Member States, which provides 80 billion euros in 2021 in long-term bonds and short-term bills. It also presents its budget guidelines for the Member States, asking for the excessive deficit safeguard clause to be maintained until 2023.

- On 7 June the European Court of Auditors publishes a report in which it warns of the collapse of Frontex due to its "inefficiency" in the fight against illegal immigration and cross-border crime.
- On 9 June the European Parliament approves the Covid-19 digital certificate which will allow European tourists unrestricted travel within the European Union from 1 July.
- On 10 June the European Parliament unanimously condemns the action of Morocco for using migrant minors in May's Ceuta crisis as a means of putting pressure on Spain for having allowed the Polisario Front leader to enter its territory to be treated for Covid-19.
- On 24-25 June the summit of Heads of State and Government of the Union rejects the French-German proposal to hold a summit with Russia in an attempt to improve relations with Moscow, condemns the approval in Hungary of a law that criminalizes homosexuality and condemns the instrumentalization of migration flows by countries like Belarus or Morocco.
- On 24 and 28 June respectively, the Parliament and European Council adopt the European Climate Law, which establishes a CO₂ emission reduction of at least 55% by 2030 in order to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

Arab League

- On 15 June the Arab League asks the United Nations Security Council to intervene in the dispute between Egypt and Sudan and Ethiopia over the GERD.

July 2021

Several countries in the region reintroduce social distancing measures and lockdown faced with a rise in Covid-19 infections. In Spain, there is a major government overhaul and the Constitutional Court rules that the lockdown imposed in March 2020 was illegal. France approves a law against radical Islamism. Migrant arrivals to Italy and Malta increase again. Slovenia takes over the six-month European Presidency. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative of the international community amends the criminal code. Montenegro

announces an agreement to repay its debt for the Bar-Boljare motorway. Kosovo recognizes the Srebrenica massacre as genocide. In North Macedonia, sentences are handed down over the failed storming of the Parliament in 2017. North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania reach an agreement for an area of free movement. In Turkey, large demonstrations reject the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and the rector of Bogazici University is sacked. In Cyprus, the worst wildfire in the country's history is reported and Turkey announces its support for the reopening of Varosha. In Lebanon, Saad Hariri abandoned efforts to form a government. Sentences are handed down in Jordan for the coup plot against Abdullah II. In Egypt, the life sentence against Mohamed Badie is upheld. In Tunisia, the President suspends the Parliament and dismisses the Prime Minister. In Algeria, the new government is appointed. Morocco denies having used Israeli spyware.

Portugal

- On 3 July Portugal reintroduces the curfew in municipalities with high numbers of Covid-19 infections faced with a rise in cases.
- On 25 July the colonel Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, a key figure in the Carnation Revolution, dies.

Spain

- On 3 July more than 400 migrant arrivals are reported in Almeria in the last three days.
- On 5 July thousands demonstrate throughout Spain to condemn the murder in La Coruña of a young man, Samuel Luiz, because he was gay, amid a worrying surge in attacks against the LGTB community.
- On 10 July the Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announces a major government reshuffle in which the Economy Minister Nadia Calviño will also be the new First Vice-President to replace Carmen Calvo.
- On 12 July 119 irregular migrants storm the Melilla border fence. On 20 July, there is another attempt, in which 200 make it through into the city. On 22 July, the Moroccan police stop another 150 from crossing the border.

- On 15 July the Constitutional Court rules that the lockdown decreed by the government during the state of alarm in March 2020 was illegal.
- On 25 July the Paseo del Prado-Retiro Park boulevard is added to UNESCO's World Heritage List.

France

- On 3 July France resumes military cooperation with Mali to combat terrorism after it was suspended by Paris on 11 June following the coup d'état organized by the Malian Vice-President Assimi Goita. Paris plans to withdraw 40% of its 5,100 troops deployed there, as of 2022.
- On 4 July Marine Le Pen is reelected leader of the far-right RN party.
- On 8 July the accidental death of a teenage girl in Septèmes-les-Vallons during a gunfight brings the number of victims in the Marseille area over the 12 days to six, amid a surge in drug trafficking and mafia violence.
- On 16 July the CJR charges the Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti with corruption.
- On 17 July there are protests against the government's measures against the Covid-19 pandemic, especially against the requirement for healthcare workers to be vaccinated and Covid passes.
- On 21 July France and the United Kingdom agree to step up joint efforts faced with the surge in illegal channel crossings.
- On 22 July the President Emmanuel Macron calls an "exceptional" defence council to deal with high-level phone hacking using the Israeli Pegasus spyware programme.
- On 23 July the Parliament approves a law to combat the rise in radical Islamism.
- On 27 July Nice is added to UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Italy

- On 9 July the Ocean Viking disembarks 572 migrants rescued off the coast of Libya in Augusta.
- On 14 and 20 July the police in Palermo dismantle Cosa Nostra's Torretta clan, linked to the New York mafia, with 27 arrests.

- On 20 July a vessel travelling with 171 migrants arrives in Lampedusa.
- On 25 July Italy asks neighbouring countries to help fight the fierce wildfires in Sardinia.

Malta

- On 1 July the army rescues 88 migrants. On 14 July, another 81 are rescued.
- On 14 July the Parliament rejects the government's constitutional amendment to redefine what constitutes a criminal offence and allow any public authority to impose high administrative fines.
- On 22 July demonstrators against the Covid-19 lockdown and vaccination measures protest in Valletta.

Slovenia

- On 1 July Slovenia takes over the European Presidency with the priorities of crisis recovery, reflection on the future of Europe, strengthening the rule of law and European values and security and stability in the European neighbourhood. On the same day, the Commission President Ursula von der Leyen urges Janez Jansa's government to respect rule of law and press freedom, following repeated condemnations by journalist organizations of the Prime Minister's attacks on the media.
- On 11 July 86% of voters reject the government-proposed Water Law in a national referendum.

Croatia

- On 8 July the EC approves the post-pandemic recovery plans of Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania and Slovenia.
- On 26 July Serbia's central bank opposes Croatia's decision to include the image of Nikola Tesla on its future euro coin.
- On 28 July the construction of the Peljesac Bridge is completed, the country's biggest infrastructure project, built by the Chinese CRBC and which will connect Dubrovnik with the rest of Croatia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 14 July Osman Mehmedagic, director of the Intelligence and Security

Agency is arrested in an investigation into abuse of office.

- On 23 July the High Representative of the international community Valentin Inzko amends the criminal code prohibiting the denial, condoning, trivialization or justification of genocide and crimes against humanity or war crimes. On 27 July, the Bosnian Serb representatives announce their boycott of the federal institutions until the amendment is withdrawn.
- On 26 July the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council dismisses Gordana Tadic as Chief Prosecutor, citing professional negligence.

Montenegro

- On 9 July the government announces an agreement with three Western banks to cover the cost of 829 million euros to complete the Bar-Boljare motorway, financed since 2014 with a Chinese loan, which has increased the country's debt from 65% to 80% of GDP.
- On 17 July the Parliament approves recognizing the Srebrenica massacre as genocide with the votes of the opposition Bosniak Party and DPS and the centrist parties from the government coalition – United Reform Action (URA) and Democratic Montenegro. During the same session, there is also a vote in favour of dismissing the Justice Minister Vladimir Leposavic for questioning the ICTY's ruling that the Srebrenica massacre constituted genocide. The pro-Serbian government coalition member DF announces a parliamentary boycott following Leposavic's dismissal.
- On 23 July Montenegro rejects modifying the 2018 border agreement with Kosovo.
- On 25 July the first same-sex marriage in Montenegro is registered in Budva.
- On 30 July the State Prosecutor Milivoje Katnic reports that investigations have begun into 114 members of the Veljko Belivuk criminal group after the leader of the True Montenegro party Marko Milacic accuses him of not investigating the group's alleged connections with state authorities.

Serbia

- On 12 July Serbia signs a memorandum with China and the UAE for the

national production of the Sinopharm vaccine.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 6 July the trial begins for the assassination of the Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanovic in 2018.
- On 7 July the Parliament recognizes the Srebrenica massacre as genocide.
- On 14 July the Trade Minister Rozeeta Hajdari affirms that the government is preparing to reintroduce reciprocity measures on Serb imports.
- On 20 July the Serb List reelects Goran Rakic and Milan Radoicic as president and vice-president of the pro-Serbian party, respectively.

North Macedonia

- On 14 July Turkey urges North Macedonia to speed up the extradition of 86 people implicated in the 2016 attempted coup, requested in 2019, increasing tensions between Ankara and Skopje.
- On 23 July UNESCO gives North Macedonia two more years to adopt measures to protect the city's heritage and Lake Ohrid.
- On 26 July the former Parliament Speaker Trajko Veljanoski, former Transport and Labour Ministers Mile Janakieski and Spiro Ristovski and the former secret police chief Vladimir Atanasovski are sentenced to six years in prison over the attempt to storm the Parliament in April 2017.
- On 29 July North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania agree in Skopje on an area of free movement for 2023.
- On 29 July the Parliament adopts a resolution drawing the "red lines" for the talks with Bulgaria on North Macedonian identity and languages, a subject that has led to the paralysis of the country's European accession process.

Albania

- On 3 July the Constitutional Court suspends the initiative of the government and Municipality of Tirana for the construction of a new National Theatre. On 4 July, the Special Prosecution Office launches an investigation, at the request of the opposition Democratic

Party (PD), into abuse of office, corruption and destruction of public property, in connection with the demolition of the old theatre.

- On 7 July Armela Krasniqi is elected as the new chairperson of the Audiovisual Media Authority by the socialist parliamentary majority, before the new Parliament takes office in September, raising concerns from the OSCE and EU over the impartiality of the regulatory body's new management.
- On 13 July the Special Prosecution against Corruption announces that the former Deputy Interior Minister Rovena Voda is under house arrest for suspected bribery.

Greece

- On 2 July, after nine months on the run, Christos Pappas, ideologue, former MP and member of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn, is jailed.
- On 6 July Greece announces new restrictions on nightlife due to the increase in coronavirus infections.

Turkey

- On 1 July large demonstrations in the country's big cities condemn Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention.
- On 2 July Turkey becomes the first NATO country to be included by the US in its annual report on the trafficking of humans to be used as child soldiers.
- On 15 July Melih Bulu, the politically appointed rector of Bogazici University is dismissed after six months of student protests.
- On 23 July a vessel carrying 45 migrants sinks near Kas.

Cyprus

- On 2 July the President Nikos Anastasiades apologizes over the scandal of the irregular granting of passports between 2007 and 2020, which led to the abolition of the national plan to issue passports to big investors.
- On 3 July the worst wildfire in the country's history is reported in Arakapas, which is brought under control on 5 July.
- On 20 July the Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar announces during a visit to the north of the island by the Turkish

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the opening of Varosha, the neighbourhood of Famagusta that was sealed off by the UN following the 1974 Turkish invasion, and the lifting of its military zone status. On 23 July, the UN Security Council condemns Turkey's unilateral position on Cyprus.

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

Syria

- On 7 July the army and Russian forces begin a massive military offensive against Daesh, east of Hama.
- On 11 July Bashar al-Assad adopts two legislative decrees that increase public workers' salaries by 50% and increase retirement pensions by 40%.
- On 17 July Bashar al-Assad is sworn in as President for his fourth term.
- On 20 July Syria condemns Israeli missile fire against al-Safirah. On 22 July, Syria condemns another Israeli attack in Homs.
- On 23 July the OPCW reports that two gas cylinders found at the site of the Douma chemical warfare attack in April 2018 were destroyed on 8 June during an Israeli airstrike condemned by Syria.
- On 28 July the US Biden Administration announces its first sanctions against Syrian officials and entities for human rights violations.

Lebanon

- On 16 July the Prime Minister delegate Saad Hariri abandons efforts to form a government because of disagreements with the President Michel Aoun over its makeup. On 26 July, Aoun begins consultations to designate a new Prime Minister, leading to the election of the businessman and former Prime Minister Najib Mikati.

Jordan

- On 12 July the former head of the Royal Court Bassem Awadallah and a former envoy to Saudi Arabia Sharif Hassan Bin Zaid are sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for plotting to overthrow Abdullah II.

Egypt

- On 11 July the Court of Cassation of Cairo upholds the life sentence for the Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Badie, and another nine senior members of the outlawed group.
- On 11 July the historian Alia Mosalam is arrested on landing in Cairo and then released the following day in a move that comes amid an escalation of repression against academics, particularly those residing abroad.
- On 14 July Egypt pauses Russia's construction of the El-Dabaa nuclear plant for two years amid tensions over Moscow's rapprochement with Ethiopia.
- On 19 July Egypt and Sudan condemn Ethiopia's announcement that it has completed the second phase of filling the GERD.

Libya

- On 1 July the Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh insists that the power to appoint cabinet members is exclusively his and not the Presidency Council's, faced with the disagreement over the appointment of the Defence Minister, the position for which the Council threatens to appoint its own candidate.
- On 2 July the LPDF ends without an agreement to hold elections in December.
- On 21 July the IOM condemns on social media the interception and forced return to Libya of more than 500 migrants on that same day.
- On 27 July at least 57 migrants drown off the coast of Khoms.
- On 27 July Mohammed al-Kani, the leader of the Kaniyat militia sanctioned for alleged war crimes by the US and EU, is killed in a raid by security forces.

Tunisia

- On 2 July Tunisia imposes a new curfew after the daily coronavirus infection rate reaches 6,000 for the first time.
- On 3 July at least 43 people travelling in a vessel from Libya go missing when their boat sinks off the Tunisian coastline.
- On 6 July the United Nations condemns the violence against the leader of the Free Destourian Party (PDL,

Bourguibist) Abir Moussi, who was assaulted on 30 June by Sahni Smara, a deputy with close ties to the Islamist al-Karama (Dignity) coalition.

- On 20 July the Health Minister Faouzi Mehdi is dismissed over the surge in Covid-19 infections. On the same day, the Health Ministry suspends the second day of mass vaccination after, on the first day, fighting breaks out and there are long queues at the walk-in vaccination centres.
- On 22 July the coast guard rescues 160 migrants.
- On 25 July thousands of Tunisians demonstrate against the political elite and especially against Ennahda. The President Kais Saied suspends the Parliament and sacks the Prime Minister Hichem Mchichi, assuming executive authority. The army blocks entry to the Parliament and the national television building, leading to clashes mainly between Ennahda supporters and those of the President. On 27 July, Saied dismisses around 20 senior officials, including the Chief Prosecutor Tawfiq al-Ayouni.
- On 28 July the Public Prosecutor announces an investigation into foreign election funding concerning three political parties: Ennahda, Qalb Tounes and Aish Tounsi.

Algeria

- On 1 July the former Parliament Speaker and former leader of the FLN Mouad Bouchareb is summoned by the Court of Algiers over a complaint filed against him in 2019 by members of the party's Central Committee for overtaking public office.
- On 7 July the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune issues pardons for those arrested during the protests on 5 July – Independence Day. Human rights organizations condemn an increase in arrests parallel to the measure.
- On 7 July the President names the 34 members of Aymen Benabderrahmane's government, 15 of who remain in their ministerial post.
- On 8 July Ibrahim Boughali, from the Unity and Change in Power list of independents, is elected Parliament Speaker.
- On 14 July the arrest is reported of the former Water Resources Minister Hocine Necib for corruption.

Morocco

- On 5 July a deal is signed for the production in Morocco of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine to be distributed throughout Africa.
- On 10 and 19 July the journalists Suleiman Raissouni and Omar Radi are sentenced, respectively, to five and six years' imprisonment for sexual offences. Both, who were arrested in 2020 and began a hunger strike in April 2021, claim to be victims of a political trial because of their criticism of the authorities.
- On 19 July the US announces its first repatriation of a prisoner from Guantanamo Bay under the Biden Administration, the Moroccan Abdul Latif Nasir.
- On 21 July Morocco denies allegations that it used the Pegasus spyware, developed by the Israeli firm NSO, to spy on politicians and journalists, slamming what it calls a "media campaign" against Rabat.
- On 23 July a new nationwide curfew comes into force in response to the increase in Covid-19 infections.

EU

- On 4 July the former European Council President and former Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk steps down from leading the EPP to return to Polish politics and halt the anti-European drift of the conservative Law and Justice party government.
- On 5 July, at the Berlin Process Summit, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel underlines the need to prioritize the Western Balkans joining the EU.
- On 14 July Poland's Constitutional Court rules that the safeguard measures of the EU High Court with respect to the Polish judiciary are not binding as they enter into conflict with the country's Constitution.
- On 19 July the EU, US and NATO blame China for cyberattacks, in collusion with cybercriminal groups.
- On 14 July the ECB launches its digital euro project to adapt to the context of virtual payments, which have increased with the pandemic.
- On 28 July the Commission freezes recovery funds for Hungary and Poland until the autumn because of their drift

away from the Union's values and their legislation against the LGBTQ community.

August 2021

Parallel to a rise in the number of infections from the Covid-19 Delta variant throughout the Mediterranean region and announcements by several countries of the administration of a third vaccine dose, countries in southern European and the Maghreb are hit by serious wildfires and extreme temperatures, while Turkey suffers major flooding. In Spain and Italy the migrant arrivals increase. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative of the international community is replaced. In Kosovo, senior officials are linked to cases of abuse of office. North Macedonia expels a second Russian diplomat. Greece reshuffles its cabinet. Cyprus cancels the European passports of the main Turkish Cypriot leaders. In Syria, fighting intensifies and a new cabinet is unveiled. In Libya, the chairman of the National Oil Corporation (NOC) is dismissed. The Tunisian President makes new dismissals and extends the suspension of Parliament, parallel to the arrest of the former presidential candidate Nabil Karoui. Algeria breaks ties with Morocco. Morocco extends its state of emergency.

Spain

- On 12 August 165 irregular migrants reach the Canary Islands. On 21-22 August, at least 307 more disembark on the islands and on 28-29 another 289 reach the archipelago, where arrivals already stand at 8,222 for this year, 144.4% more than for the same period in 2020.
- On 17 August 57 migrants illegally enter Melilla.

France

- On 11 August the government announces the administration of a third vaccine dose against Covid-19 starting in September.
- On 21 August thousands of demonstrators protest for the sixth Saturday in a row against the requirement of a

Covid-19 certificate for most social activities.

Italy

- On 5 August the requirement is introduced to present a certificate of vaccination against Covid-19, a negative PCR test or a certificate of recovery from Covid-19 to enter numerous recreational venues.
- On 13 August data collected by the European Forest Fire Information (EFFIS) reveal that in the more than 400 wildfires reported so far in 2021, Italy has lost 110,000 hectares, four times more than the average for the last decade, especially in Sardinia and the southern half of the peninsula, where temperatures have been recorded of up to 48.8 degrees, the highest in European history.
- On 26 August the Economy Undersecretary Claudio Durigon from the far-right the League resigns after pressure from the other parties in the government coalition following his proposal to change the name of a square in Latina to that of the dictator Benito Mussolini's brother.
- On 28 August Lampedusa registers the arrival of 820 migrants.

Slovenia

- On 4 August a 71% increase in Covid-19 infections in Slovenia over the last week is reported, where preparations are underway to reintroduce social restrictions, with only 38.5% of the population vaccinated.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 1 August the former German minister Christian Schmidt replaces the Austrian Valentin Inzko as High Representative of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- On 10 August the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina reports that only 18 war crimes cases were completed in 2020, in comparison with 49 in 2019, with 571 cases yet to be resolved involving 4,498 suspects.

Serbia

- On 17 August, in anticipation of a new wave of Covid-19 infections, this

time the Delta variant, Serbia begins administering a third dose of the vaccine.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 4 August the dismissal of the head of the Financial Intelligence Unit is announced after he can be heard discussing plans for taking over the media in audio recordings leaked by the media, which implicate civil servants and members of the judiciary in abuses of office. On 6 August, the Chief Prosecutor Aleksander Lumezi orders an investigation into the recordings.
- On 25 August Serbia protests against a Kosovo court's decision to uphold a two-year prison sentence for the MP Ivan Todosijevic for claiming that the massacre of Kosovo Albanians by Serbian forces in Racak in 1999 was fabricated.
- On 29 August the government delays the start of the school year by two weeks, faced with a rise in Covid-19 cases.

North Macedonia

- On 16 August the requirement enters into force for hospitality venues with a capacity of over 30 people to hire private security to check customers' vaccination certificates.
- On 17 August North Macedonia confirms the expulsion of a Russian diplomat on 11 August.
- On 30 August North Macedonia declares a state of emergency for a month due to the proliferation of wildfires.

Albania

- On 15 August Albania and Kosovo announce they will take in several hundred Afghan refugees at the request of the US, with Afghanistan falling into the hands of the Taliban.

Greece

- On 16 August three districts of Athens are ordered to evacuate after two new wildfires are reported in the area. Since the beginning of the month, Greece has been hit by hundreds of fires in the middle of its most severe heat wave in decades.

- On 20 August Greece strengthens its land border with Turkey, predicting a wave of Afghan refugees now that the Taliban are in power.
- On 24 August the Health Ministry announces that as of September only people who are vaccinated or have recovered from Covid-19 can enter leisure or hospitality venues.
- On 31 August the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis reshuffles the cabinet after fierce criticism against the measures taken to address the pandemic and severe wildfires. The economy, foreign affairs, labour and education ministers remain unchanged. Athanasios Plevris becomes the Health Minister to replace Vasilis Kikilias, who takes over the Ministry of Tourism. Takis Theodorikakos replaces Michalis Chrisochoidis as the Citizen Protection Minister.

Turkey

- On 16 August Turkey secretly evacuates 40 Afghan senior officials, including the Second Vice-President Sarwar Danish, the Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar and the head of national security Ahmad Zia Saraj.
- On 17 August the death toll from the severe flooding that has hit Turkey stands at 77.
- On 30 August Turkey completes the construction of 43 additional kilometres of its border with Iran to prevent the entry of irregular migrants.

Cyprus

- On 23 August the government revokes the European passports of the main Turkish Cypriot leaders for undermining the integrity and sovereignty of Cyprus.

Syria

- On 5 August tensions increase along the Jordanian border with intense fighting between government forces and the opposition.
- On 9 August Russian airstrikes attack Turkish army positions in Idlib in response to the actions on 7 August by Uzbek militias allied with Turkey against the Syrian army.

- On 10 August Bashar al-Assad issues a decree for the formation of a new government led by the Prime Minister Hussein Arnus and which maintains all the portfolios unchanged, except the Internal Trade Minister.
- On 19 August Syria reports various Israeli attacks on military facilities on the outskirts of Damascus and Homs.
- On 25 August the surge in fighting in the Daraa region between government and rebel forces displaces up to 45,000 people.

Lebanon

- On 4 August France hosts a new international donor conference for Lebanon, faced with the dramatic worsening of the country's economic situation.

Egypt

- On 1 August Egypt announces the death of at least 89 jihadists in Sinai. On 13 August, another 13 insurgent deaths are reported.

Libya

- On 29 August the Oil Minister Mohamed Aoun sacks the chairman of the National Oil Corporation (NOC) Mustafa Sanalla for travelling abroad without prior authorization.
- On 30 August, in Algiers, two days of meetings with the foreign ministers of Libya's neighbouring countries, the Arab League and the UN conclude with a joint declaration on the importance of respecting the outcomes of the 1st and 2nd Berlin Conferences and Libya's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

Tunisia

- On 10 August 150 wildfires are declared in Tunisia, on the same day that temperatures reach 49°C, the highest in Africa.
- On 13 August the President Kais Saied replaces the governor of Bizerte, Mohamed Gouider. Since the dismissal of the Prime Minister in July, Saied has sacked more than 30 senior officials, including the ministers of Defence, Justice, Communications and Technolo-

gies and Economy and Finance, the head of the Interior Ministry, the Tunisian ambassador in Washington and the governors of Sfax, Monastir, Medenine and Zaghuan.

- On 23 August President Saied indefinitely extends the suspension of the Parliament and the lifting of all lawmakers' immunity approved in July. On the same day, Ennahda announces the dissolution of its executive committee to create a new formation that responds to the "exceptional circumstances" arising from the presidential decisions.
- On 30 August the businessman and leader of Qalb Tounes (Heart of Tunisia) Nabil Karoui is arrested in Algeria on charges of illegal entry after leaving Tunisia, where on 15 June he was released after being detained for six months as a suspect in a money laundering and tax evasion investigation.

Algeria

- On 14 August more than 100 wildfires are reported in seven days in northern Algeria, leaving 65 dead and more than 30,000 hectares of land burnt. Algiers accuses Rachad and MAK of being behind the fires.
- On 16 August the former wali of Tipasa Moussa Ghellai is sentenced to three years' imprisonment for corruption and influence peddling.
- On 24 August the Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra announces it is breaking ties with Morocco over Rabat's "hostile actions."
- On 28 August Algeria calls for the extradition of the MAK leader, who has been living in France as a refugee for the last 20 years. He stands accused of being involved in the murder of the Hirak member Djamel Bensmail, who was lynched on 11 August in Larbaa Nath Irathen following allegations that he was possibly responsible for the severe fires in the region.

Morocco

- On 23 August Morocco extends the state of emergency until 31 October, after registering the highest infection rates in August since the beginning of the pandemic.

- On 27 August Morocco closes its embassy in Algiers in response to Algeria announcing it is breaking diplomatic relations.

EU

- On 4 August the EU reports the mobilization, through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, of air and land assistance in putting out the forest fires that are affecting Italy, Greece, North Macedonia and Albania.
- On 29 August in an effort to avoid internal splits similar to those that followed the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015, the European President Ursula von der Leyen urges Member States to adopt measures before the anticipated mass arrival of refugees following the Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan.

September 2021

Portugal holds local elections. In Spain the Cumbre Vieja volcano on La Palma erupts and a massive wildfire rages through Malaga. France and the EU enter a diplomatic crisis with Australia, the US and the United Kingdom. Italy makes Covid-19 vaccination certificates a requirement to work. Malta imposes a record fine on Pilatus Bank. Demonstrations are held by anti-vaccine protesters in Slovenia. Croatia moves forward in its process to adopt the euro. In Montenegro, there are clashes during the inauguration of the head of the country's Serbian Orthodox Church. Tensions rise between Serbia and Kosovo with the decision not to renew the agreement on car number plates. In Albania, the new government is sworn in. Turkey begins talks with the EU to reinvigorate bilateral trade. The Syrian army enters Daraa. Lebanon successfully forms a government. In Libya, Saadi Gaddafi is released and there is fierce fighting in Tripoli. In Tunisia, President Saied increases his powers and announces a constitutional reform. Algeria closes its airspace to Morocco and new sentences are handed down to members of the entourage of the recently deceased former President Bouteflika. Morocco holds legislative elections.

Portugal

- On 10 September the former President Jorge Sampaio dies.
- On 27 September Portugal holds local elections with a 46% abstention rate. In Lisbon, the victory of Carlos Moedas from the Social Democratic Party (PSD, conservative), ends 14 years of socialist control. The same change takes place in socialist strongholds like Coimbra, Ponta Delgada and Funchal. In Porto, the independent Rui Moreira is reelected as mayor.

Spain

- On 8 September the Interior Ministry blames organized criminal groups for the 43% increase in hate crimes based on sexual orientation in the first quarter of 2021, as compared with the previous year.
- On 13 September Spain deploys troops to join the fight against the wildfires reported in Estepona, in Malaga, which have already burnt 7,000 hectares in a week, leading to the evacuation of more than 2,600 people.
- On 19 September the Cumbre Vieja volcano on La Palma, the Canary Islands, erupts, forcing more than 6,000 people to evacuate. The eruption continues until 25 December.
- On 27 September around 450 migrants arrive in Andalusia, Murcia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands from Algeria, amid an increase in recent weeks in arrivals along this migration route.
- On 15 September the first meeting takes place in a new round of talks between the central and Catalan governments in efforts to resolve the Catalan political issue.

France

- On 1 September Emmanuel Macron launches his presidential campaign "Security, the mother of all battles" in Marseille, considered the EU's least safe city. On 6 September, the Interior Minister confirms it has expelled 636 foreign nationals "suspected of Islamist radicalization" since 2018.
- On 10 September the former Health Minister Agnes Buzyn becomes the first

politician to be charged by the Public Prosecutor over her handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- On 17 September France summons its ambassadors in the US and Australia for consultations and cancels a defence summit with the UK in response to the surprise announcement, on 15 September, of the creation of a new military alliance, AUKUS, between Washington, London and Canberra, forged without NATO's or the EU's knowledge. It means the cancellation by Australia of the multimillion-euro contract from 2016 for the construction of 12 French conventional submarines, so that the country can instead sign a deal with the US for nuclear submarines.
- On 20 September Emmanuel Macron issues an apology on behalf of France to the almost 200,000 Algerian harkis who sided with the French army during the war in Algeria and who later suffered reprisals after being abandoned by Paris.
- On 28 September France and Greece sign a defence cooperation pact to ensure the protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both countries.
- On 30 September a court in Paris sentences the former President Nicolas Sarkozy to one year in prison for the illegal financing of his 2012 presidential campaign, in the so-called Bygmalion case.

Italy

- On 16 September around 108 migrants arrive in Lampedusa, bringing the total number currently in the island's reception centre to 880.
- On 17 September Italy becomes the first Western country to require workers to provide a Covid-19 vaccination certificate.
- On 23 September the former senator and co-founder of FI Marcelo Dell'Utri is cleared of his 12-year prison sentence, handed down in 2018 for his involvement in deals made between the State and the mafia in the 1990s.
- On 30 September the former mayor of Riace Domenico Lucano is sentenced to more than 13 years' imprisonment for irregularities in the management of asylum applications.

Malta

- On 1 September Malta imposes a record fine of 4.9 million euros on Pylatus Bank, for its failure to guard against suspicious million-euro transactions. The bank was closed by the State in November 2018, more than a year after the murder of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, who repeatedly accused the entity of allowing money laundering.

Slovenia

- On 3 September an anti-vaccination and coronavirus denialist group storms the studio of the RTVS public broadcaster demanding air time to voice their views, before being removed by police. On 15 September, large weekly protests begin in Ljubljana against vaccination.

Croatia

- On 10 September the EC, the eurozone and Croatia sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the preparations for producing euro coins, with a view to Croatia adopting the European currency on 1 January 2023.

Montenegro

- On 5 September clashes break out in Cetinje during the inauguration of the bishop Joanikije II as head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro. The demonstrators are protesting against the ceremony being held in the historical Montenegrin capital and consider it an act of Serbian expansionism. On 22 September, the Parliament backs an initiative to call upon the Constitutional Court to rule whether or not the President Milo Djukanovic violated his responsibilities by supporting the protests.
- On 8 September the mayor of Niksic, Marko Kovacevic, is accused by the State Prosecutor of inciting hatred for denying that the Srebrenica massacres were genocide.
- On 24 September the Supreme Court upholds the charges against the former mayor of Podgorica Slavoljub Stijepovic for money laundering and as-

sociation with a criminal organization in the Envelope affair.

Serbia

- On 11 September thousands protest in Belgrade against Rio Tinto's plans to mine Lithium in Loznica.
- On 13 September Borisav Jovic, the President of Yugoslavia between 1990 and 1991, dies of Covid-19.
- On 15 September the Parliament adopts a bill requiring public companies to use the Cyrillic alphabet and offer tax breaks to private companies that use it.
- On 15 September Serbia and Republika Srpska celebrate the day of Serbian unity, created in 2020, amid growing concerns among countries in the region of a surge in Serbian nationalism.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 9 September the Deputy Prime Minister Besnik Bislimi announces that, as of 15 September, Kosovo will not renew its agreement with Serbia on car number plates and will only accept plates that begin with the initials of the Republic of Kosovo. On 20 September, Kosovo's police force disperses hundreds of Kosovo Serbs close to the Jarinje and Zubin Potok border crossing that demand to be allowed to keep using their Serbian registration plates. On 27 September, Serbia gives NATO 24 hours to respond to the situation and Kosovo reports attacks on offices of its Interior Ministry in northern Kosovo. On 30 September, Serbia and Kosovo agree to ease the crisis and withdraw their respective military forces from their shared border.
- On 15 September the trial begins at the Specialist Kosovo Chambers against Salih Mustafa, a former UÇK commander charged with murder, unlawful detention and the torture of Serbian prisoners in 1999.

North Macedonia

- On 3 September the national population census begins, proposed in March in view of the pandemic. This census, the first to be conducted since 2002, was approved in the Parliament

on 21 January despite the initial boycott by the opposition VMRO-DPMNE.

- On 11 September the Health Minister Venko Filipce resigns over the fire on 9 September at a hospital for Covid-19 patients in Tetovo, in which 14 people died.

Albania

- On 15 September thousands take to the streets in Tiran and Fier to demonstrate over the murder, on 10 September, of a young woman by her ex-husband and to protest the inefficiencies of the authorities to prevent violence against women.

- On 18 September Edi Rama's new government takes office, comprising 12 women and four men. On the same day, the cabinet approves creating the Media and Information Agency that will centralize government communication. The decision is met with criticism from the opposition, which accuses Rama of propaganda and wanting to silence the media.

- On 22 September the former General Prosecutor Adriatik Llalla is sentenced by an appeals court to two years in prison for falsifying his asset declaration.

- On 24 September, following an appeal, the Albanian judiciary orders the reopening of the case against the former Defence Minister Fatmir Mediu, for the death of 26 people in an explosion at a munitions factory in 2008.

Greece

- On 17 September Athens hosts the 8th summit of southern European countries, which adopts a joint declaration for COP26 in November in Glasgow, in which it reiterates its commitment to climate transition and environmental protection.

- On 20 September 400 of the 550 migrants currently in the temporary Vathy camp are transferred to the new permanent and controlled Samos camp.

- On 20 September Greece issues an official protest to Turkey, accusing it of illegal fishing in Greek waters in the Aegean Sea.

- On 27 September an earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale in

Crete leaves one dead and thousands displaced.

Turkey

- On 6 September the EC begins talks with Turkey to boost bilateral trade, as part of efforts to normalize ties, as agreed in June by the European Council.

- On 7 September the Public Prosecutor orders 240 new arrests in connection with the attempted coup in July 2016.

- On 14 September the trial begins against eight lawyers of the leader of the PKK terrorist organization Abdullah Ocalan, for cooperating with terrorists.

Cyprus

- On 3 September the Turkish Vice-President Fuat Oktay announces that Turkey will begin new oil and gas exploration in Cypriot waters if the exploration announced in late August by Cyprus, Exxon Mobil and Qatar Petroleum goes ahead.

Syria

- On 1 September the army, supported by Iranian militias, steps up its offence against the rebel stronghold in Daraa. On 6 September, a precarious ceasefire is established between the rebel forces and the government, who are negotiating a deal to put an end to three months of siege on the city. On 9 September, the Syrian army enters Daraa.

- On 3 September the Syrian air defences shoot down missiles fired by Israel at Damascus.

- On 9 September a French court upholds the four-year prison sentence handed down for corruption between 1996 and 2016 to Rifaat al-Assad, Bashar al-Assad's uncle and the former Vice-President of Syria, who has been living in exile since 1984.

- On 14 September hours after Vladimir Putin and Bashar al-Assad meet in Moscow, the Russian airforce bombs areas of Aleppo controlled by the opposition and included in the 2020 ceasefire.

- On 24 September the UN updates the official death toll for the war in Syria, setting it at 350,000.

- On 26 September Russian warplanes bomb SNA targets in Afrink and areas controlled by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in Idlib, a day before the Turkish and Russian presidents meet to discuss Syria.

Lebanon

- On 1 September the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths announces that 10 million dollars will be allocated to Lebanon to ease the fuel crisis.

- On 8 September Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan agree in Amman to export natural gas to Lebanon from Egypt through Jordan and Syria.

- On 9 September two Iranian ships arrive in Baniyas with fuel and other materials to help with the shortages of fuel and essential goods in Lebanon, at the request of the Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and in defiance of the US embargo on the Islamic Republic.

- On 9 September the government launches a cash card programme to help half a million vulnerable families.

- On 10 September the political leaders agree on the composition of a new government led by Nayib Mikati and composed largely of technocrats. On 20 September, the Parliament approves the new government.

Egypt

- On 2 September Egypt presents the biggest factory in the Middle East and North Africa for producing Covid-19 vaccines in 6th of October City.

- On 10 September the Daesh commander in Sinai Mohamed Saad Kamel turns himself in to a tribal union loyal to the army.

- On 21 September the general Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, Defence Minister of the former President Mubarak, dies.

Libya

- On 3 September intense fighting in Tripoli between the Stabilization Support Force and the 444 Brigade endangers the already fragile ceasefire and the elections scheduled for December.

- On 6 September Saadi Gaddafi, Muammar Gaddafi's son, is released after serving a seven-year prison sentence.

- On 8 September the Parliament Speaker Aguila Saleh approves the law on choosing the head of state, in a decision criticized by the High State Council and 22 deputies for not having been debated in the Parliament.
- On 17 September the IMO report that during the previous week the Libyan authorities intercepted and returned to the North African country more than 800 migrants, bringing the total number intercepted in 2021 to 24,000, 6,000 of whom are being held arbitrarily.
- On 20 September the Tobruk-based Parliament approves reducing the GNU's powers, after which the Prime Minister Abdelhamid Dbeibah calls for demonstrations to support the government.

Tunisia

- On 11 September the President Kais Saied announces his intention to reform the 2014 Constitution.
- On 22 September the Presidency announces new powers for Kais Saied, including that of ruling by decree.
- On 26 September more than 100 representatives of Ennahda resign in protest against the party's action in the political crisis triggered by President Saied.

Algeria

- On 16 September a military court in Blida upholds the 16-year prison sentence against the former internal security chief Wassini Bouazza for interfering in the presidential election process in 2019.
- On 17 September the former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika dies. He had resigned in April 2019 following the wave of protests calling for democratization.
- On 22 September Algeria closes its airspace to Moroccan aircraft.
- On 22 September the general Ali Ghediri is sentenced to four years' imprisonment for "undermining army morale." The leader of the Forum of Algeria of Tomorrow (FAD) Hocine Gouasmia is sentenced to 10 years in prison on the same charges.
- On 22 September the former President of the Council of the Nation and former caretaker President following the

fall of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Abdelkader Bensalah dies.

- On 23 September the former National Gendarmerie commander Ghali Belkecir is sentenced in absentia to 20 years in prison for high treason.
- On 26 September the former Finance Minister Mohamed Loukal is jailed for abuse of power when he was head of the External Bank of Algeria.

Morocco

- On 8 September Morocco holds parliamentary elections which, with a turnout of 50.35%, end in defeat for the ruling Justice and Development Party (PJD, Islamist) which wins 12 seats, down from 125. They do however bring good results for the parties close to the monarchy: the liberal National Rally of Independents (RNI) led by Aziz Akhannouch and the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) win 97 and 82 seats, respectively, and the centre-right Istiqlal Party, 78. On 10 September, Mohammed VI appoints Akhannouch as Prime Minister entrusted with forming a government. On 22 September, Akhannouch announces a coalition agreement between his party, the PAM and Istiqlal.

EU

- On 2 September Poland declares a state of emergency on its border with Belarus to halt the irregular flow of Afghan migrants entering from Belarus. Lithuania and Latvia adopt similar measures and the EU accuses Minsk of orchestrating a migratory wave in response to sanctions imposed by the Union.
- On 7 September the EC asks the CJEU to impose daily sanctions on Poland to guarantee it complies with a provisional ruling of the Court relating to its disciplinary system for and immunity of Polish judges.
- On 15 September during the State of the Union Address, the President Ursula von der Leyen announces the launch in March 2022 of the European Defence Union.
- On 22 September the ECB estimates that the EU's GDP will drop by 10% by 2100 if it does not take measures for the ecological transition.

October 2021

The government collapses in Portugal. Italy and North Macedonia hold local elections. In Montenegro, the former head of the National Security Agency is arrested. The Serbian Parliament votes against the ban on denying the Srebrenica genocide. Clashes break out in northern Kosovo. Turkey extends its presence in Syria and Iraq. The negotiations for drafting a new Syrian constitution break down. There are protests in Lebanon to call for the recusal of the judge Tarek Bitar. Jordan renews its government and Abdullah II is mentioned in the Pandora Papers financial scandal. Egypt suspends the state of emergency in place since 2017. In Tunisia, President Saied approves a new government. Algeria enters a diplomatic crisis with France, which adds to the one ongoing with Morocco, which leads to the closure of the Maghreb-Europe gas pipeline. In Morocco, Mohammed VI appoints a new government.

Portugal

- On 27 October the draft national budget unveiled by the Prime Minister Antonio Costa is rejected by the Parliament, leading to the collapse of the government and early elections being called.

Spain

- On 14 October the Law on the Comprehensive Guarantee of Sexual Freedom, which was approved by the government in July, is presented to the Parliament.

France

- On 8 October the 29th Africa-France summit is held in Montpellier, marked for the first time by the absence of African presidents and heads of government and the presence, instead, of young representatives of civil society, to analyse the present and past state of relations between France and its former colonies and how they should develop looking to the future.
- On 12 October the President Emmanuel Macron unveils the France 2030

plan, with investments of 30 billion euros over 10 years.

- On 17 October Emmanuel Macron apologizes on behalf of France during the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the police massacre of demonstrators during a peaceful FLN march against the curfew targeting the Algerian population in Paris.
- On 27 October the Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin confirms the closure of the mosque in Allonnes, Pays de la Loire, and the association, Coordination against Racism and Islamophobia of Sainte Foy-Les-Lyon, Auvernia-Rodano-Alpes, for hate speech and defending terrorism.

Italy

- On 3-4 October Italy holds the first round of local elections. The second round is held on 17-18 October. The elections see a drop in votes for M5S, which loses power in Rome and Turin, and especially for the right wing, which loses Milan, Bologna and Naples. These five cities will now be governed by a centre left, now stronger after the elections.
- On 9 October a big demonstration in Rome against the Covid pass ends with unrest caused by members of Forza Nuova who infiltrate the protests and storm the headquarters of the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL), Italy's biggest trade union. The PD and M5S sign a parliamentary motion calling for the dissolution of the far-right party. On 16 October, thousands demonstrate against the attack.
- On 15 October ITA Airways, Italian national airline that replace the bankrupt Alitalia, begins operations amid protests over the relocation of staff.
- On 22 October 406 migrants rescued by the Sea Watch-3 disembark in Pozzallo.
- On 30-31 October Rome hosts the G20 summit that backs the agreement reached at the beginning of the month in the OECD on the global corporation tax and commits to working collectively to overcome the aftereffects of the pandemic and reach an agreement to limit climate change at COP26 in Glasgow.

Slovenia

- On 6 October Brdo pri Kranju hosts an EU-Western Balkans summit marked by the stalled enlargement process and by the offer of economic benefits and political cooperation to avoid the region falling into the sphere of influence of Russia, Turkey or China.
- On 16 October the news programme editor-in-chief at public broadcaster RTVS Manica Janezic Ambrozic resigns in protest against cuts in the news programming, a decision taken amid a standoff between journalists and the government and coinciding with the European Parliament's complaints of the country's hostile climate towards journalists.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 28 October Claudio Graziano, the chairman of the EU Military Committee, visits Bosnia and Herzegovina to formally express the Union's commitment to the country's integrity after the Russian-backed Bosnian Serb President Milorad Dodik threatens to form an exclusively Serb army.

Montenegro

- On 21 October the former head of the National Security Agency Dejan Peunic is arrested for the illegal wiretapping of the Special State Prosecutor's Office.

Serbia

- On 19 October the Parliament votes against debating three resolutions to ban the denial of the Srebrenica genocide, set up a commission to determine the number of deaths during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia and recognize Serb rebel fighters as war veterans.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 13 October several people are injured in clashes in Mitrovica and Zvecan between the police and Serb demonstrators protesting against the seizure of goods during an anti-smuggling operation.

- On 27 October Kosovo sanctions seven people and a company for links with Hezbollah, designated as a terrorist organization by Pristina in June 2020.
- On 27 October the indictment is upheld on the former European Integration Minister Dhurata Hoxha, charged with abuse of office for allegedly lobbying for border changes in exchange for normalizing ties with Serbia.

North Macedonia

- On 17 and 31 October North Macedonia holds the two rounds of its local elections, which end with good results for the main opposition party VMRO-DPMNE and defeat for the SDSM of Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, who announces his resignation.

Albania

- On 19 October the EC again recommends starting accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia.

Greece

- On 29 October the coast guard rescues 400 migrants in waters near Crete.

Turkey

- On 7 and 21 October the security forces arrest 15 people suspected of giving information to the Israel's Mossad intelligence agency on foreign students and Israeli opponents.
- On 15 October more than 50 people are arrested for belonging to the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP-C).
- On 23 October 98 people are arrested for alleged ties with Fetullah Gulen. They add to a hundred or so arrests carried out on 19 October on the same charges.
- On 26 October the Parliament extends Turkey's military mission in Syria and Iraq for another two years.

Cyprus

- On 20 October a week after his coalition government loses its parliamentary majority in the north of the island, Ersan Saner resigns, coinciding with the ap-

pearance of a video allegedly showing him involved in a sexual act, circulated by the Turkish mafia boss Sedat Peker.

Syria

- On 16 October Syria denounces the death of Midhat al-Saleh, head of the Occupied Syrian Golan Office, at the hands of an Israeli sniper.
- On 20 October the blast from two explosive devices kills at least 14 soldiers in Damascus, in the most serious attack in the city since March 2017.
- On 20 October a Syrian army attack on Ariha, in Idlib, leaves 13 dead. In response to the government stepping up its offensive in the area, Turkey threatens to use heavy weapons against the Syrian army.
- On 21 October Syria announces the execution of 24 people charged with terrorism for starting wildfires in 2020.
- On 22 October the US announces it has killed the senior al-Qaeda leader Abdul Hamid al-Matar in an attack in northeastern Syria, two days after Washington denounces an attack on its troops in the country.
- On 23 October the process to draft a new constitution for Syria fails in the sixth round of the Syrian Constitutional Committee in Geneva.

Lebanon

- On 4 October the Lebanese judiciary rejects the request filed in September to recuse the judge Tarek Bitar who was heading the investigations into the explosions in August 2020 at the port in Beirut. On 14 October, at least seven people are killed in clashes in Beirut during the ongoing Hezbollah-led protests against the judge.
- On 9 October Lebanon is left without power for a day and a half after the Deir Amar and Zahrani power stations shut down due to a lack of fuel.
- On 12 October an arrest warrant is issued for the former Minister and MP Ali Hassan Khalil, a close ally to the Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, as part of the investigation into the Beirut port blast.
- On 28 October the US sanctions the businessmen Jihad al-Arab and Dany Khoury and the MP Jamil Sayyed for corruption and undermining the rule of law.

Jordan

- On 3 October Jordan resumes flights to Syria after a 10-year hiatus.
- On 3 October the global investigation run by journalists known as the Pandora Papers reveals that Abdullah II allegedly spent 100 million dollars amassing property in the US and the UK.
- On 12 October Jordan and Israel agree to double the water supply entering Jordan from Israel.
- On 21 October Abdullah II approves the fourth reshuffle of Bisher al-Khasauneh's government in the last year, with changes to eight portfolios.

Egypt

- On 14 October the trial begins against four agents of the National Security Agency over the torture and murder of the Italian student Giulio Regeni.
- On 20 October around a hundred female judges become the first women to form part of the State Council.
- On 26 October Bahaa Kishk, considered a top aide to Hisham Ashmaui, the founder of the al-Qaeda-linked terrorist group al-Mourabitoun, is sentenced to death.
- On 26 October the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi decrees the end of the state of emergency, in place since 2017.

Libya

- On 1 October at least one migrant is killed in an operation in Tripoli carried out by the Libyan forces, which ends with the arrest of more than 4,000 irregular migrants.
- On 20 October the international community expresses its support for the Libya Stabilization Initiative and urges elections be held as scheduled, during the first high-level meeting organized in Tripoli since the beginning of the civil war.
- On 25 October the Zawiya refinery, the only one in operation in Libya, suffers serious damage following skirmishes between armed groups.

Tunisia

- On 1 October Parliament Speaker and Ennahda leader Rachid Ghannouchi

declares the assembly in session and urges lawmakers to resume their duties despite the suspension ordered by the President Kais Saied.

- On 13 October Kais Saied names the new government, led by Najja Bouden Romdhane, the country's first female Prime Minister.
- On 14 October Imed Trabelsi, the nephew of the former President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, is sentenced to eight years in prison for illicit enrichment.
- On 18 October the former minister Mehdi Ben Gharbia is arrested under suspicion of fraud and money laundering.
- On 26 October the former Agriculture Minister Samir Taieb is arrested on corruption charges.
- On 29 October the Hannibal TV television network announces the "voluntary" suspension of its broadcasts, after on 27 October the Independent High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAICA) shuts down Nessma TV and Radio Quran, another two media outlets critical of President Saied, the closure of which follows that of Zituna TV on 7 October.

Algeria

- On 3 October Algeria recalls its ambassador to France for consultations and closes its airspace to French military flights, amid the diplomatic crisis arising from Paris's decision on 28 September to reduce the number of visas for Maghrebi citizens, which in turn comes in response to Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia's refusal to take back illegal migrants sent home by France.
- On 13 October the former Justice Minister Tayeb Louh is sentenced to six years in prison for abuse of office and perversion of justice. Said Bouteflika, the former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's brother, is given two years jail time for the obstruction of justice, in the same case.
- On 31 October the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune confirms the termination of the contract with Morocco allowing gas to be transported to Spain and Portugal through the Maghreb-Europe gas pipeline, in the context of the rupture in diplomatic relations between Algiers and Rabat.

Morocco

- On 7 October Mohammed VI names the new coalition government, led by Aziz Akhannouch, with no changes to the ministers of foreign affairs, the interior, religious affairs and defence.
- On 30 October Abdelilah Benkirane returns as the PJD leader after being elected at the party's extraordinary congress in Bouznika.

EU

- On 12 October the United Kingdom asks the EU for a new protocol for the two Irelands to replace the one agreed in 2020, claiming it was hurriedly negotiated and harmful to British interests.
- On 21 October a European Parliament resolution calls for investigations to be launched into any wrongdoing in EU jurisdictions exposed by the Pandora Papers, which reveal the offshore affairs of the former Maltese minister and former European Commissioner John Dalli and the Cypriot and Montenegrin Presidents Nicos Anastasiades and Milo Djukanovic, among other senior officials.
- On 27 October the CJEU orders Poland to pay a record daily fine of a million euros for its failure to comply with the order to suspend its disciplinary mechanism for the country's judges.
- On 29 October the European Parliament files a lawsuit before the CJEU against the EC for its failure to activate its conditionality mechanism and thus force Poland and Hungary to comply with the rule of law, as laid out in the post-pandemic Recovery Fund agreement.

November 2021

Most countries in the region introduce tougher restrictions against Covid-19 faced with the first cases of the Omicron variant. Portugal holds early elections. Migrant arrivals to Spain, Italy and Greece increase. The rise in illegal migration leads to escalating diplomatic tensions between France and the United Kingdom, made worse by the dispute over fishing licences in the English Channel. Relations between Paris and Rome, on the other hand make good progress. In Croatia, a former minister is

arrested and the ECHR rules against the country for its violation of human rights. Kosovo and Algeria hold local elections. In North Macedonia, the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev resigns as head of the SDSM. In Turkey, the lira crisis continues, sparking protests and a ministerial change. The International Conference on Libya ends in the same month that the UN Special Envoy Jan Kubis steps down from the post. In Tunisia, there are demonstrations against President Saied.

Portugal

- On 3 November the Council of State dissolves the Parliament at the proposal of the President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa to hold early elections on 30 January 2022.
- On 8 November at least 10 soldiers and other peacekeeping agents who participated in United Nations missions in Central Africa are arrested over their involvement in a large-scale drug, gold and diamond smuggling case.
- On 26 November the Parliament approves a new law authorizing surrogacy.
- On 28 November Rui Rio, leader of the PSD, beats the Euro MP Paulo Rangel in the primaries to elect a candidate for the January 2022 elections.
- On 30 November the President Rebelo de Sousa vetoes for the second time a bill approved in the Parliament to legalize euthanasia.

Spain

- On 15 November at least 491 migrants have arrived in the Canary Islands since 12 November. Between January and October, at least 16,827 migrants have arrived at the archipelago, 44.3% more than in the same period in 2020.
- On 27 November more than 100,000 police officers and civil guards demonstrate in Madrid to call for the government-approved reform of the Citizens Security Law to be repealed, claiming that it deprives them of the means and authority they need to carry out their duties.

France

- On 4 November France and the United Kingdom begin talks to try to put an end to the dispute over London's

delay in approving licences for French fishermen in British waters, laid down in the United Kingdom's EU withdrawal agreement.

- On 8 November an Algerian residing in France since 2016 stabs two police officers in Cannes, a crime investigated by the Public Prosecutor as an act of terrorism.
- On 16 November the security forces dismantle an illegal migrant camp in Grande-Synthe.
- On 24 November at least 31 people drown near Calais while trying to reach the United Kingdom, amid a sharp rise in migrants crossing the English Channel. On 26 November, France cancels a ministerial meeting to address the migration crisis, describing the British management of the crisis and that of the fishing licences as "not very serious."
- On 26 November the French judiciary announces the opening of an investigation against the former Minister Nicolas Hulot accused of rape and sexual assault.

Italy

- On 7 November 847 migrants disembark in Trapani, after being rescued between 2 and 4 November by the Sea-Eye 4, whose crew denounces Malta's refusal to coordinate the rescues. On the same day, the Ocean Viking disembarks 308 migrants in Lampedusa and 53 more arrive in Crotone. The arrivals on Italian shores increase throughout November.
- On 23 November the Ethics Committee of the Italian public health service authorizes assisted suicide for the first time since the Constitutional Court's 2019 ruling in favour of applying euthanasia in specific cases, despite it still being illegal.
- On 26 November the Prime Minister Mario Draghi and the French President Emmanuel Macron sign the Quirinale Treaty in Rome, a landmark agreement for enhancing cooperation between Paris and Rome.

Malta

- On 24 November the Maltese Roberta Metsola is elected to be the EPP's candidate to run for President of the European Parliament as of January 2022.

Croatia

- On 9 November preliminary figures for the census carried out in September and October by the National Bureau of Statistics (DZS) reveal that Croatia has lost 400,000 residents in the last 10 years, almost 10% of its population.
- On 10 November the former Regional Development and EU Funds Minister Gabrijela Zalac is arrested in connection with an anti-corruption investigation by the European Public Prosecutor's Office.
- On 20 November the ECHR rules that Croatia violated human rights in the death of an Afghan child in 2017, when border police forced her and her family to return to Serbia by walking along the train tracks.
- On 24 November Emmanuel Macron becomes the first French President to pay an official visit to Croatia since the country's independence, during which both countries sign a strategic partnership agreement, which includes the purchase from France of 12 F3F-Rafale fighter jets for 990 million euros.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 3 November the UN Security Council extends the mandate for the EU Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea) by another year, removing from the resolution all mention of the Office of the High Representative of the international community to win support from Russia and China, after Christian Schmidt warns in his first report of the existential risk posed to the country by Bosnian Serb separatism.
- On 23 November thousands of coal miners protest in Sarajevo calling for better pay and working conditions.
- On 29 November the former Defence Minister Selmo Cikotic is indicted for abuse of office between 2009 and 2011.

Serbia

- On 10 November around 991 migrants are arrested along with seven alleged traffickers in an operation against undocumented centred on Belgrade, Subotica, Sombor, Kikinda,

Sabac, Kraljevo, Vranje and Novi Pazar.

- On 27 November demonstrations in several cities protest against the government's plans to help speed up the expropriation of private property in areas of public interest. The project of the multinational company Rio Tinto to open a lithium mine in the west of the country is at the centre of the demonstrations that have been taking place on a weekly basis.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 12 November 21 out of Kosovo's 38 municipalities hold a second round of local elections, following a first round that took place on 17 October. The ruling Vetevendosje wins in just four of the 12 municipalities, and its mayoral candidate for Pristina, the former Health Minister Arben Vitia, loses against the LDK candidate Perparim Rama.
- On 25 November public healthcare workers go on strike to demand the approval of the draft law on public sector salaries, so they can be included in the 2022 state budget.
- On 30 November the US, the UK, Germany, France and Italy urge Kosovo to enforce a ruling from seven years ago that grants the Orthodox monastery in Decani ownership of plots of land claimed by two Kosovar companies.

North Macedonia

- On 9 November North Macedonia declares a state of crisis over the risk of a power shortage, allowing authorities to intervene financially to help power companies buy electricity from abroad.
- On 9 November the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev postpones a decision to resign after poor results in the local elections in October in response to the announcement of a confidence motion tabled by the opposition against the government coalition led by the social democrats, which on 11 November is unsuccessful. In any case, on 27 November Zaev resigns as leader of the SDSM, which agrees to elect a new leader to be presented to the Parliament as Zaev's replacement as Prime Minister.

Albania

- On 11 November Russia and Serbia describe remarks made by the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama regarding a possible unification of Albania and Kosovo as "unacceptable."

Greece

- On 2 November Greece announces tougher Covid-19 restriction for the non-vaccinated, a day after registering record infection rates.
- On 5 November the police use tear gas to disperse firefighters protesting in Athens calling for their temporary contracts to be made permanent in recognition of their work during the wave of fires in the summer.
- On 27 November Greece opens two new Closed Controlled Access Centres to house asylum seekers in Leros and Kos.

Turkey

- On 11 November the EU renews its sanctions on unauthorized drilling activities in eastern Mediterranean waters, which affect the Turkish oil company TPAO, by another 12 months.
- On 12 November Turkey announces the ban on Syrian, Iraqi and Yemeni nationals from travelling by air to Belarus to help stem the dangerous migration crisis on the Polish border.
- On 15 November Turkey announces a new counterterrorism operation against the PKK in the provinces of Bingol and Diyarbakir.
- On 19 November Turkey and Bulgaria recall their ambassadors after Bulgaria's caretaker government accuses Ankara of rigging the vote of Bulgarians residing in Turkey in favour of the pro-Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MDL) in the Bulgarian elections on 14 November.
- On 23 November the ECHR rules against Turkey for the pre-trial detention of 427 judges following the failed coup attempt in 2016.
- On 23 November the Turkish lira hits a record depreciation, its value dropping by more than 13% against the dollar and the euro, after the central bank's decision to reduce interest rates, at the

President's request. The fall in the country's currency sparks protests in the main cities.

- On 25 November the police disperse demonstrators protesting against Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, during the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Cyprus

- On 5 November Colin Stewart is appointed the UN's Special Representative for Cyprus and head of the UNFICYP, to replace Elizabeth Spehar.
- On 18 November the Supreme Court rejects the appeal by Diko MP Zaharias Koulias against the court decision to award the former Agriculture Minister Costas Themistocleous 25,000 euros in damages for defamation when, in 2006, Themistocleous, a staunch supporter of reunification, sued Koulias for remarks suggesting the former minister was being paid by Turkey to support separatism in Northern Cyprus.

Syria

- On 15 November the EU adds four new Syrian ministers to its sanctions list, raising the number of people sanctioned by Brussels to 287.
- On 16 November the President Bashar al-Assad issues a decree abolishing the position of the Grand Mufti and expands the powers of a council under the authority of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.
- On 24 November Syria denounces Israeli attacks on the province of Homs, amid an increase in such attacks over recent weeks to avoid Iranian bases being set up in the country.

Lebanon

- On 2 November after publishing for 70 years, *The Daily Star*, owned by the former Prime Minister Saad Hariri and one of the leading English-language newspapers for the Middle East, shuts down due to Lebanon's economic crisis.
- On 15 November the investigation begins in Luxemburg against the central bank governor Riad Salameh, for illegal financing, which adds to those ongoing

in Switzerland and France for money laundering, embezzlement, illicit enrichment and tax evasion.

- On 24 November Australia designates Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.

Egypt

- On 3 November the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi orders government institutions to begin relocating to the administrative capital in December, located to the east of Cairo and without an official name. On 23 November, the government holds its first meeting in the new capital.
- On 15 November the requirement enters into force for public workers to be vaccinated or have a weekly negative PCR. On 25 November, the country approves administering a third dose of the vaccine to vulnerable groups.
- On 18 November the former lawmaker Zyad al-Elaimy, the journalists Hossam Moanis and Hisham Fouad and the activists Mohamed Bahnasy, Husam Nasser and Fatma Ramadan are handed down sentences of between three and five years in prison for spreading false news and questioning the legitimacy of state institutions, in collusion with the Muslim Brotherhood.
- On 19 November the Court of Cassation approves the inclusion of the former presidential candidate Abdelmo-neim Aboul Fotouh and the activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, among others, on the country's list of terrorists, decreed in November 2020.

Libya

- On 13 November the International Conference for Libya in Paris ends, in which some thirty countries announce "sanctions" for those trying to "undermine or manipulate" Libya's first democratic presidential and parliamentary elections, scheduled for December, in which Saif el-Islam, the son of the dictator Muammar Gaddafi, will run as a presidential candidate. On 16 November, Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar also announces he will run in the presidential elections, with the Speaker of the House of Representatives Aguila Saleh making a similar announcement the next day.

- On 23 November the UN Special Envoy for Libya Jan Kubis, who has occupied the post since January, resigns abruptly, a month before the presidential elections.

Tunisia

- On 9 November the Tunisian General Labour (UGTT) calls a general strike in Agareb, following violent clashes with police on 8 November during a protest over the reopening of the el-Gonna landfill, in which an activist dies.
- On 12 November the MP of Qalb Tounes Zouhair Makhlouf is sentenced to a year in prison for sexually harassing a school girl.
- On 14 November a demonstration against the suspension of the Parliament and the authoritarian drift of the President Kais Saied ends in clashes with the police.

Algeria

- On 7 November the former director-general of national security Abdelghani Hamel and the former security chief of the wilaya of Algiers Noureddine Berrachedi are cleared of charges of abuse of office by a court in Blida.
- On 27 November Algeria holds early local elections with a turnout of 36.58% and in which the FLN is the most voted party.

Morocco

- On 21 November Morocco reports the arrest of a group of 155 migrants illegally trying to set sail for the Canaries.
- On 24 November, during the first official visit of an Israeli Defence Minister – Benny Gantz – to Morocco, both countries sign a security and defence cooperation agreement.

EU

- On 10 November European Council President Charles Michel, on an urgent visit to Warsaw, announces aid for Poland to avoid the uncontrolled entry of migrants from Belarus, coinciding with Minsk's threat to cut the gas supply to the Union if Brussels approves new sanctions against the regime of Alexan-

der Lukashenko. In parallel, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell proposes the creation of an emergency European military force before 2025 in a document known as “Strategic Compass,” aimed at establishing a common position on geopolitical threats. On 15 November, EU foreign ministers impose a fifth round of sanctions on Belarus.

- On 11 November the European Parliament approves the creation of the new EU asylum agency.
- On 15 November the CJEU rules against Poland for allowing its Justice Minister to appoint judges to higher criminal courts and against Hungary for failing to comply with the regulations on asylum application.
- On 19 November riots break out in Rotterdam in the context of denialist demonstrations against government measures to address the surge in Covid-19 cases, which also affect Vienna, Brussels and Zagreb.
- On 30 November the Parliament and the Council reach an agreement to renew the mandate of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and to strengthen the EU’s health crisis prevention and response capacity.

December 2021

With the Omicron Covid-19 variant adding to the previous alpha, beta, gamma and delta variants, most Euro-Mediterranean countries tighten restrictions to slow down infection rates. Also during December there is a sharp increase in migrant arrivals to European shores. In Portugal, the Internal Administration Minister resigns. In Spain, the Minister of Universities resigns and early elections are called in Castile and Leon. In France, the race begins for the presidential elections in April 2022, the SME Minister resigns and New Caledonia rejects independence again in a referendum. In Italy, the Prime Minister authorizes the entry of 70,000 non-EU nationals to help deal with labour shortages. Two former senior Maltese officials are sanctioned by the US. The Parliament of the Republika Srpska approves starting its withdrawal from the federal institutions of Bosnia and

Herzegovina. The President of North Macedonia asks for a new government to be formed. Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia move forwards in establishing a single market. The Turkish currency crisis deepens and the European Council approves launching infringement proceedings against Ankara over the detention of Osman Kavala. Cyprus signs a deal with Qatar on gas exploration and production sharing in its EEZ. Bahrain and the EAU adopt measures to normalize ties with the Syrian regime. France helps to ensure the Gulf countries’ commitment to settling their diplomatic crisis with Lebanon. Lebanon calls elections for May 2022 as part of efforts to overcome the country’s political crisis. In Egypt, various sentences are handed down for undermining national security and spreading fake news. Libya suspends the elections scheduled for 24 December. In Tunisia, there are protests against President Saied, the former President Moncef Marzouki is sentenced in absentia and a senior official from Ennahda Noureddine Bhairi is arrested.

Portugal

- On 1 December Portugal enters a state of calamity for Covid-19 despite its 87% vaccination rate, the highest in the EU. On 7 December, the government approves vaccinating children from 5 to 11 and, on 22 December, it brings forward restrictions planned to start on 2 January 2022 to 25 December.
- On 6 December with less than two months before the early elections, the Internal Administration Minister Eduardo Cabrita resigns, following an incident on 18 June when a worker for the A-6 motorway, which joins Alentejo with the Spanish border, was struck and killed by a speeding vehicle in which the minister was travelling.
- On 14 December the former Economy Minister Manuel Pinho is arrested on suspicion of tax fraud and money laundering.
- On 17 December seven agents of the National Republican Guard are accused by the Public Prosecutor of torturing and humiliating immigrants in Odemira.

Spain

- On 2 December the EC dismisses calls from Spain, France, Italy, Greece and Romania to reform the marginal pricing system, under which energy prices are fixed, and improve consumer protection, amid soaring electricity prices.
- On 18-19 December around 600 migrants reach the Canary Islands.
- On 20 December Joan Subirats takes over as Minister of Universities, to replace Manuel Castells.
- On 20 December the president of Castile and Leon, Alfonso Fernandez Mañueco (PP) breaks the coalition pact with Cs and calls early elections for 13 February 2022.

France

- On 3 December France signs a multibillion-euro contract with the UAE for the sale of 80 Rafale fighter jets, during Emmanuel Macron’s tour of the Persian Gulf.
- On 4 December Valerie Pécresse is elected the LR candidate to run for the President of the Republic in the April 2022 elections.
- On 6 December after the first case is confirmed of the Covid-19 Omicron variant, France announces new restrictions that include the closure of nightlife activities and the recommendation to vaccinate children between 5 and 11 years old. On 16 December, France closes access from the English Channel and the Channel Tunnel due to the surge in the Omicron variant in the United Kingdom. On 27 December, requirements are announced for workers to telework for at least three days each week, the third dose to be given three months after receiving the last dose and the use of face masks in outdoor spaces in certain cities.
- On 7 December a rally in Villepinte held by Eric Zemmour ends in clashes between SOS Racisme activists and supporters of the far-right presidential candidate.
- On 8 December the SME Minister Alain Griset resigns after being sentenced to six months in prison for making false declarations about his assets.
- On 9 December France begins talks with other EU members to reach a com-

mon position on the US-led diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

- On 12 December New Caledonia holds its third and last referendum as agreed with Paris on the independence of the overseas territory. With a turnout of 44%, the vote against independence wins again with 96% of the votes, due to a massive boycott of pro-independence parties, who claim that the Covid-19 pandemic has hampered both the campaign and voting.

- On 13 December Nicolas Sarkozy's former Interior Minister Claude Gueant is jailed for failing to reimburse the money he was convicted of embezzling from public funds in 2017.

- On 14 December the Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin announces the beginning of procedures to close the Grand Mosque of Beauvais, in response to the "extremely radical" nature of its sermons against "Christians, homosexuals and Jews."

- On 23 December France opens its judicial and police archives from the Algerian War, 15 years ahead of the legally scheduled date.

- On 23 December France, another 13 European countries and Canada condemn the deployment in Mali of mercenaries from the private Russian company Wagner, who Bamako has asked to help fight against the jihadist insurgency, following the reduction in French troops from Operation Berkhane.

- On 30 December at least 15 police officers are injured during the evacuation of a migrant camp in Calais.

Italy

- On 2 December in response to the increase in Covid-19 cases with the advance of the Omicron variant of the virus, Italy reintroduces mandatory face masks in city centres. On 15 December, Italy restricts entry to travellers from the rest of the Union. On 23 December, the use of face masks in outdoor spaces is enforced and nighttime leisure activities are closed down.

- On 24, 25 and 26 December amid a sharp increase in arrivals to Italy, despite the bad weather, 490 immigrants disembark in Calabria, 278 in Lampedusa, 100 in Capo Rizzuto and 154 in Capo di Leuca. Added to these arrivals over the

same dates are 114 migrants disembarked in Trapani by the Ocean Viking, 214 disembarked in Pozzallo by the Sea-Eye 4 and 350 picked up by the Sea-Watch 3, which is awaiting a safe port.

- On 28 December the Prime Minister Mario Draghi signs a decree to allow entry to 70,000 foreign nationals for the reconstruction of the Italian economy following the pandemic.

Malta

- On 22 December the US announces sanctions against the former Energy Minister Konrad Mizzi and the former prime minister's chief of staff Keith Schembri over their participation in acts of "significant corruption" while they held their posts, and which includes a ban on entering US territory.

- On 22 December the Education Minister Justyne Caruana resigns following reports of favouritism in her hiring of former footballer Daniel Bogdanovic. This is Caruana's second resignation, following her 2020 resignation as Minister for Gozo after revelations of a trip her husband made with the main suspect in the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia.

Slovenia

- On 16 December the European Parliament condemns the hostility against the press and surge in polarization in Slovenia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 2 December the Bosnian Serb member of the tripartite presidency Milorad Dodik meets in Moscow with the Russian President Vladimir Putin to hold talks on the situation in the Balkans and which may involve plans for the supply of Russian gas.

- On 10 December the Bosnian Serb Parliament approves a declaration calling for the start of the Republika Srpska's withdrawal from the federal judicial and tax system and armed forces, in its first step towards declaring Bosnian Serb independence.

Montenegro

- On 11 December after negotiations fail for a government reshuffle that re-

places technocrat members of Zdravko Krivokapic's cabinet, appointed in December 2020, with members of the parties of the coalition government, the DF, a coalition member, proposes early parliamentary elections. The announcement leads the DPS-led opposition to withdraw, on 13 December, a confidence vote tabled against the government, in exchange for elections being called.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 16 December Kosovo and Denmark agree on the transfer of up to 300 non-EU nationals to Kosovo's Gjilan prison to ease the strain on the overloaded Danish prison system.

- On 21 December the former mayor of Shterpce/Strpce Bratislav Nikolic is arrested on corruption charges.

North Macedonia

- On 6 December the Albanian party Alternative joins the Social Democrat-led coalition government.

- On 29 December following Zoran Zaev's resignation as Prime Minister and SDSM leader on 22 December, the President Stevo Pendarovski tasks the party's new leader Dimitar Kovachevski with the formation of a new government.

Albania

- On 20-21 December Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia sign six agreements in Tiran on the labour market, electronic identification and the lifting of non-tariff barriers, which add to a previous agreement to abolish customs controls as of 2023, in efforts to move forward with the Open Balkan initiative for a single market, which will pave the way towards European accession.

Greece

- On 11 December the US approves a possible sale of warships to Greece, which challenges a similar agreement between France and Greece in September.

- On 13 December Nikos Androulakis is elected as the leader of the Movement

for Change, formerly the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), taking over from Fofi Gennimata, who died on 25 October.

- On 25 December at least 27 migrants die in the Aegean Sea while trying to reach Greece. 2021 has seen the death of 2,500 migrants in the Aegean Sea, according to official figures.

Turkey

- On 2 December the Council of Europe approves infringement proceedings against Turkey for repeatedly failing to comply with a ECHR ruling from December 2019 and for continuing to hold the philanthropist and businessman Osman Kavala in pre-trial detention since 2017. Although Kavala was cleared in February 2020 of charges related with the 2013 Gezi Park protests, the Court of Cassation overturned the ruling ordering a retrial and merging it with proceedings for the 2016 coup attempt. The new, broader trial began on 8 October with Kavala in preventive detention.

- On 2 December Metin Gurcan, a former soldier and founding member of the Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA), a splinter party from the AKP, is indicted by the Public Prosecutor for spying for Spain and Italy.

- On 2 December Recep Tayyip Erdogan appoints Nureddin Nebati as Finance Minister to replace Lutfi Elvan in an effort to reverse the course of the country's currency crisis. On 12 December, thousands gather in Ankara and Istanbul to protest against the government's social policy and the sustained depreciation of the lira, despite the central bank's interventions to prop up the exchange rate. On 17 December, Erdogan announces a 50% increase in the minimum wage for 2022, and on 21 December, he promises savers that they will be compensated for any losses resulting from the exchange rate.

Cyprus

- On 13 December QatarEnergy signs an energy exploration and production sharing deal with Cyprus. Ankara, which maintains a strategic alliance with Doha, condemns the agreement.

Syria

- On 22 December the EU announces 10 million euros in aid to ease the effects of the severe drought in Syria.

- On 22 December the SDF and international coalition announce the death of five Daesh members in Deir ez-Zor, amid a rise in attacks by the terrorist organization in recent months.

- On 28 December Syria accuses Israel of attacking the port of Latakia for the second time in a month.

- On 30 December Bahrain names its first ambassador in Damascus since the Syrian war. This appointment adds to the UAE's request in November to readmit Syria into the Arab League.

Lebanon

- On 3 December Information Minister George Kordahi announces his resignation after more than a month of diplomatic, commercial and political crisis since on 29 October, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait ordered the expulsion of the Lebanese ambassadors and suspended Lebanese imports following Kordahi's condemnation of war crimes by the Arab coalition against the Houthi rebel movement in Yemen. On 4 December, the French President Emmanuel Macron announces he has secured Saudi Arabia and Lebanon's commitment to resolving the crisis.

- On 12 December three people are killed in a gunfight, attributed to members of Fatah and Hamas, during the funeral of a member of the Shiite party-militia who died in a blast at the Burj el-Shemali Palestinian refugee camp.

- On 18 December the nighttime curfew begins for the Christmas holidays.

- On 26 December the Saudi-led Arab International Coalition accuses Hezbollah of actively participating in fighting in Yemen in support of the Houthi insurgency.

- On 27 December the President Michel Aoun calls for urgent international dialogue to resolve the political paralysis in the government which began on 12 October with the decision of Hezbollah and the AMAL Movement to block government work until the replacement of the judge Tarek Bitar, who

is leading the investigation into the Beirut port blasts in August 2020.

- On 27 December the government approves a decree setting parliamentary elections for 15 May 2022.

Egypt

- On 8 December after almost two years in pre-trial detention, the activist Patrick Zaki, whose trial for spreading fake news began on 14 September, is provisionally released.

- On 19 December the acting leader of the Muslim Brotherhood Mahmoud Ez-zat, arrested in August 2020, is sentenced to life imprisonment for collaborating with Hamas against national security.

- On 20 December Alaa Abdel Fattah, one of the leaders of the 2011 Revolution, is sentenced to five years in prison together with the blogger Mohamed Ibrahim and lawyer Mohamed al-Baqer, both sentenced to four years' imprisonment.

- On 23 December the activist Sanaa Seif, who was sentenced on 17 March to a year and a half in prison for spreading fake news, is released.

Libya

- On 13 December there are serious clashes in Sebha, between the GNU-affiliated 116 Brigade and the Tariq Bin Ziyad force, loyal to Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar.

- On 15 December armed men surround the government in Tripoli and the office of the Prime Minister. The head of the Presidency Council Mohammed al-Menfi calls for the security forces to intervene.

- On 22 December, after receiving a report from the High Election Commission, the Parliament decides to suspend the presidential elections scheduled for 24 December, given the disputes over their legality, the resulting presidential powers and the validity of various candidacies. It is decided not to propose a new date without first having restructured the executive authority and reaching an agreement on a road map enshrined in the Constitution.

Tunisia

- On 17 December thousands protest against the President Kais Saied, four

days after he announces that Parliament will remain suspended for another year, on the basis of a new electoral law, until elections are held in December 2022, along with a popular consultation to draft constitutional reforms that will be put to a referendum in July.

- On 22 December the former President Moncef Marzouki is sentenced in absentia to four years in prison for conspiring against state security.
- On 22 December the vaccination certificates become a requirement for accessing indoor spaces.
- On 31 December Ennahda report that security forces have arrested a senior party official, Noureddine Bhairi, in a move Parliament's biggest party brands as an attempt to silence the opposition to President Saïed.

Algeria

- On 26 December the government announces the requirement of a vaccination pass to enter or leave the country.

Morocco

- On 10 December Morocco extends the suspension of international air links until 31 December to contain Covid-19 infections. On 21 December, New Year's Eve celebrations in public spaces are banned. On 30 December, the period before administration of the third vaccine dose is reduced from six to four months.
- On 21 December Morocco says it has rescued at least 350 migrants in various operations since 18 December.

EU

- On 3 December Hungary, the only EU country not invited to the World Summit for Democracy called by the US President Joe Biden, vetoes the Union's participation with a common position.
- On 6 December Frontex registers 8,239 returns of irregular migrants in the first half of 2021, the highest figure on record for a six-month period.
- On 8 December the Commission approves a draft regulation allowing commercial retaliation in response to illegitimate political and economic pressure from third countries.

- On 13 December EU Foreign Ministers approve sanctions on people and entities supporting the Russian Wagner Group due to its destabilizing activities in various countries.
- On 14 December the Commission approves a reform of the Schengen Area, which includes, at the request of the Commission, centralizing in the European Council the closure of the EU's external borders in the event of a crisis.
- On 16 December Poland and the Czech Republic block an agreement to address the energy crisis in the European Council, over their disagreement with the CO₂ emissions trading system, which has triggered soaring prices in 2021.
- On 20 December the EMA recommends the new Covid-19 Nuvaxovid vaccine produced by the US pharmaceutical company Novavax.
- On 23 December the Commission launches infringement proceedings against Poland in response to the Polish Constitutional Tribunal's ruling on 7 October rejecting the primacy of EU law over the Polish Constitution.
- On 25 December Romania's Constitutional Court rules that a CJEU decision cannot be applied without first amending the Romanian Constitution, two days after the CJEU ruling concerning the primacy of EU law over Constitutional Court rulings that lead to systemic impunity for crimes concerning European funds.

Gibraltar

- On 19 March the EC refers the United Kingdom to the CJEU for failing to guarantee the repayment of up to 100 million euros in illegal tax exemptions granted to large companies in Gibraltar.
- On 24 March Gibraltar announces an easing of Covid-19 restrictions.
- On 24 June, in a referendum, a majority of Gibraltarians voters support abolishing life imprisonment as a possible sentence under the Abortion Law.
- On 12 October talks begin between the EU and the United Kingdom on Gibraltar, a territory that is not covered by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement signed with London in 2020.

Western Sahara

- On 10 January the US begins the process of establishing a consulate in Dakhla.
- On 24 January the Polisario Front says it has launched a missile attack on the Guerguerat border area. The situation in the area is highly tense since Moroccan troops were deployed in Guerguerat in October 2020 to remove Sahrawi activists that were blocking goods transit.
- On 5 April Senegal opens its consulate in Dakhla.
- On 8 April a senior commander of the Polisario Front, Addah al-Bendir, is killed in an attack by the Moroccan army in Tifariti, after participating in an offensive in Bir Lehlou on the Moroccan-built separation wall.
- On 23 April Spain confirms that the leader of the Polisario Front Brahim Ghali has been hospitalized in Logroño for humanitarian reasons and is in a serious condition due to Covid-19. Morocco accuses Spain of withholding information regarding the situation and failing to change its stance on the status of Western Sahara, sparking a diplomatic crisis that comes to a head on 17-18 May with the entry of 10,000 migrants into Ceuta, which Moroccan forces do nothing to stop. On 1 June Spain informs Morocco of Ghali's departure for Algiers after being discharged and after the National Court decides not to press charges against him.
- On 15 June the Moroccan ambassador to the United Nations rejects the UN's parameters for the self-determination of Western Sahara.
- On 29 October the United Nations Security Council extends the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until October 2022.
- On 1 November Staffan de Mistura is appointed the UN Special Envoy for Western Sahara, following the approval of Morocco and the Polisario Front.
- On 5 November Algeria denounces Morocco before the UN for terrorism over the death of its citizens in a bombing in Western Sahara.
- On 7 November the Polisario Front condemns Mohammed VI's previous day's address during the commemora-

tion of the Green March and announces a return to the armed struggle.

- On 19 November the EU Council appeals the ruling of the EU General Court on 29 September annulling the trade and fisheries agreements with Morocco, as they included Western Sahara in their application without the consent of the Polisario Front.
- On 22 December after a statement is posted on the German Foreign Ministry website in which Morocco's autonomy plan presented to the UN in 2007 is described as an "important contribution" in resolving the Sahwari issue, Morocco announces it is resuming diplomatic ties with Germany, which have been suspended since March over Berlin's criticism of the US recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.

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