

Chronologies

Chronology of Major Conflicts and Political Events

January 2023

In Portugal, the government survives a no-confidence vote and there are ministerial changes. Spain elects the president for the Constitutional Court. Italy strengthens energy cooperation with Algeria and Libya. The pension reform in France sparks protests and national strikes. Croatia enters the eurozone and the Schengen Area. Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina form governments. In Greece, the government defeats a no-confidence vote. The Turkish Constitutional Court freezes the bank accounts of the People's Democratic Party (HDP, left-wing, pro-Kurdish) and the mayor of Istanbul is accused of corruption. In Syria, protests are staged against the normalization of relations between Damascus and Ankara. Lebanon's economic crisis worsens. In Tunisia, the second round of the presidential elections is held; there are also a number of ministerial dismissals, as there are in Algeria, where the main human rights organization is dissolved. A diplomatic crisis opens between Morocco and the EU. In Mauritania, the trial begins against the former President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz.

Portugal

- On 2 January the Prime Minister Antonio Costa appoints Joao Galamba and Marina Goncalves as Ministers of Infrastructure and Housing, respectively.
- On 5 January the government survives its second no-confidence vote since the Socialist Party (PS) won an absolute majority in 2022. The motion, tabled by the Liberal Initiative party, stems from the dismissal in December 2022 of the Secretary of State for the

Treasury Alexandra Reis and the Infrastructure Minister Pedro Nuno Santos, after it was revealed that Reis was paid compensation for stepping down from his post in TAP, the state-owned airline bailed out by the government.

- On 14 January more than 20,000 teachers demonstrate in Lisbon against changes to the teacher selection and hiring process and calling for better salaries.

Spain

- On 11 January the former attorney general Candido Conde-Pumpido is elected president of the Constitutional Court.
- On 11 January the Criminal Code reform comes into effect, backed by the government and Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC, pro-independence), which repeals the crime of sedition and amends that of the misuse of public funds.
- On 25 January a Moroccan fundamentalist murders two Catholic priests and another three people in Algeciras.

France

- On 1 January the British Defence Ministry reports that in 2022 over 45,700 migrants crossed the English Channel from France.
- On 3 January Iran announces the indictment of two French nationals and a Belgian for spying in the context of the anti-government protests which have been taking place since September in Iran over the death of Mahsa Amini, arrested for allegedly not properly wearing the Islamic veil. On 9 January, France and Germany summon Iranian diplomats in protest over the arrests of Europeans and death sentences handed down to

four people charged with the death of several police officers during the protests. On 16 January, thousands of people in Strasbourg decry the executions of demonstrators in Iran.

- On 7 January thousands of supporters of the yellow vest movement take to the streets again in several cities to protest against the policies of the President Emmanuel Macron and his government, particularly over the high cost of living and the pension reform, which foresees raising the retirement age to 64 for 2030. On 19 and 31 January, nationwide strikes call for the withdrawal of the pension reform.
- On 20 January Emmanuel Macron announces an increase in Defence spending between 2024 and 2030 to around 400 billion euros.
- On 20 January the crisis within the Socialist Party (PS) worsens following its poor results in the 2022 presidential elections – 2% of the vote –, with the reelection of Olivier Faure as the party's First Secretary, only 393 votes ahead of Nicolas Mayer-Rossignol, who denounces the process as fraudulent.
- On 27 January following demands made by the Burkinese government, France withdraws its troops in Burkina Faso, deployed there for the last 14 years as part of the anti-jihadist Operation Sabre.
- On 31 January the Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne unveils a plan to combat racist, antisemitic and discriminatory crime, after it is revealed that said offences rose by 13% between 2019 and 2021.

Italy

- On 4 and 29 January *Médicins Sans Frontières* (MSF) allows 85 and 237 migrants to disembark in Tarento and La Spezia, respectively.

- On 16 January the Cosa Nostra boss and the most wanted fugitive in Europe, Matteo Messina Denaro, is arrested in Palermo.
- On 23 January the Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni signs a deal for the construction of a gas pipeline between Algeria and Italy, which will make the Maghreb country Italy's main supplier, reducing dependence on Russia.
- On 28 January Giorgia Meloni signs a 7.3-billion-euro deal for the development of two gas fields off the coast of Tripoli between the Italian energy company Eni and Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC).

Slovenia

- On 24 January the Parliament approves the government of the Prime Minister Robert Golob.

Croatia

- On 1 January Croatia enters the eurozone and Schengen Area.
- On 11 January the Ministers of Construction, Ivan Paladina, and Regional Development and European Funds, Natasa Tramisak, are sacked and replaced, respectively, by Branko Bacic and Sime Erlic, over the slow progress of reconstruction work in Banija following the earthquake in 2020.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 6 January the Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SBiH, centre, Bosniak nationalism) and the People's European Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (NES, centre-right, pro-European), abandon their support for the government elected in October 2022, calling for the withdrawal of a new state property law, passed by the Bosnian Serb Parliament. Despite the situation, on 25 January the federal Parliament approves the Council of Ministers that will be led by Borjana Kristo, the deputy leader of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ-BiH, Bosnian Croat conservative).
- On 9 January some 2,000 Bosnian Serb paramilitaries and police officers go on parade in Sarajevo to commemorate the Day of Republika Srpska, de-

spite the event being banned by the Federal Constitutional Court.

Montenegro

- On 4 January the parties led by the Democratic Front (DF, populist pro-Russian) fail to agree on the formation of a government led by Miodrag Lekic, putting Montenegro on the path to early elections in March.

Serbia

- On 18 January Serbia condemns Russia's attempts, through the Wagner Group, to recruit Serbian mercenaries for the war in Ukraine and denies the Russian paramilitary group's participation in the roadblocks in northern Kosovo during the crisis in December 2022.
- On 26 January hundreds of workers from a Chinese-Serbian copper mine in Bor block access to the facilities calling for improvements in their salaries and working conditions.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 8 January Serbia announces NATO's rejection of its request to allow the deployment of its army and police force in North Kosovo in the face of rising tensions in the area.

North Macedonia

- On 25 January Bulgaria announces the withdrawal of its diplomatic mission in North Macedonia following the assault in Skopje of Hristijan Pendikov, a North Macedonian citizen who identifies as Bulgarian.

Albania

- On 13 January a court orders the arrest of the General Secretary of the Finance Ministry Arlind Gjokutaj for fraud and abuse of power.

Greece

- On 8 January the Citizen Protection Minister announces that, in 2022, the Border Guard arrested over 1,300 alleged human traffickers near the Evros

river, on the Turkish border, and stopped around 256,000 migrants from crossing.

- On 10 January Constantine II, the last King of Greece between 1964 and 1973, dies in Athens.

- On 13 January due to procedural errors and following the UN's demands a Greek court drops the charges for espionage and forgery against 24 humanitarian activists involved in rescuing migrants.

- On 27 January Alexis Tsipras, leader of the Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) loses the no-confidence vote tabled against the government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis (New Democracy, ND, conservative) over a scandal involving illegal wiretapping by the intelligence agency and uncovered in 2022 after being denounced by the leader of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) Nikos Androulakis.

Türkiye

- On 5 January the Constitutional Court freezes the HDP's bank accounts to prevent it from accessing treasury aid. On 26 January, the Constitutional Court rejects the HDP's appeal to slow down the process of banning the pro-Kurdish party.

- On 12 January the mayor of Istanbul Ekrem Imamoglu is accused of corruption in a trial that could see him serve seven years behind bars, on top of the two-year sentence he was handed down in December 2022 for insulting the Electoral Council, a conviction that included a ban on running in the presidential elections in June.

- On 25 January Türkiye says it has rescued 200 migrants in the Aegean Sea and accuses Greece of pushing them back into Turkish waters.

- On 26 January Türkiye freezes talks to lift its veto on Sweden's entry into NATO following the far-right politician Rasmus Paladan's burning of the Koran in Stockholm on 21 January and Sweden's refusal to extradite 130 people with ties to the PKK terrorist organization.

Syria

- On 2 January Israel launches a wave of missiles at Iranian targets in Syria,

forcing the temporary closure of the airport in Damascus.

- On 4 January Russia and Türkiye announce they will resume joint patrols in northern Syria to counter terrorism and irregular migration.
- On 6 January Syrians protest in rebel-held areas against the rapprochement between Damascus and Ankara and call for Bashar al-Assad's regime to be brought down.
- On 7 January the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), led by the Kurdish militant group People's Protection Units (YPG), announce the end of its operation against members of Daesh in northern Syria, which began on 29 December 2022, after having arrested a total 102 members or suspected members of the group.
- On 17 January the Netherlands' national prosecutors office announces the arrest of a man it says was a senior figure in Daesh's security service for war crimes in Syria.
- On 28 January Syria rejects the conclusions of the latest report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which accuses the Syrian army of perpetrating the chlorine attack in Douma in 2018, which left 43 people dead.
- On 31 January Russia announces that Iran is joining the process to normalize relations between Türkiye and Syria.

Lebanon

- On 1 January the army announces it has rescued 232 migrants off the coast of Selaata.
- On 11 January Hussein el-Husseini dies, the former parliament speaker and key player in the Taif Agreement, which put an end to the Civil War in 1989.
- On 14 January the activist William Noun, an icon of the protests against the Beirut port blast in August 2020, is arrested on threat charges after he criticized the police force's failure to act to evade their responsibility and their obstruction of the inquiry into the case. On 28 January, families and close friends of the victims call for the resignation of the chief prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat after his decision to release all suspects in the case and charge the

investigative judge Tarek Bitar to prevent "sedition." Previously, on 24 January, Bitar had charged Oueidat and three other judges, a day after resuming the investigation after three months of suspension following several lawsuits filed against him.

- On 31 January the Central Bank announces it is devaluing the Lebanese pound by 90% against the dollar.

Jordan

- On 4 January Abdelsalam Majali, former Prime Minister who signed the peace deal with Israel in 1994, dies.

Egypt

- On 1 January at least four people are killed in a Daesh attack on a checkpoint in Ismailia.
- On 11 January the value of the pound against the dollar drops by 16%, amid the Egyptian currency's steady devaluation.
- On 22 January the magnate Safwan Thabet and his son, Seif el-Din, are released after being held for two years in administrative detention on terrorism charges.

Libya

- On 6-7 January the MSF rescue ship *Geo Barents*, rescues 73 migrants off the coast of Libya. On 24 January, it rescues a further 69 people, during which the NGO denounces threats by the Coast Guard.

Tunisia

- On 1 January the Coast Guard rescues 108 migrants.
- On 7 January the President Kais Saied sacks the Trade Minister Fadila al-Rabhi, amid the country's supply crisis.
- On 14 January a large-scale protest is held in the capital against the government and President Saied.
- On 29 January the second round of the legislative elections sees record abstention levels of almost 90%, in a repeat of the first round on 17 December 2022. The pro-President Saied 25th of July Movement wins with 80 of the 98 seats.

- On 31 January Kais Saied sacks the Education and Agriculture Ministers – Fethi Sellaouti and Elyes Hamza – replacing them, respectively, with Mohamed Ali Boughdiri and Abdelmomen Belati.

Algeria

- On 20 January the former Energy Minister Chakib Jelil, a fugitive in the US, is sentenced in absentia for corruption, adding to the 20-year sentence handed down to him in 2022. The former ministers Amar Ghoul (Transport) and Mohammed Bedjaoui (Foreign Affairs) and two former heads of the state oil and gas company, Sonatrach, are given prison sentences of between five and 10 years.
- On 23 January the authorities order the dissolution of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights.

Mauritania

- On 25 January the trial of former President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz on charges of corruption, money laundering and illicit enrichment, begins.

EU

- On 1 January Sweden assumes the six-month Presidency of the EU with the priorities of security, support for Ukraine and its European accession, competitiveness, the energy and green transition, and the upholding of democratic values and the rule of law.
- On 1 January the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) enters into force with a budget of 307 billion euros for the 2023-2027 period and particular emphasis on job creation and environmental and climate protection.
- On 10 January the EU and NATO strengthen their partnership in an effort to deal with hybrid, cybernetic and technological threats and the consequences of the climate crisis.
- On 13 January the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) publishes data according to which the EU detected almost 330,000 irregular border crossings at its external borders in 2022, a 64% increase compared with 2021.

- On 18 January the European Parliament elects the Luxembourgish socialist Marc Angel to occupy one of the 14 parliamentary vice-presidencies, replacing the Greek Eva Kaili, who was jailed over links to the Qatargate scandal, a corruption plot involving MEPs and financed by Qatar and Morocco, which was uncovered at the end of 2022.
- On 22 January Germany joins the H2Med project, which includes Spain, France and Portugal and foresees the construction of a hydrogen pipeline linking these countries.
- On 23 January the EU approves the seventh aid package to Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian invasion, set at 500 million euros. The decision comes after, on 17 January, the Commission disburses the first 3-billion-euro instalment of macro-financial assistance out of the 19 billion approved for Ukraine in 2023.
- On 23 January the EU imposes new sanctions on the Iranian regime over its crackdown on the protests in the country and human rights violations.
- On 24 January the Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson unveils an “operational strategy” to favour the return of irregular migrants to their countries of origin.

February 2023

In Portugal and Spain there are demonstrations calling for improvements in public systems and against the rising cost of living. In Spain, the abortion law is reformed, the so-called trans law is approved and a public corruption network is uncovered in the Canary Islands. In France, there are rallies against the pension system reform and the diplomatic crisis with Algeria and Morocco continues. Italy, Monaco and Cyprus hold elections. In Italy, the migration crisis becomes the first stumbling block for Meloni's government. Montenegro unblocks the renewal of the Constitutional Court. In North Macedonia, a cabinet reshuffle is blocked. In Greece, a former minister is sentenced to prison. Türkiye and Syria are struck by major earthquakes leaving tens of thousands dead. The Lebanese pound plunges to a new low. In Tunisia,

different opposition figures are arrested. Algeria dissolves one of the main NGOs that participated in the protests in 2019.

Portugal

- On 11 February thousands of teachers in Lisbon participate in one of the biggest protests in Portugal in recent years, calling for urgent improvements to the public education system, amid discontent over the rising cost of living, which has led to health and transport strikes.

Spain

- On 12 February a large-scale demonstration in Madrid calls for greater investment and improvements in public healthcare management.
- On 14 February following a confession by businessman Antonio Navarro Tacoronte, 13 arrests are made in the Canary Islands and various mainland provinces in the Mediator case, an investigation into an influence peddling and bribery plot, led by the former socialist deputy Juan Bernardo Fuentes.
- On 16 February the Parliament approves the abortion law reform presented by the government. In the same session the law is passed on Real and Effective Equality of Trans Persons and for the Guarantee of the Rights of LGBTI Persons.

France

- On 7 and 11 February nationwide strikes are held in protest against the draft bill on pension reform. On 11 February, half a million people participate in the protest march in Paris.
- On 8 February over 2,000 farmers block Paris in protest against the government's announcement on 23 January to withdraw the exception that allowed the use of neonicotinoids, insecticides that are toxic for bees and were banned by the EU in 2018.

Monaco

- On 5 February the Monegasque National Union (UNM, conservative), led by Brigitte Boccone-Pages, wins the

general election, obtaining 24 seats in the National Council.

Italy

- On 12-13 February Lombardy and Lazio hold regional elections, which the right-wing coalition led by the Brothers of Italy (FdI, far-right) wins.
- On 15 February a court in Milan acquits the former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in the Ruby Ter trial, which investigated the alleged bribery of people who attended his sex parties in 2010.
- On 16-17 February around 1,500 migrants arrive in Lampedusa raising the number of people in the already overcrowded reception centre to 2,110.
- On 18 February the Universities Undersecretary and FdI minister Augusta Montaruli resigns after being sentenced by the Supreme Court to 18 months in jail for embezzlement.
- On 26 February Elly Schlein is elected ahead of Stefano Bonaccini as leader of the Democratic Party (PD, centre-left).
- On 26 February a Turkish fishing boat is shipwrecked off the coast of Calabria leaving at least 79 migrants dead. A further 80 people are brought out of the water alive. The tragedy ignites a political crisis in view of the growing evidence that the authorities did not use all the means at their disposal to rescue the ship.

Croatia

- On 20 February the European Commission announces that Croatia, along with France, Poland and Finland, will host strategic reserves of antidotes, vaccines and treatments in the event of possible chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear emergencies.

Montenegro

- On 27 February the Parliament appoints three new judges to the Constitutional Court, thereby paving the way to unblocking the country's highest legal instance, which has been without a quorum since September 2022, when the magistrate Miodrag Ilickovic retired, following in the footsteps of three of his

six colleagues. In July 2022, the Parliament was unable to elect new members to the High Court, as none of them had the necessary support.

North Macedonia

- On 13 February the Prime Minister Dimitar Kovacevski proposes a cabinet reshuffle to the Parliament, which foresees the withdrawal of the centre-right Albanian coalition government Alternativa and the entry of Alliance for Albanians (APS, conservative pro-European), amid talks to increase the government coalition's parliamentary majority enabling it to pass a constitutional reform that would recognize the Bulgarian minority, a condition demanded by France to move forward with the North Macedonian accession process. The voting is stopped after the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE, right-wing), files an appeal claiming that the cabinet reshuffle is motivated by personal and corrupt interests.
- On 24 February the European Council approves an agreement under which Frontex will provide operational support to North Macedonia to manage migratory flows.

Greece

- On 5 February Greece accuses Türkiye of repeated violations of its territorial waters and airspace.
- On 16 February Greece and Bulgaria agree on the joint construction of an oil pipeline that will reduce their dependence on the Russian oil supply.
- On 24 February the former Minister of Digital Policy Nikos Pappas is sentenced to two years in prison and banned from office for three years over irregularities in his handling of a television licences tender.

Türkiye

- On 2 February France becomes the fifth country to announce the temporary closure of its consulate in Istanbul, following Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, fearing possible reprisal attacks after copies of

the Koran were burnt in different European cities in reaction to the conditions set by Türkiye for Sweden and Finland's NATO accession.

- On 6 February two earthquakes measuring 7.8 and 7.5 Mw and successive aftershocks during the month leave at least 51,080 dead and 107,204 injured in Türkiye in the region's worst natural disaster on record. Faced with the magnitude of the disaster, the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan calls for patience following widespread discontent over the speed of the rescue efforts. Meanwhile, the authorities temporarily suspend access to Twitter. For its part, the earthquakes lead the PKK terrorist organization to declare a unilateral ceasefire. By 12 February there have been 110 arrest warrants issued for those responsible for the collapse of more than 6,000 buildings, which failed to comply with construction legislation. On 22 February, the authorities fine three television channels over their coverage of the crisis.

Cyprus

- On 12 February with 51.9% of the vote, the former Foreign Minister and independent centre-right candidate Nikos Christodoulides claims victory over the left-wing independent candidate Andreas Mavroyiannis, in the second round of the presidential elections.
- On 22 February the government extends its subsidies on electricity consumption for two months to counter inflationary pressures.

Syria

- On 2 February the two earthquakes – 7.8 and 7.5 magnitude – with an epicentre in the Turkish province of Gaziantep leave at least 8,476 dead and 14,500 injured in Syria.
- On 17 February nearly 70 people are killed in a Daesh attack in Homs, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR). On the same day, the US announces the death of Hamza al-Homsi, a senior Daesh leader, in a joint operation with the FSA.
- On 19 February an Israeli airstrike leaves at least 15 dead in the neighbourhood in Damascus where the Syr-

ian security and intelligence agencies are located.

Lebanon

- On 16 February at least six bank branches are set on fire in Beirut after the Lebanese pound drops to a new low, losing 98% of its value.

Libya

- On 15 February at least 73 migrants are missing following a shipwreck off the Libyan coast.

Tunisia

- On 1 February the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) reports the arrest of the union leader Anis Kaabi after a nationwide strike for road workers is called for 12 February. On 13 and 14 February the lawyer Lazhar Akremi and Ennahda member Nouredine Bhiri are arrested. On 23, 24 and 25 February the politicians Chaima Issa, Issam Chebbi, Jaouhar Ben Mbarek and Ghazi Chaouachi are arrested.
- On 8 February President Saïed sacks the Foreign Minister Othman Jerandi.
- On 11 and 13 February the social democratic Ettakatol party member Khayam Turki and the head of Mosaïque FM Nouredine Boutar are arrested, respectively, for actions against the State.
- On 13 February the former president of the Court of Cassation Taieb Rached and former prosecutor at the capital's court of first instance Bechir Akremi are arrested, charged with corruption.
- On 21 February a speech by the President Kais Saïed, in which he calls for urgent measures to be taken to counter the "hordes of irregular migrants from sub-Saharan Africa" a source of "violence and crime" and a threat to the Arab-Muslim identity unleashes a wave of xenophobic and racist attacks.

Algeria

- On 8 February Saïd Bouteflika, brother and advisor of the late former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, is sentenced to 12 years in prison in a new ruling against him for corruption.

- On 23 February the Council of State confirms the dissolution of the Youth Action Rally (RAJ), an NGO that participated in the anti-government demonstrations in 2019 against Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

Morocco

- On 10 February following royal orders issued on 19 January, Morocco ends the mission of its Ambassador to France, Mohamed Benchaaboun, without designating a replacement.
- On 19 February protests are staged against the rising prices of basic goods, with inflation reaching 8.3% at the end of 2022.
- On 21 February statements made by the director of the Royal Archives, Bahija Simu, reignite the territorial dispute with Algeria, claiming that there are historical documents that prove Morocco's sovereignty over Eastern Sahara.

Mauritania

- On 11 February there are protests in Dar-Naim, Nouakchott, over the death of the Human Rights activist Souvi Ould Cheine, allegedly as a result of police violence.

EU

- On 2 February, together with the Ukrainian President Volodimir Zelenski, the President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen announces new EU sanctions against Russia over the invasion of Ukraine and the acceleration of the country's integration into the Union's Single Market.
- On 11 February the Belgian MEP Marc Tarabella is placed in pre-trial detention for his alleged involvement in the Qatargate scandal. The move comes a day after the Italian MEP Andrea Cozzolino was arrested in Italy in the same case.
- On 22 February according to figures published by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), the 27 Member States, Norway and Switzerland received 966,000 asylum applications in 2022, the highest figure since 2016.
- On 25 February the EU approves the 10th package of sanctions against Rus-

sia, which includes 121 people and organizations, some linked to the Wagner Group, restrictions on the export of Russian military technology and measures against Iranian companies that supply drones to Moscow. On 27 February, the EU extends its sanctions against Belarus until 28 February 2024 for its support of the invasion of Ukraine.

March 2023

There are ministerial changes in Spain, Algeria and Syria. In France, the protests continue against the pension system reform. Italy introduces tougher measures against immigration amid a surge in arrivals. Serbia and Kosovo agree to normalize relations. The Greek Transport Minister resigns in the aftermath of a deadly train crash. The Turkish Parliament approves Finland's entry into NATO and opposition parties agree to field a joint candidate for the presidential elections. Cyprus forms a new government. The Lebanese pound drops to record lows against the dollar. In Libya, advances are made towards an agreement for holding elections in 2023. The dismissals and arrests of opposition members continue in Tunisia.

Portugal

- On 11 March around 8,000 people demonstrate in Lisbon calling for better protection of women's rights.
- On 18 March more than 100,000 protestors gather in Lisbon to demand higher wages and pensions.

Spain

- On 3 March Cantabria's Public Works Councillor Jose Luis Gochicoa is sacked after a corruption and money laundering scandal within the regional government is brought to light.
- On 16 March the Parliament adopts a law on the protection of animal rights and welfare.
- On 22 March the director of the Civil Guard resigns after her husband is indicted in the ERE case, an investigation into a corruption scandal in the Andalusian government between 1980 and 2018.

- On 22 March the government survives the no-confidence motion tabled by Vox (far-right).
- On 27 March the Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announces a government reshuffle. Hector Gomez and Jose Manuel Minones replace Reyes Maroto and Carolina Darias at the head of the Industry and Health ministries, respectively.

France

- On 1 March against the backdrop of the French military crisis in the Sahel, the President Emmanuel Macron begins his African tour to reset Franco-African and Euro-African relations. The themes on the table are geostrategy, counterterrorism, the socioeconomic future and multiculturalism.
- On 10 March President Macron and the British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak hold a bilateral summit to "restore" closer cooperation on migration and security.
- On 16 March the government adopts the pension reform bill by decree. The measure continues to be contested with protests and strikes throughout the month and successive nights of unrest. On 20 March, the government survives no-confidence votes tabled by Liberties, Independents, Overseas and Territories (LIOT, centrist, regionalist) and the National Rally (RN, far-right).

Italy

- On 2 March the public prosecution office in Bergamo concludes its inquiry into the management of the Covid-19 outbreak in March 2020, the first and one of the most deadly in Europe. 19 senior officials are under investigation, including the then Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, (Five Star Movement, M5S, left-wing populism); his Health Minister Roberto Speranza; the president of Lombardy Attilio Fontana, from the League (far-right) and the regional Minister for Health Giulio Gallera (Forza Italia, FI, conservative populist).
- On 4 March an investigation by *La Repubblica* exposes a secret entity known as a "Chinese underground bank" which was syphoning billions of euros towards China.

- On 8 March the journalist Mario Sechi is named as the government's spokesman.
- On 9 March at least 1,200 migrants have arrived in Lampedusa over the past 24 hours. On the same day, the Council of Ministers toughens immigration laws and sentences for human trafficking. On 10 March, a fishing boat carrying over 500 migrants is intercepted near Sicilia. So far this year, there have been 20,017 arrivals, more than triple the number for the same period in 2022.

- On 31 March Italy becomes the first Western country to block the use of ChatGPT artificial intelligence, over fears of data privacy violations.

Malta

- On 3-4 March Spain, Italy, Malta, Greece and Cyprus call for more solidarity among EU States to halt irregular migration, in the fifth MED5 Ministerial Summit.

Slovenia

- On 8 March the parliamentary Foreign Policy Committee rejects declaring Russia a state sponsor of terrorism, as proposed by the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS, conservative).

Croatia

- On 20 March the former Yugoslav intelligence chief Aleksandar Vasiljevic is sentenced *in absentia* for setting up prison camps where detainees were tortured and killed during the Croatian war in 1991.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 15 March the former head of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Security Agency Osman Mehmedagic faces US sanctions for corruption.
- On 18 March the scheduled activities for Gay Pride Day are banned in Banja Luka for "security reasons."
- On 23 March the Bosnian Serb government cuts ties with the British and US embassies in protest against London and Washington's plans to supply arms to Ukraine.

- On 24 March the EU and UN criticize the restrictions on freedom of speech foreseen in the reintroduction of the crime of defamation in the criminal code of the Republika Srpska, approved by the Bosnian Serb Parliament.

- On 31 March hundreds of demonstrators in Sarajevo call for the resignation of the High Representative of the International Community for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Christian Schmidt, accusing him of fuelling the ethnic divide.

Montenegro

- On 16 March the President Milo Djukanovic dissolves the National Assembly to hold early elections, after the deadline expires for the Prime Minister designate Miodrag Lekic to secure the support needed to form a government.

- On 30 March the police chief Zoran Brdjanin is sacked after his involvement in an investigation into police links with the Kavac drug gang.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 18 March Serbia and Kosovo reach an agreement under EU mediation to normalize relations. Kosovo agrees to apply a self-governance mechanism for majority Serb municipalities in the country.
- On 23 March Kosovo announces it is joining US sanctions against the Russian Wagner Group.

Albania

- On 14 March the Minister of Culture Mirela Kumbaro declares the Vjosa River, one of the last wild rivers in Europe, a national park.
- On 16 March the election commission allows the Democratic Party of Albania (PDS, centre-right) to run in the municipal elections in May, stating that the documentation needed to run is now signed by the de facto party leader Enkelejd Alibeaj, and not by Lulzim Basha, who resigned temporarily in May 2022 due to the party's internal split into two rival factions: the official party, led temporarily by Alibeaj, and the House of Freedom, led by Sali Berisha, who requested unsuccessfully to run in the elections in representation of PDS.

Greece

- On 1 March the Transport Minister Kostas Karamanlis resigns after the head-on collision of two trains in Tempe on 28 February. The deterioration of the railway network is blamed for the crash, which left 57 people dead. Throughout the month there are national strikes and large protests denouncing the situation of the railway sector.

- On 7 March the Culture Minister Lina Mendoni signs a protocol, on the initiative of Pope Francis, for the return to Greece of three fragments of the Parthenon, hosted in the Vatican.

- On 17 March the government announces the third increase in the minimum wage in just over a year, which will now stand at 780 euros a month.

Türkiye

- On 7 March the opposition parties designate the leader of the People's Republican Party (CHP, kemalist), Kemal Kilicdaroglu, as their joint candidate for the presidential elections on 14 May. On 22 March, the HDP announces that it will also back Kilicdaroglu.

- On 8 March the Parliament approves an additional 10% tax on more than 22 companies to finance the recovery plan following the earthquakes in February.

- On 11 March the army confirms the death of a leader of the PKK terrorist organization, identified as Hamiyet Yalcinkaya, in an operation in January.

- On 14 March at least 43 people are arrested charged with spreading panic with their social media posts on the earthquakes in February. A further 279 are arrested on suspicion of violating building regulations following the multiple building collapses.

- On 30 March the Parliament approves Finland's NATO membership, enabling the country to become the 31st member of the Atlantic Alliance on 4 April.

Cyprus

- On 1 March the new government of the President Nikos Christodoulides is sworn in.

- On 11 March Annita Demetriou claims victory over Demetris Demetriou

to become leader of the Democratic Rally (DISY, liberal conservative) in the party's internal elections.

Syria

- On 7 March at least three people are killed in an attack on the Aleppo airport, amid continued Israeli bombings on pro-Iranian positions.
- On 15 March the President Bashar al-Assad announces Syria's support for Russia in the war in Ukraine.
- On 24 March Bashar al-Assad reshuffles the cabinet with changes in the Oil, Industry, Internal Trade and Social Affairs ministries.
- On 24 March the US bombs pro-Iranian targets in eastern Syria in retaliation for an attack on a base of the international coalition in Hasaka.

Lebanon

- On 14 March the Lebanese pound hits a new record low of 100,000 to the dollar on the black market, while the mass protests against the political elite continue throughout the month.
- On 23 March the Prime Minister Najib Mikati announces a delay in the start of daylight saving time until 21 April to avoid it coinciding with the fasting that Muslims observe during Ramadan. The measure sparks a new intercommunal dispute. On 27 March, Mikati announces that the change to summer time will now take place at midnight between 30 and 31 March.

Libya

- On 2 March the High Council of State – the Tripoli-based Parliament – approves a constitutional amendment that enables elections to be held before the end of 2023, and which already had the consent of the rival Parliament, the Tobruk-based House of Representatives.
- On 7 March 105 migrants adrift off the Libyan coast are rescued.
- On 27 March an independent United Nations mission concludes that the security forces and armed militias have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in their treatment of migrants.

Tunisia

- On 4 March thousands of demonstrators called by the UGTT protest against the authoritarian drift of the President Kais Saied.
- On 9 March Kais Saied dissolves the municipal councils elected in 2018, replacing them with “special delegations” overseen by the regional governors.
- On 11 March the coast guard rescues 326 migrants off the coast of Sousse.
- On 13 February the new Parliament, presided over by Ibrahim Bouderbala, holds its first session since its dissolution in March 2022 by President Saied.
- On 16 March the European Parliament condemns Tunisia for “the recent attacks on freedom of expression and association and trade unions, in particular the case of the journalist Nouredine Boutar.”
- On 16 March Kais Saied calls for the maritime borders with Libya to be redefined giving the country a fairer share of the el-Bouri oil field.
- On 18 March President Saied appoints Kamal Feki as the new Interior Minister to replace Taoufik Charafeddine.
- On 21 March President Saied sacks Makram Ben Mna, who he had appointed president of the National Commission for Criminal Conciliation, tasked with pardoning economic crimes in exchange for investments in development projects.
- On 31 March the government announces tight restrictions on water usage to cope with a severe drought.

Algeria

- On 5 March the secretary general of the General Union of Algerian Workers (CGTA) Salim Labatcha resigns citing health reasons.
- On 16 March the Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra is replaced by Ahmed Attaf as part of the cabinet reshuffle ordered by the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune due to his dissatisfaction with the work of the current cabinet. The reshuffle also affected the ministries of Transport, Labour, Youth and Sport, Trade and Export, Finance, Industry, the Interior and Justice.
- On 30 March the Algerian Ambassador to France returns to his post after being recalled for consultations on 9

February over the “illegal exfiltration” from Tunisia to Lyon of the opposition activist Amira Bouraoui.

Morocco

- On 13 March Mohammed VI describes as “irresponsible and dangerous” the stance on the escalating violence in the West Bank adopted by the opposition Justice and Development Party (PJD, Islamist), which in turn appeals to its right to freedom of expression.

Mauritania

- On 6 March two national guards are killed during a prison break in Nouakchott, in which four convicted terrorists manage to escape. On 11 March, three of the fugitives and a gendarme are killed in Adrar, in an operation to capture them.

EU

- On 10 March the Parliament and Council reach a binding agreement for the Member States to reduce the Union's final energy consumption by 11.7% by 2030.
- On 13 March the European Council agrees to extend by six months the sanctions on Russians responsible for violating Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- On 14 March the EU states approve the increase of the European Peace Facility to 7.98 billion euros until 2027 to finance the European supply of arms and ammunition to Ukraine.
- On 24 March the EU and United Kingdom adopt the Windsor framework deal which amends the Northern Ireland Protocol included in Britain's EU withdrawal agreement, establishing regulations for the circulation of goods that do not enter the single market and a mechanism giving the Northern Irish Parliament more say in Union decisions directly affecting Northern Ireland.

April 2023

Spain approves the reform of the Sexual Freedom law. Demonstrations against

the pension reform continue in France. Italy toughens legislation on irregular migration. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative of the International Community forces the formation of the government in the Bosniak-Croat entity. Montenegro holds the second round of the presidential elections. Serbia vetoes Kosovo's entry into the Council of Europe. The trial against Kosovo's former President Hashim Thaci begins in the Hague. Local elections are held in Kosovo's Serb-majority municipalities. In Türkiye, the country's first nuclear plant is inaugurated and a number of HDP members are arrested. In Syria, the US and Türkiye announce the death of two senior leaders of Daesh. Egypt accuses Ethiopia of deciding unilaterally to resume filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and begins mediation efforts in Sudan's third civil war. In Tunisia, the headquarters of the Ennahda party are shut down and its leader Rached Ghannouchi jailed. In Algeria, new sentences are handed down to former senior officials for corruption. In Morocco, the former minister Mohamed Moubdii is taken into custody and a new inspector general of the Armed Forces is appointed.

Portugal

- On 1 April thousands of Portuguese protest in the country's biggest cities claiming their right to affordable housing.

Spain

- On 20 April the ruling Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) obtains parliamentary approval, with the support of the People's Party (PP, conservative), for the reform of the Sexual Freedom law, despite the reform's rejection by its government partner, Together We Can (UP, left-wing), with whom the law was initially agreed in October 2022. The reform rectifies lowering certain sentences for sexual assault arising from the unification of the crimes of sexual abuse and assault.
- On 25 April Spain requests the activation of the crisis reserve fund of the CAP to alleviate the country's severe drought.

France

- On 2 April the Supreme Court rejects the extradition to Italy of ten terrorists, mainly members of the Red Brigades, who were guilty of violent crime and given asylum in France during the Years of Lead.
- On 7 April the government authorizes the creation of a registry to monitor the more than 200 children of jihadists returning from Syria or Iraq in recent years.
- On 11 April Adrien Quatennens, member of France Unbowed (LFI, far-left) is reinstated into his parliamentary group four months after being convicted for domestic violence.
- On 14 April another mass protest takes place in Paris during the enactment of the pension system reform, finally approved by a Constitutional Court ruling.
- On 26 April the government delays the vote on the immigration bill until the autumn, in view of the lack of parliamentary support required to push it through.

Italy

- On 2-3 April Friuli-Venezia Giulia holds regional elections, won by the centre-right coalition led by Massimiliano Fedriga (League).
- On 10-11 April over 3,000 migrants arrive in Lampedusa after which the government announces tougher legislation on irregular migration and declares a six-month state of emergency. On 25 April, a further 1,200 people are rescued.
- On 27 April the police arrest Pasquale Bonavota one of the bosses of the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta, on the run after being convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for two murders committed in 2004 and 2014.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 26 April the Assembly of the Republika Srpska votes in favour of calling for the resignation of the Federal Constitutional Court judge Zlatko Knezevic, after the High Court annuls two laws passed by the Bosnian Serb Parliament that transferred ownership of state property to the Bosnian Serb entity.

- On 27 April the High Representative of the International Community uses the Bonn powers for the second time in six months to ensure the formation of a government in the Bosniak-Croat entity, imposing new changes in its constitution. On 28 April, the House of Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina names the new government, formed by HDZ BiH, HDZ 1990, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), Our Party (NS, socio-liberal) and People and Justice (NiP, Bosniak nationalist conservative).

Montenegro

- On 2 April Montenegro holds the second round of presidential elections in which 60% of the vote goes to the leader of the Now Europe Movement (PES, liberal) Jakov Milatovic. He thereby defeats the outgoing President Milo Djukanovic, who on 5 April steps down as leader of the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS).
- On 13 April the mayor of Budva Milo Bozovic is arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking and creating a criminal organization.
- On 26 April Montenegro signs a memorandum of understanding with China for the construction of a highway between Budva and Tivat valued at 59 million dollars. The deal sparks controversy due to the problems experienced when a Chinese company was also contracted with the construction of the Bar-Boljare highway, which plunged the country into a severe debt crisis.

Serbia

- On 24 April Serbia vetoes Kosovo's entry into the Council of Europe, despite a commitment not to block the country's membership to international bodies included in March's agreement to normalize relations.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 3 April the trial in The Hague begins against the former President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci and another three top members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK) for war crimes during the

conflict in Kosovo. Thousands of people demonstrate in Kosovo against the trial.

- On 19 April Nagip Krasniqi, the director of Kosovo Energy Corporation (KEK), is arrested on suspicion of abuse of power and conflict of interests.
- On 23 April local elections are held in the Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo, marked by a turnout of just 3.4%, due to a boycott by the region's biggest party, Srpska Lista.

Albania

- On 21 April Albania suspends visa-free travel for Russian citizens, as a reprisal for the invasion of Ukraine.

Greece

- On 11 April the Ministry of Finance and Greece's four main banks announce that the latter will absorb any further interest rate hikes on mortgage loans over the next 12 months to curb inflation.
- On 17 April Syriza temporarily suspends the membership of its MEP Alexis Georgoulis, until the investigation into alleged sexual harassment, ongoing since 2020, is fully clarified. The Belgian authorities have asked the European Parliament to lift his parliamentary immunity.

Türkiye

- On 14 April at a campaign event in Diyarbakir the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces plans to start a process for a new Constitution.
- On 20 April Türkiye rules out joining international sanctions against Russia unless they are imposed by the UN.
- On 25 April a police operation is launched to arrest 150 people in the country's southeast who have connections with or belong to the HDP, accused of supporting the PKK.
- On 29 April Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vladimir Putin inaugurate Türkiye's first nuclear plant in Akkuyu, built by Russia.

Cyprus

- On 26 April a fire breaks out in the Russian Centre of Science and Culture

in Nicosia, which Moscow describes as a "terrorist attack."

Syria

- On 4 April the US announces the death in Syria of a senior leader of Daesh, identified as Khalid Ayyd Ahmad al-Jaburi.
- On 27 April the Tunisian President Kais Saied appoints Mohammad al-Mahdhabi ambassador to Syria, after an almost 10-year break in diplomatic ties over the Syrian conflict.
- On 30 April Türkiye claims its intelligence service has killed Daesh leader Abu Hussein al-Qurashi in Syria.

Lebanon

- On 18 April the Parliament approves delaying the local elections scheduled for May for a year, in an effort to avoid a bigger political stalemate than the one the country is already undergoing.

Egypt

- On 7 April a leaked US intelligence document reveals that Egypt had plans to supply Russia with around 40,000 missiles in its war against Ukraine.
- On 13 April Egypt accuses Ethiopia of buying time by asking for talks on the GERD to be resumed under the auspices of the African Union (UA) so it can continue to fill the dam and avoid reaching a deal with Egypt.
- On 16 April Egypt begins mediation efforts in Sudan and says the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have committed to returning the Egyptian soldiers captured the previous day during the fighting between the RSF and the Sudanese army. On 27 April, the Foreign Ministry states that 16,000 people have arrived from Sudan during the two weeks since the breakout of the country's third civil war.

Libya

- On 2 April the Ocean Viking ship rescues 92 migrants off the Libyan coast, who are to be taken to Salerno.
- On 9 April rival military leaders in Libya tell the UN they are committed to protecting the country's stability ahead

of the elections scheduled for the end of the year.

- On 26 April at least 55 migrants are killed in a shipwreck off the coast of Garabulli.

Tunisia

- On 10 April the leader of the opposition coalition the National Salvation Front (FSN) Najib Chebbi calls for unity to agree on a road map that will steer the country out of the political crisis it has been in since Kais Saied took over the presidency.
- On 17 April the authorities shut down the headquarters of the Islamist Ennahda party and its leader and former speaker of the Parliament Rached Ghannouchi is arrested, along with other senior party members. On 20 April, Tunisia's Court of First Instance orders Ghannouchi to be imprisoned for conspiring against state security.
- On 27 April Tunisia reports the arrival of a hundred bodies at the morgue in Sfax of migrants who drowned in the Mediterranean.

Algeria

- On 2 April the owner of the media outlets Radio M and Maghreb Émergent Ihsane El-Kadi is sentenced to five years' imprisonment for receiving "foreign funding for his business."
- On 6 April the former Minister Delegate in charge of Microenterprises Nassim Diafat is arrested on charges of abuse of power and squandering public funds.
- On 16 April Nouredine Boutarfa, the former Energy Minister, and the former Sonatrach CEOs Abdelmoumen Ould Kaddour and Mohamed Meziane, are sentenced to five, 10 and five years in prison, respectively, for corruption.

Morocco

- On 13 April the US approves the sale to Morocco of 18 HIMARS rocket launchers.
- On 24 April amid mounting regional tensions, Mohammed VI appoints Mohammed Berrid Inspector General of the Armed Forces, to replace Belkhir el-Farouk.

- On 24 April the authorities forecast a week-long heatwave with temperatures reaching highs of 44 degrees, adding to low rainfall and unusually high temperatures recorded in March.
- On 28 April the MP and former minister Mohamed Mobdii is remanded in custody in a corruption probe.

EU

- On 4 April the Belgian and Germany police forces raid the offices of the European People's Party (EPP, centre-right) in Brussels as part of an investigation in Thuringia into Mario Voigt, leader of the Christian Democrat Union (CDU, conservative), over contracts he is alleged to have awarded irregularly during his management of the digital campaign for Manfred Weber for the 2019 European elections.
- On 17 April the Commission warns Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria against their decision to ban the entry of duty-free grain and other products from Ukraine, a measure adopted by Brussels to alleviate Ukraine's economic situation and the global food crisis. On 20 April, the Commission proposes earmarking an additional 100 million euros to support farmers in countries bordering Ukraine.

May 2023

In Portugal a crisis erupts inside the PS and euthanasia is legalized. Spain, Italy, Greece, Albania, Türkiye and Mauritania hold electoral processes. In France, the former President Nicolas Sarkozy is convicted. Italy approves its labour reform. Tensions rise in North Kosovo. In Serbia there are two mass shootings and President Vucic steps down as leader of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS, conservative). In Egypt, relatives and friends of the former opposition MP Ahmed Eltantawy are arrested. In Libya, the east-based House of Representatives suspends the Prime Minister Fathi Bashagha. In Tunisia, the leader of Ennahda is convicted and a terror attack is carried out in Djerba. In Algeria, the leader of the Movement for the Self-Determination of Kabylie (MAK) is sentenced to life im-

prisonment and Karim Tabbou, a prominent figure from the Hirak movement, is arrested. Morocco recognizes Yennayer as a national holiday.

Portugal

- On 2 May the Prime Minister Antonio Costa sparks a crisis inside the PS when he refuses the resignation of the Infrastructure Minister Joao Galamba, despite the PS leader Carlos Cesar calling for his dismissal from the government over irregularities in the management of the TAP airline; a call joined by that of the Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa.
- On 16 May the President Rebelo de Sousa enacts the law on euthanasia, passed by the Parliament after four presidential vetoes and six years of disputes.

Spain

- On 28 May Spain holds local elections as well as regional elections in most of its regions. Both votes hand victory to the PP in most of the contested regions, as well as in a large number of the provincial capitals, which see a significant surge in votes and councillors for Vox (far-right). Worthy of note is the collapse of UP and the losses suffered by the PSOE of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who, on the following day, announces an early general election for July.

France

- On 1 May, International Workers' Day, some 300 demonstrations throughout France protest once more against the reform of the pension system. 500 arrests are made throughout the day. On 3 May, the Constitutional Council rejects the bid for a referendum by the left-wing opposition to cancel the reform.
- On 4 May the Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin prompts the Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani to cancel an official visit to Paris and sparks a diplomatic crisis with Rome after accusing the Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of being "incapable of resolving migration problems."

- On 9 May the Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin announces that he has instructed prefectures to ban all far-right demonstrations after a controversial neo-Nazi rally in Paris on 6 May.
- On 16 May France, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Finland, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Estonia hold the first meeting of the Paris-led alliance that promotes a nuclear energy transition model for Europe. On the same day, the French Parliament approves accelerating the construction of six new nuclear reactors.
- On 17 May the former President Nicolas Sarkozy becomes the first French President to be handed down an effective prison sentence, albeit one he will serve at home. The court ruled for a three-year prison sentence for corruption and influence peddling in the so-called wiretap graft case, one of the three trials being held against him.

Italy

- On 1 May the government approves the new labour reform which makes temporary employment and indefinite contracts more flexible, scraps the citizens' income and cuts taxes until 2024 for workers with yearly incomes below 35,000 euros.
- On 3 May more than 130 members of the 'Ndrangheta network are arrested in raids coordinated across 10 European countries.
- On 4 May, in Rome, the Prime Minister Georgia Meloni receives General Khalifa Haftar, an ally of the eastern Libyan authorities, to discuss the mass migratory flows to Italy and a roadmap towards Libyan elections.
- On 6 May MSF disembarks 336 migrants in La Spezia.
- On 8 May the MP and former candidate for prime minister Carlo Cottarelli leaves the PD, citing his disagreement with the direction its leader Elly Schlein is taking the party in.
- On 14 and 15 May Italy holds local elections in 596 of its municipalities, with second rounds on 28 and 29 May where candidates have failed to gain an absolute majority in the first round. The elections confirm the strong rise of the right wing.

- On 18 May a storm causes serious flooding in Emilia-Romagna leaving at least 14 dead and forcing 20,000 to evacuate.
- On 28 May 151 migrants are rescued off the coast of Calabria.

Malta

- On 13 May Malta and Cyprus revoke 45 Russians of their “golden passports,” which grants citizenship in exchange for investment.

Slovenia

- On 23 May Slovenia recognizes the 1931-1933 famine that killed four million Ukrainians under the dictatorship of Joseph Stalin, known as the Holodomor, as genocide.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 11 May the Council of Ministers approves negotiations for building three gas pipelines to supply gas from Russia and Azerbaijan through Serbia and Croatia.

Montenegro

- On 16 May Montenegro signs an agreement allowing Frontex to deploy personnel on its territory.

Serbia

- On 5 May eight people are killed and 13 wounded in Dubona during a shooting perpetrated by a young man, who is arrested during a large-scale police action. The incident happens three days after a student kills nine people at a primary school, opening the debate on firearm ownership in Serbia, a country ranked third in the world, after the US and Yemen in the number of firearms per inhabitant. On 8 May, the President Aleksandar Vucic sets an ultimatum for citizens to surrender any illegal weapons in their power. By 10 May, over 3,000 weapons have been handed in.
- On 26 May, amid a crisis in North Kosovo and in the aftermath of the shootings in Belgrade and Dubona, President Vucic announces his resigna-

tion as SNS leader, proposing the Defence Minister Milos Vucevic as his successor. On the same day, thousands of SNS supporters rally in Belgrade in support of Vucic.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 2 May in Brussels, Serbia and Kosovo agree to locate people still missing from the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo.
- 19 May Erden Atic, from the left-wing pro-independence Vetevendosje party, is sworn in as mayor of North Mitrovica amid mounting tension after his victory in North Kosovo's local elections on 23 April, despite the mass boycott by the Serb-majority population. On 28 May, the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg urges Kosovo and Serbia to ease tensions two days after violent clashes between Kosovo police and demonstrators angry over the appointment of Albanians as mayors in majority-Serb areas, a situation that prompts Serbia to put its army on alert. On the same day, there is more unrest, which leaves dozens injured, among them 30 members of the Atlantic Alliance peace-keeping force (KFOR), resulting in NATO's announcement to send 700 reinforcement troops to North Kosovo.

Albania

- On 14 May Albania holds local elections in which the Socialist Party (PSS) wins the majority of the mayoral posts.

Greece

- On 3 May the Supreme Court backs a parliamentary amendment on 11 April ensuring that the Greeks-National Party (EK-E, far-right), a successor to the outlawed Golden Dawn, cannot participate in the elections.
- On 21 May Greece holds parliamentary elections in which Kyriakos Mitsotakis' ND wins with 40.8% of the vote against the 20.1% of Syriza, a good result, although insufficient to support a single-party government. Mitsotakis therefore calls early elections for 25 July. Ioannis Sharma, the hitherto president of the Court of Auditors, is sworn in as the interim Prime Minister.

Türkiye

- On 14 May Türkiye holds general elections in which the Justice and Development Party (AKP, Islamist) wins 266 seats, followed by the CHP with 169. On the same day, the first round of the presidential elections is held, in which Recep Tayyip Erdogan (AKP) and Kemal Kilicdaroglu (CHP) are the most voted candidates. On 28 May, Erdogan claims victory over Kilicdaroglu in the second round with 52.18% of the votes.
- On 31 May Selahattin Demirtas, the former HDP leader imprisoned in Edirne, announces his retirement from active politics following his criticism of the party's presidential election strategy.

Cyprus

- On 23 May the Parliament rejects the government proposal to create an online list of some 350 basic consumer goods on which the large retailers have to post their prices on a daily basis.

Syria

- On 3 May the Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi makes his first official visit to Syria since 2011, during which he signs a number of cooperation agreements to strengthen bilateral ties.

Jordan

- On 1 May the Foreign Ministers of Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Egypt meet in Amman to normalize relations with Damascus.
- On 7 May the MP Imad al-Adwan, arrested in April by Israel for attempting to smuggle arms into the West Bank, is handed over to Jordan for investigation. On 17 May he is charged with arms and gold smuggling.

Egypt

- On 1 May Egypt releases Hisham Abdelaziz, the al-Jazeera journalist held in pre-trial detention since 2019.
- On 3 May the National Dialogue begins, an initiative of President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to discuss human rights issues and the economic crisis with political organizations and labour unions.

- On 5 May Human Rights Watch (HRW) condemns the arrest of friends and relatives of the former MP and opposition figure Ahmed Tantawy, a possible Karama Party candidate for the 2024 elections.

Libya

- On 16 May the eastern Libyan House of Representatives suspends Fathi Bashagha, the Prime Minister since 2021 of the government operating in parallel to the Tripoli Parliament, replacing him with the Finance Minister Osama Hamad.
- On 29 May there is fierce unrest in Tripoli between the Deterrence Force (Rada) and the Libyan army's 444th Brigade.
- On 29 May 23 jihadists are sentenced to death for belonging to Daesh. A further 14 are handed down life sentences.

Tunisia

- On 10 May a member of the National Guard opens fire in the vicinity of the Ghriba synagogue on the island of Djerba, killing four people.
- On 15 May the Ennahda leader Rached Ghannouchi is sentenced to one year in prison for incitement to terrorism.
- On 16 May Khalifa Guesmi, a journalist for the Mosaïque FM radio station who was arrested in February, is sentenced to five years in prison for his reporting on security operations. On 25 May, the director of Mosaïque FM Noureddine Boutar, also arrested in February, was released on bail.
- On 19 May the former Ennahda leader Sadok Chourou, who spent 20 years in prison during the regime of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, is arrested.

Algeria

- On 17 May the MAK leader Ferhat Mehenni is sentenced to life imprisonment on terrorism-related charges.
- On 23 May Karim Tabbou, the leader of the Social and Democratic Union (UDS) and prominent figure in the Hirak movement, is arrested. On 25 May Tabbou is released on bail.
- On 30 May Cevital, Algeria's largest business conglomerate, which was

blocked in 2017 and relaunched by the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune in 2022, inaugurates its new flagship factory, a few days after its former chairman and founder Isaad Rebrab was banned from exercising any commercial or managerial duties.

Morocco

- On 14 May Mohammed VI declares Yennayer, the Amazigh New Year celebrated on 13 January, a national holiday.

Mauritania

- On 13 and 27 May Mauritania holds the two rounds of its parliamentary, regional and local elections, in which the conservative party el-Insaf of the President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani wins with an absolute majority. On 27 May, the anti-slavery activist and MP Biram Dah Abeid, arrested on 24 May after denouncing electoral fraud in the elections, is released.
- On 31 May the authorities shut down Internet access a day after protests erupt over the death of a young man while in police custody.

EU

- On 9 May, Europe Day, in his address to the European Parliament, the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz calls for the Union's founding treaties to be amended to put an end to decisions on foreign policy and taxes requiring unanimous approval.
- On 10 May the Commission launches the first international tender for the joint purchase of 11.6 billion m³ of gas.
- On 15 May Italy's former Foreign Minister Luigi di Maio is appointed as the EU's special envoy to the Persian Gulf.

Arab League

- On 7 May the emergency meeting of foreign ministers of the Arab League approves the end of Syria's suspension from the body. Consequently, on 20 May, the participation of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the 32nd Arab League summit in Jeddah marks

the culmination of the gradual reestablishment of ties between Damascus and Türkiye, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, a process which began at the start of the year.

June 2023

The month of June sees a surge in the number of migrant arrivals on European shores and the tragic shipwreck in the Ionian Sea of a fishing boat carrying over a hundred migrants. In France, the death of a young man at the hands of police sparks protests and unrest. In Italy, Silvio Berlusconi dies and regional elections are held in Molise. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska declares federal Constitutional Court rulings to be invalid. Montenegro and Greece hold legislative elections. The crisis escalates between Serbia and Kosovo over the situation in the Serb-majority municipalities. In Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdogan unveils his third cabinet. The PKK ends the unilateral ceasefire declared in February. Syria continues to normalize relations with other states in the region and is brought before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The Lebanese Parliament again fails to elect a president for the country. Protests continue by the Tunisian opposition against the President Kais Saied.

France

- On 6 June around 500,000 demonstrators protest throughout France against the socioeconomic politics of the President Emmanuel Macron and the pension reform. On 8 June, the President of the National Assembly Yael Braun-Pivet rejects an initiative forwarded by the opposition to delay the reform.
- On 20 June the police raid the headquarters of the Paris 2024 Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games as part of two investigations into misuse of public money and favouritism.
- On 29 June President Macron holds an interministerial crisis meeting over the unrest that erupted in several cities following the death of a young man on 27 June, who was shot by a police of-

ficer after refusing to stop his vehicle at a police checkpoint in Nanterre. The clashes and acts of vandalism continue for over a week in the most serious “banlieue” crisis since 2005.

Italy

- On 12 June the three-time Prime Minister, FI founder and Mediaset owner Silvio Berlusconi dies.
- On 25 and 26 June Molise holds regional elections. The right-wing coalition led by Francesco Roberti wins with 62.2% of the votes, defeating Roberto Gravina's left-wing coalition, which obtains 36.3%.
- On 27 June over 40 people are arrested in a raid against the 'Ndrangheta mafia in Calabria.
- On 29 June some 700 migrants arrive in Lampedusa.

Malta

- On 22 June Malta reaches a deal with Libya for the construction of a renewable energy interconnector.
- On 28 June the Parliament approves a new abortion law that allows pregnancies to be terminated if the mother is at risk.

Slovenia

- On 6 June Slovenia is elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, alongside Algeria, South Korea, Sierra Leone and Guyana.

Croatia

- On 28 June the Parliament recognizes the Holodomor as an act of genocide committed by the Soviet dictatorship, in which four million Ukrainians died from starvation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 14 June a minor opens fire in a school in Lukavac injuring a teacher.
- On 28 June on the request of the President of the Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik, the Bosnian Serb National Assembly declares that Federal Constitutional Court rulings are not applicable in the entity.

Montenegro

- On 11 June Montenegro holds early legislative elections won by the Now Europe Movement (PES, liberal pro-Europe) of Miloško Spajić, with 25.5% of the votes.

Serbia

- On 1 June the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (MICT) dismisses the appeals filed by Jovica Stanisic and Franko Simatovic, the Serbian spy chiefs under Slobodan Milosevic, and sentences them to 15 years in prison, ruling that the Yugoslav regime had led a criminal ethnic cleansing enterprise. This is the final case to be concluded for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).
- On 20 June the Serbian and Hungarian national gas companies, Srbijagas and MVM, establish the joint company SERBHUNGAS.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 1 June faced with the surge of violence in North Kosovo in May, the EU calls on Pristina to repeat the local elections held in April in the region, which had a turnout of just 3.4% due to the Kosovo Serb boycott. Brussels urges Kosovo Serbs to vote in the new elections. On 15 June, Brussels reiterates its warnings after Kosovo bans Serbian vehicles from entering the country in response to Serbia's arrest of three Kosovo police officers. On 26 June, Serbia releases the police officers. On 28 June, the EC announces a package of severe sanctions against Kosovo over the country's failure to take action to alleviate the tensions. On 29 June, Kosovo declares the pro-Serbian groups Civil Protection and Northern Brigade, terrorist organizations.

Albania

- On 20 June a member of Mojahedine-Khalq (MEK) is killed in a police raid in Durrës. The Iranian opposition group was suspected of involvement in political activity, a practice forbidden under

the terms of the agreement that allows the organization to remain in Albania.

- On 29 June an anti-drug operation in Elbasan results in 45 arrests.

Greece

- On 9 and 23 June 91 and 150 migrants are rescued, respectively, from the Evros river on the border with Türkiye.
- On 15 June nine Egyptians suspected of human trafficking are arrested following the previous day's shipwreck in the Ionian Sea of a boat carrying 500 migrants, which leaves at least 82 dead.
- On 19 June around 70 migrants are rescued off the coast of Leros, in the Dodecanese.
- On 21 June 63 migrants are rescued off the coast of Cape Tainaro, in the Peloponnese.
- On 25 June Greece holds early legislative elections in which Kyriakos Mitsotakis' ND wins with an absolute majority with 40.79% of the votes. The 20.07% obtained by Syriza forces Alexis Tsipras to resign as party leader. The far-right parties together win 12.18% of the votes. On 27 June, the new government is sworn in. Kostis Chatzidakis takes over as Finance Minister and Giorgios Gerapetritis in Foreign Affairs replacing Nikos Dendias, who is appointed Defence Minister.
- On 30 June Frontex calls on Greece to clarify its actions regarding the rescue of migrants and refugees.

Türkiye

- On 3 June the country's new government is unveiled. Mehmet Şimşek is appointed Finance Minister. Yasar Güler replaces Hulusi Akar in Defence. Ali Yerlikaya takes over from Suleyman Soylu as Interior Minister and Hakan Fidan replaces Mevlut Cavusoglu as Foreign Minister. The cabinet's only woman Mahinur Özdemir is named Minister of Family and Social Services.
- On 5 June the HDP co-chairs Mizan Sancar and Pervin Buldan announce they will not run for reelection as party leaders after the poor results in the presidential and parliamentary elections.
- On 5 June the opposition demands the release of the activist and newly

elected MP Can Atalay, who was jailed over the Gezi Park protests in 2013.

- On 8 June the AKP vice-chairman Numan Kurtulmus is elected as Parliament Speaker.
- On 9 June Hafize Gaye Erkan is appointed the Central Bank governor, tasked with curbing inflation and halting the devaluation of the lira.
- On 14 June the PKK terrorist organization announces the end of the unilateral ceasefire in place since the earthquakes in February.
- On 18 June a large contingent of police officers was deployed to stop the Trans Pride Parade in Istanbul, which was banned for threatening family values.
- On 20 June the government approves a 34% minimum wage hike to offset inflation.
- On 25 June at least 113 people are arrested in Istanbul and Esmirna for participating in Gay Pride events.

Cyprus

- On 19 June farmers in Nicosia protest against the draft law under debate in the European Parliament which will reduce the number of authorized pesticides.
- On 19 June the Parliament approves the creation of more than 1,800 public sector jobs.
- On 23 June 45 migrants are rescued in Cypriot waters.

Syria

- On 5 June the opposition calls for the UN-mediated talks to be resumed with the government of Bashar-al Assad.
- On 10 June the SDF announces a mass trial of Daesh detainees in view of the "failure" of the international community to accelerate the repatriation process.
- On 12 June Canada and the Netherlands file a case against the Syrian regime at the ICJ for violations of the Convention against Torture since 2011.
- On 13 June Syria and Saudi Arabia agree to resume economic and trade cooperation, after a decade of severed ties.
- On 14-15 June the EU holds the 7th conference on supporting the future of Syria, which raises almost 5.6 billion euros.

- On 21 June Kazakhstan announces the end of the Astana Process to end the war in Syria.
- On 28 June the SOHR reports that Russia has given an ultimatum for the more than 2,000 Wagner Group mercenaries in Syria to join the Russian army or leave the country. The step comes shortly after the failed uprising of Yevgeni Prigozhin's group against Moscow.
- On 29 June the United Nations General Assembly approves the creation of an independent mechanism to investigate the arrest and forced disappearance of some 100,000 people since the start of the war in Syria.

Lebanon

- On 9 June Lebanon recalls its ambassador in Paris Rami Adwan, following his involvement in a French investigation into rape allegations against him.
- On 9 June the United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL) deploys troops on the Israeli border faced with the protests and unrest over the Israeli forces' harassment of a farmer in Kfar-chouba.
- On 11 June Lebanon declares the end of the cholera outbreak which began in October 2022. 23 people are reported to have died as a result and there have been 671 confirmed cases.
- On 14 June Hezbollah's boycott prevents the election of the Maronite Jihad Azour as President in the 12th attempt to elect a successor to Michel Aoun, whose mandate expired in October 2022.

Egypt

- On 11 June Egypt announces the reintroduction of visas for Sudanese nationals, who are mostly fleeing from the civil war being fought in their country.

Libya

- On 4 June the Tobruk authorities impose an indefinite nighttime curfew after days of tension between security officers and residents over the death of a young man in clashes between border guards and human traffickers.
- On 7 June the rival governments in Tripoli and Tobruk end talks in Bouznika,

Morocco, without agreeing on new election laws needed to hold polls.

Tunisia

- On 18 June an NSFT march demands the release of political prisoners, including the former Prime Minister Ali Laarayedh. On the same day, a court bans audiovisual media from reporting on the trial of 21 activists charged with conspiring against President Saied.
- On 19 June France announces 25.8 million euros to help Tunisia stop irregular migration.
- On 22 June the journalist Zied el-Heni is released, after he was arrested on 20 June for criticizing an article in the penal code which criminalizes insulting the Head of State.
- On 22 June a vessel heading for Lampedusa shipwrecks, leaving at least 37 migrants missing.

Algeria

- On 18 June the Algiers Appeals Court increases the jail sentence handed down to the journalist Ihsane el-Kadi for receiving illegal foreign financing from three to five years.

Morocco

- On 24 June the Interior Minister reports 25,519 interceptions of irregular migrants between January and May 2023.
- On 24 June the government announces fines of between 1,800 and 18,000 euros for anyone spreading false news.

Mauritania

- On 16 June Mauritania reports at least 104 cases of slavery amid a government campaign to put an end to this practice.

EU

- On 1 June the 2nd European Political Community (EPC) Summit in Bulboaca, Moldavia, displays a united front against Russia and underscores its commitment to Moldava's integration into the EU.
- On 1 June the European Council approves the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention concerning the protection of women.

- On 5 June the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) declares Poland's 2019 judicial reform illegal.
- On 8 June the Commission presents the Inter-institutional Ethics Body, an agency tasked with setting transparency and good practice standards, six months after the outbreak of the Qatar-gate scandal.
- On 16 June Frontex indicates that half of the irregular migration towards the EU takes place in the central Mediterranean, with over 50,300 illegal crossings between January and May in 2023, representing a 160% increase on the same period in 2022.
- On 22 June the CJEU rules that Hungary has failed to comply with European legislation on asylum.
- On 23 June the EU adopted the 11th package of sanctions against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine.

July 2023

The heatwave affecting the northern hemisphere, and attributed to climate change, makes July the hottest month on record, causing wildfires and power cuts in several Mediterranean countries. Spain takes over the six-month European Presidency and holds early legislative elections. The anti-government protests continue in France. In Italy, Antonio Tajani is elected leader of the FI. The High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina cancels Republika Srpska's ruling not to recognize the jurisdiction of the Federal Constitutional Court. In Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia and Albania a number of senior officials are arrested for corruption. Türkiye lifts its veto on Sweden's accession to NATO and resumes diplomatic ties with Egypt. The governor of the Lebanese Central Bank resigns. Tunisia signs a major deal with the EU on economic and migration assistance, at the same time as it departs thousands of migrants from Sfax following violent clashes in the coastal city.

Portugal

- On 18 July the Parliament approves an amnesty law for young people be-

tween 16 and 30 years of age who have not committed serious crimes.

Spain

- On 1 July Spain takes over the six-month European Presidency with the priorities of reindustrializing Europe, guaranteeing its strategic autonomy, advancing in the green transition, increasing socioeconomic justice and strengthening European unity.
- On 5 July the European General Court lifts the parliamentary immunity of the former regional President and two of his former ministers, who are due to stand trial in Spain over the Catalan independence process.
- On 23 July Spain holds early legislative elections in which Alberto Núñez Feijóo's PP is the most voted party (33.04%, 136 seats) ahead of Pedro Sánchez's PSOE (31.70%, 122 seats). There is a notable downturn in votes and seats for the far-right party Vox, which drops by 19 seats down to 33, and Sumar, the left-wing successor to UP, which loses seven seats, now down to 31.

France

- On 2 July far-right groups demonstrate in Lyon calling for the defence of national identity, following the eruption of protests in the French "banlieue," which are ongoing since late June and in which more than 3,500 people have been arrested.
- On 8 July, despite the ban imposed by the Interior Ministry, thousands of demonstrators protest in Paris and other cities against "police violence."
- On 20 July after months of social instability, the President Emmanuel Macron carries out a small government reshuffle without any key ministerial changes. Noteworthy is the departure of the State Secretary for the Social and Solidarity Economy Marlene Schiappa, under investigation for her alleged involvement in a funding scandal.

Italy

- On 7 July the Council of Ministers approves the entry of almost half a million legal immigrants over three years, in view of labour shortages.

- On 11 July over 1,350 migrants arrive in Lampedusa in 24 hours.
- On 15 July the Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani is elected to be the FI secretary.
- On 22 July Rome hosts the Conference on Development and Migration, which centres on strengthening security policies against human trafficking.
- On 25 July Catania and Palermo are hit by wildfires that force the closure of Sicilian airports, amid a heatwave that sees temperatures of up to 47°C, causing water and power cuts that also affect Syracuse.
- On 27 July the Parliament approves the government proposal to consider surrogacy as a "universal crime" in Italy, as well as banning Italians from its practice abroad.
- On 31 July protests are staged in Italy against the government's announcement that it will scrap its scheme for a basic income for vulnerable families as of 2 January 2024.

Malta

- On 26 July there have been nine consecutive nights of power cuts in large areas due to faults attributed to the extreme heatwave.

Croatia

- On 21 July, amid a showdown between the President Zoran Milanovic and the Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, an unprecedented session of parliament is convened, the first requested by a president of the Republic, to address the seven-week judiciary strike and possible fraud over the resale of gas by the Croatian Electricity Company HEP.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 1 July the High Representative for the international community Christian Schmidt annuls legislation passed in June by the Republika Srpska, which rejects the authority of the country's Constitutional Court rulings.
- On 6 July Djordje Ristanic, head of the leadership in Brcko during the Bosnian War, is acquitted of his involvement in the persecution of Bosniaks and Croats.

- On 20 July the Parliament of the Republika Srpska adopts amendments to the Bosnian Serb criminal code to criminalize defamation; a measure the press says would stifle free speech.

Montenegro

- On 11 July Yugoslav Raicevic, the former head of the Police Department for Personal Security is arrested for alleged abuse of power and links with the Skaljari drug-trafficking gang.
- On 24 July the former police chief Veselin Veljovic is arrested for abuse of power and belonging to a criminal organization.

Serbia

- On 27 July the Public Prosecutor's Office submits a request to the Constitutional Court to outlaw the far-right movement Leviathan for endangering minority and human rights, spreading racial, religious and national hatred and for constituting a paramilitary organization.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 12 July the Kosovo Supreme Court acquits the former minister Ivan Todorovic of inciting hatred over his denial of the massacre of Kosovo Albanians in Racak/Recak in 1999.

North Macedonia

- On 6 July Dragi Rashkovski, former Government Secretary General, is sentenced to eight years in prison for corruption in the Software case.

Albania

- On 14 July the Parliament raises the immunity of the former Deputy Prime Minister Arben Ahmetaj, under investigation for corruption. On 24 July, the Special Court against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) issues an international arrest warrant for Ahmetaj.
- On 27 July the Supreme Court rules that the mayor of Himara, Fredi Beleri, should remain behind bars, charged with vote-buying in the local elections in May.

Greece

- On 22 July the Greek coast guard rescues almost a hundred migrants from waters off Karpathos and Rhodes.
- On 23 July, amid a heatwave with temperatures exceeding 40°C, massive wildfires are reported in Corfu, to add to the ones already raging in Rhodes, Aigio (Achaëa), Karystos (Euboea) and Lake Yliki (Boeotia). On 28 July, the Greek Minister for Citizen Protection Notis Mitarakis resigns.

Türkiye

- On 2 July Türkiye reports the rescue of 84 migrants that, according to Ankara, were pushed back from Greek waters.
- On 5 July UN experts urge Türkiye not to deport around a hundred Ahmedis, detained on the Bulgarian-Turkish border in June, back to their country of origin, on the grounds they could suffer serious human rights violations.
- On 11 July Türkiye announces it is lifting the veto on Sweden's accession to NATO during the summit of the Atlantic Alliance in Vilnius. In exchange, Sweden commits to giving its support to resuming Türkiye's EU accession process and stepping up its anti-terrorism cooperation with Ankara. The summit also approves simplifying Ukraine's accession process.
- On 12 July the ruling parliamentary majority rejects the proposal forwarded by the CHP to recognize the Srebrenica massacre as genocide.
- On 17 July Turkish and UN mediation is unable to safeguard the agreement to export Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea, following its suspension by Russia.
- On 26 July the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK) fines five digital platforms for "normalizing obscenity" in productions that address LGBT issues.

Syria

- On 5 July the OPCW concludes that there are no grounds to determine chemical weapons were used in two attacks in 2017 in Hama, as reported by the Syrian regime.

- On 7 July US forces kill Usamah al-Muhajir, a senior Daesh leader in eastern Syria.
- On 14 July Syria authorizes the UN to resume the delivery of humanitarian aid through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing, days after Russia vetoes the extension of the cross-border aid mechanism in the Security Council.
- On 23 July Kurdish forces announce the capture of a prominent Daesh leader in Deir ez-Zor.

Lebanon

- On 5 July HRW reports that Lebanon arbitrarily deported thousands of Syrian refugees between April and May 2023.
- On 31 July there have been three days of violent clashes between factions in Ain al-Hilweh, Lebanon's biggest Palestinian refugee camp.
- On 31 July Riad Salameh steps down from his post after three decades as the governor of the Central Bank, after the Justice Minister Henri Khoury called for his resignation and Germany and France issued warrants for his arrest in May.

Egypt

- On 4 July after months of talks, Egypt and Türkiye appoint respective ambassadors, thereby putting an end to a 10-year rift following the downfall of the Islamist Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi in 2013.
- On 21 July Abdel Fattah El-Sisi pardons the activist Patrick Zaki, a day after he is sentenced to three years in prison for spreading false news. The jailed activists Mohamed al-Baqer and Alaa Abdel Fattah are also pardoned.
- On 27 July the government announces programmed power cuts to deal with the heatwave.

Libya

- On 2 July the Parliament in Tripoli rejects the appointments made by its rival Parliament in Tobruk to form its own Constitutional Court.
- On 3 July Khalifa Haftar, commander of the self-proclaimed National Libyan Army (NLA) in the country's east, de-

mands the creation, before the end of August, of a high commission for the fair management of public funds and oil revenues. The threat backs up warnings made at the end of June by the Prime Minister of eastern Libya Oussama Hamad that activities in the region's main oil fields will be suspended as a reprisal for what Tobruk considers is an unfair distribution of the profits.

- On 3 July NLA soldiers release 237 migrants held near Tobruk, during an anti-mafia operation that concludes with over 1,000 arrests.
- On 15 July Tripoli's security forces release former Finance Minister Faraj Buntari, whose arrest on 12 July prompted the closure of several oil fields and water supply cuts in protest.
- On 26 July the country's eastern-based Parliament approves the road-map devised by the 6+6 committee to prepare the electoral laws that will allow unified elections to be held.

Tunisia

- On 3 July a Tunisian is stabbed to death by three sub-Saharan migrants in Sfax. The incident unleashes major unrest and increases the tensions already affecting the city. On 6 July, more than 1,200 sub-Saharan migrants are deported by the authorities from Sfas to the desert border with Libya and Algeria, amid a wave of xenophobia exacerbated by the country's serious economic crisis and the President Kais Saïed's approach to the situation. On 28 July, Tunisian public workers report the discovery of 25 dead migrants on the border with Libya where temperatures of up to 50°C have been recorded.
- On 16 July the EU and Tunisia sign a memorandum of understanding on migration and economic cooperation which provides 400 million euros for border control and to alleviate the financial crisis.
- On 17 July more than 100 migrants are rescued when the boat they are travelling in shipwrecks off the coast of Sfax.
- On 24 July record temperatures of 50°C are recorded, leading to power cuts and, combined with spells of strong wind, fuelling wildfires in the Jendouba governorate.

Algeria

- On 14 July the Meteorological Office issues an alert over a new widespread heatwave, following temperatures recorded during the first week of the month, which, on 24 July, reach 48°C, amid reports of wildfires in the country's north and east which leave at least 34 people dead and lead to 1,500 being evacuated.
- On 13 July MAK leader Ferhat Mehenni is sentenced to 20 years in prison, adding to previous life sentences, also handed down in absentia.
- On 23 July the Prime Minister Aïmene Benabderrahmane announces development projects in Mali, Niger and Mauritania to combat illegal migration.

Morocco

- On 12 July Abdelali Hamieddine, the former PJD deputy, is sentenced to three years in prison for the murder in 1993 of a radical left-wing student during student clashes in Fez.
- On 20 July the Court of Cassation rejects the final appeals of two journalists and critics of the authorities, Omar Radi and Soulayman Raïssuni, who, since 2021, have been serving six and five-year prison sentences, accused of sexual assault and espionage.
- On 27 July 50 people are arrested in different cities across the country over their alleged links with al-Qaeda and Daesh.
- On 29 July Mohammed VI calls for relations with Algeria to be restored during his Throne Day speech.

EU

- On 4 July the EUAA reports that around a million asylum applications were recorded for 2022, the highest figure since 2016.
- On 29 July the EU suspends indefinitely and with immediate effect all economic and security cooperation with Niger, following the coup d'etat on 26 July, which has brought the country into Russia's orbit.

August 2023

Most Mediterranean countries are affected by devastating wildfires. August

also sees a surge in irregular migrant arrivals to Europe. France evacuates its nationals from Niger. In Italy, the government approves a tax on banks. Slovenia is hit by torrential rains. Serbia joins the platform calling for Crimea to be returned to Ukraine. In Athens, the EU reiterates its commitment to its enlargement strategy. In Syria, Daesh announces the death of its leader. In Lebanon, the Defence Minister survives an attempt on his life and tensions mount on the border with Israel. The Prime Minister of Libya's Government of National Unity sacks the Foreign Minister. In Tunisia, the Prime Minister is sacked and protests intensify over the bread and flour shortages.

Portugal

- On 21 August the President vetoes the law approved by the Parliament that limits tourist apartments, foresees the forced rental of vacant flats and ends the system of residence permits in exchange for investment.
- On 31 August the President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa promulgates the law decriminalizing the consumption of synthetic drugs, following its validation by the Constitutional Court.

Spain

- On 17 August the former Balearic President Francina Armengol is elected speaker of the Congress of Deputies, succeeding Meritxell Batet. Pedro Rolan is elected president of the Senate, taking over from Ander Gil.
- On 24 August the devastating wildfire that broke out on 15 August in Tenerife is finally brought under control, after razing 15,000 hectares of land.

France

- On 3 August France completes the evacuation of more than a thousand French nationals and citizens of other nationalities from Niger, following the military coup on 26 July that deposed the President Mohamed Bazoum. On 4 August, Niger's military junta announces the end of all military cooperation with France, in an episode that adds to the recent wave of coups in Africa and the

Sahel in particular, marked by clear anti-French and pro-Russian positions.

- On 11 August the Council of State suspends the dissolution, decreed by the government in June, of the radical environmental organization the Uprisings of the Earth (SLT), linked to violent protests such as those reported in March in Sainte-Soline, Aquitaine, against the construction of a reservoir.

Italy

- On 8 August the Council of Ministers announces a 40% tax on banks' windfall profits, to help mortgage holders and reduce the tax burden on citizens.
- On 9 August at least 41 migrants lose their lives in a shipwreck off the coast of Lampedusa.
- On 10-11 August the Ocean Viking rescues over 600 migrants, which disembark in Lampedusa and Civitavecchia. These add to the 49 migrants that disembarked from the Geo Barents on 11 August.

Slovenia

- On 6 August Slovenia asks the EU and NATO for assistance to deal with the serious damage caused by the torrential rains over the last three days.

Serbia

- On 23 August Serbia joins the Ukraine-led platform to demand Russia returns Crimea.

Albania

- On 19 August the police reports the arrest of four people for causing fires during the wave of forest fires spreading across the country due to the high temperatures.

Greece

- On 21 August Athens hosts the 20th anniversary of the EU-Western Balkans summit and the Declaration of Thessaloniki, during which participants reiterate their commitment to a new drive for EU enlargement.
- On 24 August the authorities step up their arrests of arsenists amid the wave

of forest fires affecting Greece throughout the month and which have left at least 20 people dead, mostly irregular migrants camped out in woodland areas.

Türkiye

- On 15 August the journalist of the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, Baris Pehlivan, is jailed to serve an eight-month prison sentence for revealing state secrets after publishing articles on Türkiye's presence in Libya.
- On 21 August the government recalls ambassadors in Denmark and the Netherlands to protest against the burning of copies of the Koran outside the Turkish embassies in Copenhagen and The Hague.

Cyprus

- On 7 August firefighters from Greece, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan take part in efforts to put out the massive wildfire which broke out on 2 August north of Limassol due to the high temperatures.
- On 21 August a group of demonstrators from the north of the island attack a unit of UN peacekeepers deployed to freeze the unauthorized construction of a road in the Green Line, between Pyla and Arsos. The UN condemns the attack.
- On 21 August the Cypriot authorities rescue 86 migrants.

Syria

- On 3 August Daesh announces the death in Idlib of its leader Abu al-Hussein al-Hussein al-Qurashi, in clashes with another jihadist organization, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a former Syrian branch of al-Qaeda. The terrorist organization announces the election of Abu Hafs al-Hashimi al-Quraishi as his successor. On 17, another senior Daesh leader known as Abu Mujahid is killed in an operation carried out by the SDF and YPG in Raqqa.
- On 11 August a Daesh attack on a military bus in Deir ez-Zor leaves over 30 dead.
- On 8 August the government extends its permission for the United Nations to continue delivering aid to parts of northern Syria from Türkiye.
- On 28 August activity at Aleppo's airport is suspended for several days due to an airstrike attributed to Israel.

Lebanon

- On 2 August Elias Hasrouni, a member of the mostly Maronite Lebanese Forces party, is found dead under mysterious circumstances.
- On 9 August clashes with local militias are sparked when a Hezbollah truck overturns in Kahaleh.
- On 10 August the US, United Kingdom and Canada include the former Central Bank governor Riad Salameh in its sanctions for corruption.
- On 10 August the Defence Minister Maurice Slim escapes unhurt when bullets strike his vehicle in Beirut.
- On 11 August the national television channel Tele Liban temporarily suspends its broadcasts amid a strike by staff demanding better pay.
- On 16 August UNIFIL expresses its concern over the rise in tensions on the border between Lebanon and Israel after Hezbollah sets up a camp in the demilitarized zone of the Shebaa Farms.

Egypt

- On 19 August the activist Ahmed Douma is one of 31 people granted a presidential pardon after a decade behind bars for participating in the protests against the army after the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution.
- On 29 August the President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi proposes a roadmap to the Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council of Sudan Abdel Fattah al-Burhan to end the fighting between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Libya

- On 6 August Mohamed Takala is elected chairman of the High Council of State, the main advisory body for the National Unity Government, to replace Khaled al-Meshri.
- On 15 August at least 55 people are killed in fighting between the 444th Combat Brigade and the Special Deterrent Force (Rada) after Rada's arrest of Mahmud Hamza at Tripoli Airport.
- On 19 August the main Libyan leaders meet in Benghazi and commit to developing a national dialogue that culminates in the holding of elections.

- On 25 August the humanitarian ship Ocean Viking rescues 438 migrants off the coast of Libya and Tunisia.
- On 25 August Khalifa Haftar's LNA forces launch an operation against the presence on its southern border of rebel militias from Chad.
- On 28 August the Prime Minister of the Government of National Unity Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh sacks the Foreign Minister Najla Mangoush, a day after reports of a meeting in Italy between Mangoush and her Israeli counterpart, Eli Cohen, which sparks fierce protests and unrest.

Tunisia

- On 1 August the Prime Minister Najla Bouden is sacked and replaced by Ahmed Hachani, in a decision attributed to the President's dissatisfaction with the worsening socioeconomic crisis.
- On 7 August non-state bakeries stage a strike in protest against the enforcement, six days ago, of a government decree which deprives them of subsidized flour, in the context of the so-called bread crisis, which has pitted the non-state bakery sector against the State amid supply shortages. With the growing discontent, on 17 August the country's bakeries' union chief Mohamed Bouanane is arrested on charges of "monopoly and speculation" three days after the CEO of the Cereals Board is removed by presidential order. On 23 August, an agreement is reached to resupply the non-subsidized bakeries.

Algeria

- On 22 August Algeria closes its airspace to the French air force as a reprisal for Paris' support for a military operation in Niger.
- On 29 August the researcher Raouf Farrah and journalist Mustapha Bendjama are sentenced to two years in prison on charges of publishing classified or secret documents.

Morocco

- On 22 August the Moroccan Royal Navy rescues 190 migrants off the country's Atlantic coast.

September 2023

Portugal approves a new housing law. In Spain, the candidate to form a government Alberto Nunez Feijoo fails to garner enough support in the investiture vote. France holds senatorial elections, suffers new street riots and proposes limited autonomy for Corsica. Monaco suspends EU accession talks. Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Türkiye report a surge in migrant arrivals. An attack on a police patrol in North Kosovo reignites tensions between Belgrade and Pristina. Albania reshuffles its cabinet against a backdrop of different corruption scandals. Greece approves a controversial labour reform and suffers the effects of Storm Elias, weeks after being affected by Cyclone Daniel, which also causes serious flooding in Bulgaria and Türkiye, and especially Libya, where it causes devastation in Derna. In Türkiye, the Central Bank approves the biggest interest rate hike since 2003. In Syria, anti-government protests are staged in Sweida. In Lebanon, fierce clashes break out in the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp. Jordan reshuffles its cabinet. Egypt's liberal opposition announces a boycott of the December elections. In Tunisia, two senior members of Ennahda are arrested. Algeria replaces its Communication Minister. Morocco is hit by a devastating earthquake.

Portugal

- On 18 September teachers stage a week-long strike against the precarious situation of the education system and staff shortages.
- On 19 September the far-right Chega (Enough) party, the third biggest party in the Parliament, tables its second no-confidence vote in 14 months against the socialist government of Antonio Costa.
- On 22 September after July's failed attempt due to the presidential opposition, the Parliament approves the new housing law unveiled by the government, which bans new holiday rentals in the main cities, imposes an extraordinary tax on the owners of this kind of property and suspends the system of issuing visas in exchange for real estate investment.

- On 24 September Madeira holds regional elections. Victory goes to the centre-right coalition Somos Madeira, formed by the Democratic People's Party/Social Democratic Party (PPD/PSD) and the Democratic and Social Centre-People's Party (CDS-PP)

Spain

- On 19 September the reform of the parliamentary regulation is approved that introduces the use of Galician, Catalan and Basque in the lower house.
- On 29 September Alberto Nunez Feijoo, leader of the PP, loses the investiture vote, after being tasked by Felipe VI on 22 August with forming a government, having won the most votes in the July elections.

France

- On 4 September the government ban on wearing the abaya in public schools on the grounds that this garment breaks the rules on secularism in education comes into effect.
- On 23 September there is serious unrest during demonstrations against police violence in around a hundred different towns across the country.
- On 24 September, France held partial senatorial elections in which the conservative and centrist forces won the majority of the 170 seats at stake, followed by the Socialist group, which retained the 33 seats at stake in this election.
- On 28 September, speaking before the Corsican Parliamentary Assembly, Emmanuel Macron proposes "the creation of a new autonomous model" for Corsica, which respects the Corsican identity, but preserves France's unity and remains within the country's constitutional limits.

Monaco

- On 14 September the EU and Monaco conclude EU accession talks without reaching an agreement.

Italy

- On 7 September the Interior Minister launches a large-scale anti-drug police

operation in the Camorra-controlled Green Park area in Caivano near Naples.

- On 8 September the Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini presents the law that introduces considerably tougher sentences to combat the surge in juvenile crime.
- Between 11-17 September almost 12,000 migrants arrive in Lampedusa from Tunisia. Since January there have been 132,832 arrivals, almost double the figure for the same period in 2022. Italy files a request for assistance from the rest of the Union to relocate the new arrivals. Germany's response is to suspend the deal to take in asylum seekers, citing "high migratory pressure" and "repeated breaches of the Dublin II transfers" by Italy and other European countries. For its part, France announces on 18 September that it will help Italy to control its borders, but will not take in the migrants who have arrived in Lampedusa.
- On 22 September Giorgio Napolitano, the President of the Republic between 2006 and 2015, dies. He was the only Italian President to have come from the Communist Party and the first to be reelected.

Malta

- On 29 September Malta hosts the EUMed9 summit in which the EU Mediterranean countries urge Brussels to draw up a new agreement on migration and asylum that reduces departures from Africa.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 11 September a court in Sarajevo opens a trial against the President of the Republika Sprska Milorad Dodik for defying the mandate of the High Representative Christian Schmidt.
- On 28 September the EU expresses its concern over the Bosnian Serb's approval of a law that labels NGOs that receive funds from abroad as "foreign agents."

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 24 September an ambush carried out by Kosovo Serb gunmen on a

Kosovo police patrol in Banjska, Mitrovica, leaves four dead in an incident that rekindles tensions in the area.

North Macedonia

- On 12 September the Foreign Minister orders the expulsion of three Russian diplomats, in the third such measure since the invasion of Ukraine.
- On 14 September, despite criticism from the EU and US, the penal code amendments come into force, which were approved by the Parliament on 6 September and foresee reduced prison sentences and statutes of limitations for state officials who abuse their positions or misappropriate public funds.

Albania

- On 4 September the Prime Minister Edi Rama undertakes a partial cabinet reshuffle, after different corruption scandals come to light affecting senior government officials.
- On 25 September Lefter Koka, the former Environment Minister, is sentenced to six years and eight months in prison in connection with the uncompleted Fieri waste incinerator, one of Albania's biggest ever corruption scandals.

Greece

- On 1 September Vasilis Stigkas, leader of Spartans, expels three of the 12 MPs from the far-right party, accusing them of "connections with the Greek mafia," despite which, the three decide to keep their parliamentary seats.
- On 4 September the tropical-like Cyclone Daniel forms, which sweeps through Greece, Bulgaria and Türkiye over the next five days, causing serious flooding and leaving 25 dead. In Greece, Daniel leads to the heaviest rainfall on record.
- On 7 September Greece becomes the 13th member of the Three Seas Initiative at the summit in Bucharest, in which Ukraine and Moldova are granted partner status.
- On 11 September the Maritime Affairs Minister Miltiadis Varvitsiotis resigns, replaced by Christos Stylianidis – until now the Climate Crisis and Civil Protection Minister – following a series

of controversial remarks about the death of a man at the hands of crew members of a ferry trying to leave Piræus.

- On 22 September the Parliament's conservative majority approves the government-backed labour reform that, among other controversial measures, sets conditions for six-day working weeks, working days of up to 13 hours for those with second part-time jobs, dismissal without warning or remuneration during the first year of an "on-call" contract, under which the worker must return to their post when the employer so requires when given at least 24 hours notice. Thousands of Greeks protest in the streets to denounce a loss of rights and exploitative working conditions.
- On 22 September official figures reveal that migrant entries during the first eight months of the year stood at 18,244 – during the same period in 2022 there were 8,873 arrivals – and in August alone these experienced a 235% increase.
- On 24 September Stefanos Kasselakis wins 56.69% of the votes to defeat Effie Achtsioglou – 43.31% – in Syriza's primary elections.
- On 28 September Storm Elias leaves dozens dead, causes severe flooding and leads to thousands of evacuations in Central Greece.

Türkiye

- On 4 September around 130 migrants are rescued in the Aegean Sea.
- On 13 September a court overrules a prosecutor's demand to shut down the NGO We Will Stop Femicide Platform for "actions against morality."
- On 21 September the Central Bank raises interest rates to 30%, the highest since September 2003, in the country's latest efforts to halt inflation.

Cyprus

- On 1 September hundreds of masked members of the far-right carry out attacks on migrants in Limassol, shortly after similar incidents reported in Chlora on 28 and 29 August.
- On 21 September around 300 migrants arrive in Cyprus and the Greek islands of Lesbos and Samos, amid an uptick in arrivals to the eastern Mediterranean.

Syria

- On 1 September thousands protest in Sweida against President Bashar al-Assad's regime over the withdrawal of fuel subsidies, corruption, economic hardship, the presence of Russian and Iranian forces and political arrests.
- On 4 September the President Bashar al-Assad annuls the 1968 law that established military field courts and orders their duties be transferred to the ordinary military judiciary.
- On 5 September the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expresses his concern over the escalation of violence in northeastern Syria between rebel groups and the pro-Kurdish Manbij Military Council, which has left over 50 civilians dead since 27 August.
- On 11 September the SDF reports the arrest in Al-Busayrah, Deir ez-Zor, of senior Daesh leader Yahya Ahmed al-Hajji.

Lebanon

- On 7 September Lebanon claims to have halted the illegal crossing of 1,200 Syrian citizens over the past week, amid a surge in entries into Lebanese territory.
- On 9 September at least five Lebanese soldiers are injured in clashes between Palestinian factions in the Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp in Sidon. On 14 September, with the death toll having risen to 15, the Fatah militias and other Palestinian factions agree on a ceasefire.

Jordan

- On 26 September Abdullah II approves the reshuffle of Bisher Khasawneh's government, as part of a process of "political, economic and public sector modernization."

Egypt

- On 10 September data from the official statistics agency CAPMAS reveal that Egypt's annual headline inflation rose to 39.7% of GDP in August this year, as compared with 15.3% in August 2022.
- On 18 September the liberal Free Current coalition, created in June, de-

clares it will no longer be running in the presidential elections in December and announces the suspension of its activities following the six-month prison sentence handed down to its leader Hisham Kassem on 16 September for defamation.

Libya

- On 3 September Tripoli and Tobruk announce a commitment to reunify the Central Bank under the management of two governors that represent the two parallel administrations.
- On 11 September the arrival of Storm Daniel, which has transformed into a tropical-like Mediterranean cyclone, causes the collapse of two dams in Derna and torrential rainfall in northeastern Libya leaving at least 3,868 dead. On 18 September, protests break out over the poor forecasting and management of the flooding, especially in Derna, where demonstrators set light to the home of the former mayor, who was sacked after the floods by the country's eastern authorities.

Tunisia

- On 3 and 6 September Abdel Karim Harouni, director of Ennahda's Shura Council and Mondher Ounissi, interim leader of the Islamist party are arrested. On 29 September, Rached Ghannouchi announces a hunger strike to demand the release of political prisoners, in an action that emulates that initiated two days previous by Jawher Ben Mbarek, leader of the Citizens Against the Coup movement and senior member of the FSN, in protest against his arrest in February.
- On 21 September the government approves the territorial reorganization of electoral districts that will be applied in the December elections for the National Council of Regions and Districts, the Parliament's new second house.

Algeria

- On 3 September Mohammed Laagab is appointed Communication Minister, to replace Mohamed Buslimani, who was fired on 20 June after media reports alleged that the Emirati ambas-

sador in Algiers was expelled for spying, a claim denied by the government.

- On 17 September lawyers start a one-week strike to protest against the proposed penal code reform, which they describe as highly damaging to people's freedoms.

Morocco

- On 8 September a devastating earthquake with a magnitude of 6.8Mw and its epicentre in Ighil, Marrakech-Safi, leaves at least 2,946 dead and 5,674 injured.
- On 26 September Mohammed VI instructs the government to draft a new Family Code or Mudawana within six months, as promised by the King in 2022.

Mauritania

- On 26 September Mauritania confirms the death of five Senegalese migrants and the rescue of another 540 in the last four days.

EU

- On 5 September Iliana Ivanova is confirmed by the European Parliament as the Commissioner of Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, replacing Mariya Gabriel, who stepped down from the post on 15 May to accept the mandate to form a government in Bulgaria.
- On 12 September the Commission calls for the European Civil Protection Mechanism to be strengthened faced with the increase in natural disasters.
- On 20 September after a two-day Azerbaijani offensive that forces an agreement for the total reintegration of Artsakh into Azerbaijan, the Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announces a turn towards the EU in Armenia's foreign relations.
- On 22 September the Commission announces the delivery of 127 million euros to Tunisia to support the implementation of the memorandum agreed upon in July and to help Tunisia manage migration, as part of the emergency plan announced by Brussels on 17 September following the migration crisis in Lampedusa.

- On 23 September one of the largest demonstrations in the last three years calling for the UK's return to the EU takes place in London.

October 2023

The outbreak of the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza prompts the adoption of extraordinary security measures in many European countries, particularly those with large Muslim and Jewish communities. Jordan and Egypt also tighten security faced with a possible wave of Gazan refugees. In Italy, Bolzano and Trentino hold provincial elections. Serbia holds early elections. In North Macedonia, the Skopje Criminal Court suspends the mass wiretapping case that led to the fall of the government in 2017. Greece holds municipal and regional elections. In Lebanon, the attacks increase between Hezbollah and Israel. In Egypt, there are arrests around the presidential candidate Ahmed al-Tantawi. Tunisia rejects European funds to deal with its economic crisis and mounting migratory pressure, the same month as the Economy Minister is fired. Algeria is hit by severe wildfires and bans teaching in French in its schools.

Portugal

- On 21 October thousands protest in Lisbon over the rising prices of housing and basic goods.

Spain

- On 5 October Granada hosts the 3rd EPC summit, coinciding with the informal meeting of EU heads of state or government. The EPC countries reaffirm their support for Ukraine, their commitment to the Union's eastward enlargement and European unity in the face of the challenges of climate change, energy dependence or digitalization. However, they fail in their search for a solution to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict after the presidents of Azerbaijan and Türkiye announce their absence from the summit.
- On 19 October Spain activates a large-scale police deployment and calls

for calm in the face of mounting tensions between Muslim and Jewish communities in Ceuta and Melilla.

France

- On 4 October the government orders the dissolution of the far-right Catholic organization Civitas over its hate messages against Jews, Muslims, LGTB people and the Republic.
- On 6 October the former President Nicolas Sarkozy is charged with two more offences in connection with the illegal financing of his 2007 election campaign by the Libyan regime of Muammar Gaddafi.
- On 8-9 October the National Liberation Front of Corsica (FLNC) claims responsibility for over 20 explosions on the island to demand its secession from the rest of France.
- On 13 October a teacher is stabbed to death by a former Islamist student and Russian national at a college in Arras. The government raises the alert level and deploys 7,000 troops.
- On 16 October over a hundred anti-semitic attacks have been registered in France since the outbreak of the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. Throughout the month, dozens of fake bomb threats force the evacuation of several airports and monuments. On 12 October, the Interior Minister bans demonstrations in support of the Palestinians, in the name of public order.

Italy

- On 10 October the Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni calls for Italian Jews to be defended against the risk of attacks stemming from the conflict in Gaza.
- On 22 October the autonomous provinces of Bolzano and Trentino hold elections for their provincial councils which also determine the composition of the Regional Council of Trentino-Alto Adige/South Tyrol. The South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP, Christian democratic nationalist) wins in Bolzano with 34% of the vote. In Trentino, the right-wing coalition led by Maurizio Fugatti (League, right-wing populist) wins with 51.82%.

- On 26 October a vessel carrying 347 migrants arrives in Lampedusa.

Malta

- On 2 October the government announces the creation of KM Malta Airlines, a flag-carrying airline that replaces the dissolved Air Malta.
- On 28 October Malta hosts the third round of peace talks for Ukraine, backed by Kiev.

Slovenia

- On 21 October Slovenia temporarily reintroduces checks on its borders with Croatia and Hungary, the same day that Italy takes analogous measures on its border with Slovenia. These measures have been adopted by Schengen Area countries to address the worsening security situation following the outbreak of the conflict in Gaza and the recent attacks in Arras and Brussels.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 19 October Bosnia and Herzegovina tightens security measures and raises the terrorism threat level amid growing concern over the effects of the Gaza conflict on the country.

Montenegro

- On 31 October Milojko Spajic (PES) is confirmed as Prime Minister. Andrija Mandic, from For the Future of Montenegro (ZBCG, conservative pro-Serbian), is appointed parliament speaker after the party agrees to support a Spajic-led government in exchange for being given four ministerial posts.

Serbia

- On 2 October the EU urges Serbia to halt its troop deployment on the border with Kosovo, amid rising tensions between the neighbouring countries. On 3 October, Serbia withdraws part of the contingent and bans the businessman and leader of the ambush in September that caused the current escalation, Milan Radoicic, from leaving the country.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 17 October citing procedural violations, the President Vjosa Osmani announces that she will not issue the decree appointing Blerim Isufaj as chief state prosecutor, a year and a half after being elected to the post by the Prosecutorial Council, which accuses Osmani of violating the separation of powers.
- On 24 October Zlatan Elek is elected as head of Srpska Lista (Serb nationalist).

North Macedonia

- On 17 October the Skopje Criminal Court suspends the mass wiretapping case involving, among others, the former secret police chief Saso Mijalkov, after the Parliament adopted criminal code amendments in September that reduce sentences for offences of abuse of power and involvement in a criminal enterprise. The mass wiretapping case brought about the fall of the government of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski (VMRO-DPMNE) in 2017.

Albania

- On 2 October medical students begin the academic year amid protests over the government's decision that obliges them to work in the country for five years before they can receive their diplomas.
- On 16 October Tirana hosts a summit of the Berlin Process, an initiative aimed at promoting the integration of the Western Balkans into the EU.

Greece

- On 8 and 15 October the two rounds of municipal and regional elections are held with high levels of abstention – 59.29% in the municipal elections and 64.84% in the regionals. Despite the generally positive results for ND in the first round, the centre-right loses the mayoralties of Athens and Thessaloniki, where social democratic candidates win. In the regional elections, candidates from or supported by ND win in most regions, except Western Macedonia, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, the North Aegean, the Ionian Islands and Thessaly.

Türkiye

- On 1 October at least two police officers are injured in a suicide bomb attack on the Interior Ministry building in Ankara, for which the PKK terrorist organization claims responsibility. In response, Türkiye bombs PKK positions in northern Iraq.
- On 3 October the ECHR rules that Türkiye violated the right to freedom of expression when it convicted two people for their social media posts, one in support of the Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan and the other describing the Turkish President as a “filthy thief”.
- On 7 October the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is reelected as leader of the AKP.
- On 29 October Türkiye commemorates the 100th anniversary of the proclamation of the Turkish Republic by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Cyprus

- On 10 October the UN Secretary-General's representative in Cyprus Colin Stewart announces an agreement reached for talks on the unilateral construction of a road in the north of the island, which prompted the incidents in August involving UN peacekeepers.

Syria

- On 3 October Syria appoints its first ambassador to Tunisia since ties were broken in 2011.
- On 5 October the Syrian regime and Russia begin their most intense bombing campaign since 2019 on Idlib, the country's last rebel stronghold, controlled by HTS. Türkiye also steps up its airstrikes on Syrian Kurdish militias.
- On 6 October the UN condemns the drone attack on a military academy in Homs that leaves 80 dead, amid weeks of fighting between pro-government and HTS forces.
- On 25 October Syria decries the death of eight soldiers in an Israeli attack in Daraa.

Lebanon

- On 6 October UAE and Lebanon agree to reopen the Emirati embassy in

Beirut, closed in 2021 following the diplomatic crisis sparked by remarks made by the Lebanese Information Minister George Kordahi, in support of the Houthi militias in Yemen.

- On 19 October Lebanon denounces the deadly shooting of a Lebanese journalist on the border with Israeli, attributed to the Israeli army, amid cross-border attacks between Israel and Hezbollah. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 21 journalists have been killed since the conflict between Israel and Hamas broke out on 7 October.
- On 27 October after approving the national emergency plan on 19 October, the Prime Minister Najib Mikati holds a meeting with the crisis committee and representatives of the United Nations and humanitarian organizations to agree on a national contingency plan to address the clashes between Hezbollah and the Israeli army, which have already caused the displacement of 20,000 people in southern Lebanon.

Egypt

- On 3 October hours after Abdel Fattah El-Sisi announces his candidacy for reelection in December's presidential elections, a large-scale demonstration in Marsa Matruh calls for the fall of his regime.
- On 5 October the European Parliament votes in favour of a resolution expressing its concern over the situation of freedoms in Egypt and calling for the release of certain opposition figures, among them the potential presidential candidate Hisham Kassem.
- On 8 October at least two Israeli tourists are killed and several injured by shots fired by a police officer in Alexandria, an action that coincides with the outbreak of the war in Gaza.
- On 14 October Ahmed al-Tantawi announces he will not run in the presidential elections in December, after decrying the arrest of eight of his followers on 9 October, charged with “falsifying” the endorsements needed to run in the elections.
- On 19 October Egypt agrees to open a corridor to send humanitarian aid to Gaza through Rafah, fearing that the Israeli offensive on the Palestinian

exclave will prompt a wave of refugees. On the same day, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Jordan's Abdullah II reject a possible forced displacement across their borders of thousands of Gazans, saying it would pose an "extreme threat" for regional security.

- On 21 October Cairo hosts a summit to address the war between Israel and Hamas, calling for an immediate ceasefire and the revival of the Middle East Peace Process.
- On 27 October at least six people are injured in Taba by a missile launched at Israel, according to the Israeli army, by the Houthi militias in Yemen, against the backdrop of the conflict in Gaza.

Libya

- On 4 October the public prosecutor orders the arrest of the ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg, Amal al-Jarari, for her alleged involvement in a corruption case.
- On 5 October the High Council of State confirms it will abide by the electoral laws drafted by the 6+6 Committee, following the decision by the House of Representatives to issue them.
- On 22 October the public prosecutor orders the arrest of the financial controller of the National Unity Government's Ministry of Health for accepting bribes.
- On 31 October the Security Council approves extending the mandate of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) for another year.

Tunisia

- On 2 October the President Kais Saied announces that he will not accept the funds allocated by the EU, describing them as "charity" and of a "derisory" amount that fails to meet the agreement reached in June under Italian and Dutch mediation.
- On 4 October the leader of the opposition Free Destourian Party Abir Moussi is arrested for "assault intended to cause chaos," when attempting to lodge an appeal against presidential decrees regarding the upcoming local elections.
- On 17 October the President Saied sacks the Economy and Planning Minister Samir Saied and replaces him tem-

porarily with the Finance Minister Sihem Boughdiri, amid the country's severe economic crisis.

- On 26 October the journalist Khalifa Guesmi declares he is going on hunger strike in protest against the five-year prison sentence handed down to him for reporting on a counterterrorism operation in Tunisia.
- On 31 October a Tunisian court increases the prison sentence handed down to the leader of Ennahda, Rached Ghanouchi, to 15 months, for "supporting terrorism" and "inciting hatred."

Algeria

- On 2 October Algeria bans instruction in French in all schools, to introduce English instead, amid mounting tensions with France and disagreements over the country's colonial past.
- On 2 October Niger's coup-leading military junta accepts the mediation proposal by Algeria in August to establish a six-month transition plan to return the country to normal constitutional order.
- On 2 October the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune appoints Rachid Hachichi as CEO of Sonatrach, to replace Toufik Hakkar.
- On 17 and 18 October the Bejaia region reports 34 serious wildfires amid a prolonged and severe drought of unprecedented proportions, which leaves the north of the country with a water deficit of 90% and forces the adoption of major restrictions.
- On 26 October the Constantine Appeals Court reduces the prison sentences handed down to the journalist Mustapha Bendjama and Algerian-Canadian researcher Raouf Farrah from two years to 20 months. The latter is released. Both were arrested for publishing state secrets.

Morocco

- On 5 October successive strikes and protests are staged by a third of public teaching staff to call for better pay and against a new teachers' mandate, approved on 27 September by the government.
- On 27 October the navy rescues 141 migrants heading for the Canary Islands, adding to the 189 intercepted

on 25 October and a further 150 on 10 October.

- On 30 October Morocco commits to increasing the returns of migrants and asylum seekers rejected by Germany.

EU

- On 4 October after four years of talks, despite Hungary and Poland's opposition and thanks to an understanding between Germany and Italy, the Council reaches an agreement on the crisis management and instrumentalization of migration regulation, the last chapter that needed closing to approve the Pact on Migration and Asylum and which increases restrictions on entries to the Union and asylum applications.
- On 5 October the European Parliament approves a resolution that claims the situation of the Armenians in Artsakh amounts to ethnic cleansing and urges the Union to adopt measures against Azerbaijan. The Commission, for its part, announces an increase in investments and aid to Armenia.
- On 8 October demonstrations take place in different cities to support and condemn Hamas' offensive on Israel. As an immediate measure, most European governments condemn the large-scale Palestinian attack and activate protocols to protect synagogues and Jewish communities.
- On 9 October the Dutch politician Wopke Hoekstra is appointed Commissioner for Climate Action to replace Slovakian Maros Sefcovic, who on 22 August took over the post of Commission Vice-President and Commissioner for the European Green Deal, replacing the Dutch Frans Timmermans, who resigned on 22 August after being proposed to head a coalition of social democrats and greens in the Dutch elections on 22 November.
- On 15 October the EU heads of state and government condemn the 7 October Hamas terrorist attacks and insist on Israel's right to defend itself in accordance with international humanitarian law, a day after the Commission announces the tripling of humanitarian aid to Gaza, to over 75 million euros.
- On 16 October two Swedish tourists are shot dead in Brussels in an attack for which Daesh claims responsibility.

Arab League

- On 11 October after four days of conflict, the Foreign Ministers of the Arab League call on Israel and Hamas to put an immediate end to the violence in Gaza and on Israel to lift its siege on the Palestinian territory to allow the entry of humanitarian aid.

November 2023

The Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa resigns. In Spain, Pedro Sanchez is reelected as President of the government. Intercommunal tensions rise in France against the backdrop of the conflict in Gaza and following a stabbing in Rhone-Alpes. In Italy, a national strike is staged in protest against the 2024 budget and the mass migrant arrivals continue. Croatia and Serbia enter into a diplomatic crisis. Albania asks NATO for a bigger deployment on its border with Serbia. In Türkiye, the Supreme Court triggers a serious institutional crisis. The attacks between Syria, Lebanon and Israel increase. In Tunisia, the businessman Marouane Mabrouk and former Minister Abderrahim Zouari are arrested. In Algeria, the President appoints a new Prime Minister.

Portugal

- On 7 November the Prime Minister Antonio Costa resigns after the police search his home and the premises of the Infrastructure and Environment ministries and carry out a number of arrests, as part of an investigation by the state prosecutor's office into perversion of justice and influence peddling. On 9 November, the President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa dissolves the Parliament and calls early elections for March 2024. On 13 November, the Infrastructure Minister Joao Galamba resigns, the main suspect in the so-called Influencer case.
- On 21 November at least 28 people are arrested in Baixo Alentejo for human trafficking and labour exploitation.
- On 29 November the Parliament approves the Socialist Party's (PS) 2024 budget.
- On 13 November a teaching strike begins, which continues until 29 No-

vember, demanding more investment in the state education system.

Spain

- On 2 November the Interior Minister announces the number of irregular arrivals in the Canary Islands so far this year stands at 30,705.
- On 2 November PSOE reaches an agreement with ERC to assume 15 billion euros of Catalan public debt in exchange for supporting Pedro Sánchez's investiture as Prime Minister. At the same time, there are demonstrations in different cities against the negotiations, which increase in intensity sparking unrest on 9 November in Madrid, after PSOE announces it has secured the backing of the pro-Catalan independence Junts party in exchange for an amnesty for the leaders of the secessionist process in 2017. On 19 November, a large-scale march is staged in Madrid against the amnesty law.
- On 16 November Pedro Sanchez is reelected Prime Minister in the Parliament. On 22 November, the new cabinet is sworn in, with few changes in the main ministries and which includes Yolanda Diaz's left-wing platform Sumar, but not the government's former partner, Podemos.
- On 9 November the former leader of the PP in Catalonia and Vox founder Alejo Vidal-Quadras is wounded in an attack in Madrid, which may be related with his relations with the opposition to the Iranian regime.
- On 22 November Madrid hosts the first Foreign Ministers meeting of the MED-9, which agrees to form an alliance to work towards the recognition of a Palestinian state.
- On 27 November Barcelona hosts the 8th Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean, without Israel's attendance. The meeting expresses its support for a two-state solution in Palestine and the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) increased control in the Gaza Strip.

France

- On 12 November in response to a wave of anti-Semitic acts, tens of thousands of people march in Paris in France's

biggest demonstration against anti-Semitism in recent years.

- On 16 November the senator of the Horizons party (centre-right), Joel Guerriau is arrested after being accused by fellow party member and MP Sandrine Josso of drugging her with intent to commit sexual assault.
- On 18 November a teenage boy is stabbed and killed when a group of youths burst into a village party in Crepol, Rhones-Alpes. On 25 November, marches in several nearby towns by far-right militants calling for "war" on migrants, who they blame for the attack, end in violent unrest.
- On 29 November the Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti is acquitted in a conflict of interest and abuse of power trial.

Italy

- On 3 November the Council of Ministers approves a draft constitutional law for the direct election of its president by universal suffrage for a five-year term.
- On 5 November the wife and mother-in-law of the Italian-Ivorian MP Aboubakar Soumahoro (Greens and Left Alliance) are placed under house arrest for the self-laundering 30 million euros of public funds earmarked for a refugee and migrant cooperative they were managing.
- On 17 November a nationwide strike called by left-wing labour unions protests against the 2024 budget, saying that it fails to include measures to reverse the worsening conditions of salaried workers, pensioners and the self-employed.
- On 20 November 1,087 migrants arrive in Lampedusa. According to the Interior Minister, 149,751 migrants have arrived since the beginning of the year, as compared with the 93,901 arrivals of the same period in 2022.
- On 22 November, in Berlin, the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and the Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni highlight the need to reduce migrant flows towards the EU.
- On 27 November more than 570 migrants disembark in Lampedusa.

Malta

- On 1 November at 29.1°C, Malta records the hottest November day on

record after the driest October in the last 100 years.

- On 16 November the Prime Minister Robert Abela proposes appointing a European Commissioner for the Mediterranean.
- On 27 November teachers strike calling for better pay and more public spending on education.

Croatia

- On 13 November Ivan Anusic is appointed Defence Minister to replace Mario Banozic, who was seriously injured on 11 November in a car accident.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 8 November The European Commission recommends the opening of accession talks with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine and Moldova as soon as they meet the Copenhagen criteria.

Montenegro

- On 16 November the US includes the businessman Branislav Brano Mucunovic on its black list for corruption and links with organized crime.
- On 20 November the Supreme Court judge Suzana Mugosa urges prosecutors to investigate the possible bribery of Appeal Court judges who, in 2021, ruled against opposition leaders accused of involvement in a Russian-backed coup plot.

Serbia

- On 3 November 738 migrants are detained in connection with a gunfight on 27 October on the Hungarian border, in which three migrants were killed.
- On 3 November the head of the Security and Information Agency (BIA) Aleksandar Vulin resigns, sanctioned in July by the US, which accused him of fostering corruption and promoting Russian interests.
- On 20 November Serbia declares the Croatian diplomat Hrvoje Snajder persona non grata, accusing him of violating the Vienna Convention and sparking a diplomatic crisis with Croatia.

Albania

- On 1 November the Parliament switches to holding its sessions online after clashes break out on 30 October between MPs, after the government majority successfully rejects the creation of six inquiry commissions into possible corruption cases.
- The Prime Minister Edi Rama urges NATO to boost its military presence in Kosovo and deploy troops along the Albanian border with Serbia, citing a loss of control regarding the surge in illegal border activities.

Greece

- On 1 November despite being banned, a European neo-Nazi rally linked to the Golden Dawn criminal organization ends in violent clashes with anti-fascist groups in Athens. On the same day, 21 members of the neo-Nazi CasaPound Italia organization are detained and deported.
- On 27 November the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis expresses his annoyance following the cancellation of a meeting in London with his British counterpart Rishi Sunak, in which Mitsotakis was planning to raise the issue of the repatriation to Greece of the Parthenon Marbles.
- On 30 November Greece threatens to block Albania's European accession process if the country does not allow the ethnic Greek mayor-elect of Himara, Fredi Beleris, to take office. Beleris was arrested two days before the local elections on 14 May charged with vote buying.

Türkiye

- On 7 November the journalist Tolga Sardan, arrested on 1 November and currently standing trial on charges of spreading misinformation, is released from custody.
- On 9 November the Supreme Court of Cassation files a criminal complaint against members of the Constitutional Court for ordering the release of Can Atalay, a member of the PKK terrorist organization.
- On 17 November the journalist Baris Pehlivan is released from prison after a

court dismisses a lawsuit filed against him for an article he wrote on corruption cases in the judiciary. This is the fifth time he has spent time in prison since 2021 for his reporting.

- On 30 November a court in Ankara rules in favour of dismissing the board members of the Turkish Medical Association, after its president Sebnem Korur Fincanci calls for an investigation to be launched into allegations of chemical weapon by the army.
- On 30 November the Parliament approves extending the deployment of Turkish troops in Libya for a further 24 months in support of the internationally recognized unity government.

Cyprus

- On 9 November the Council of the EU renews sanctions against Turkish individuals and entities responsible for unauthorized oil drilling activities in Cypriot waters for another year.

Syria

- On 14 November the Iraqi militia Islamic Resistance in Iraq, supported by Iran, launches attacks against three US bases in Syria, a day after the SOHR reports five rockets fired by pro-Iranian militias against the international coalition forces in Syria.
- On 15 November French judges issue an international arrest warrant for the President Bashar al-Assad, blaming him for sarin gas attacks in 2013.
- On 16 November a general amnesty is approved for hundreds of prisoners whose crimes were committed before 16 November 2023.
- On 17 November Israel launches attacks on Hezbollah sites close to Damascus.

Lebanon

- On 23 November the son of Hezbollah's parliamentary head Mohammad Raad is killed, along with four other members of the movement, amid the exchanges of fire that have taken place between the Israeli army and the Shiite party-militia since the beginning of the conflict in Gaza. Around 105 people, including 14 civilians, have died so far since 7 October.

Jordan

- On 4 November after failing in his attempt to convince the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to agree to a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken meets with representatives of Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Egypt and Palestine in Amman, who all urge the US to push for an immediate ceasefire and an increase in humanitarian aid to the Palestinian exclave.
- On 16 November Jordan withdraws from an energy and water deal it signed in October with Israel in protest against the Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip.

Libya

- On 12 November the Libyan House of Representatives approves new provisions for Law 62 of 1957, which criminalizes interaction with Israel.

Tunisia

- On 1 November Tunisia confirms the escape from Mornaguia prison of five inmates convicted of terrorism.
- On 7 November the businessman Marouane Mabrouk, the former son-in-law of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, and former Minister Abderrahim Zouari are arrested.
- On 28 November the leader of the Free Destourian Party Abir Moussi begins a hunger strike to protest against her imprisonment.

Algeria

- On 7 November the French-Algerian opposition figure and member of the Hirak and Barakat movements Amir Bouraoui is sentenced to 10 years in prison in absentia.
- On 11 November the President Abdelmadjid Tebboune appoints Nadir Larbaoui as the Prime Minister to replace Aymen Benabderarrahmane. Boualem Boualem replaces Larbaoui as the presidency's chief of staff.
- On 20 November the former Prime Minister Nouredine Bedoui and former Health Minister Abdelmalek Boudiaf are sentenced to four years in prison for corruption.

- On 21 November the first meeting of the mixed commission set up in August 2022 by France and Algeria to discuss French colonization and the war in Algeria is held in Constantine.
- On 28 November the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Abdelhafid Henni is fired, coinciding with remarks made by Henni denying the increase in the price of potatoes.

EU

- On 2 November six Western Balkan countries sign in Berlin three agreements allowing their citizens to cross borders using only identity documents and guaranteeing the mutual recognition of university degrees and professional qualifications for doctors, dentists and architects.
- On 3 November at least 12 people die in Storm Ciaran, which, since 29 October, has been affecting the west of the EU and the United Kingdom, with winds of up to 207 km/h.
- On 22 November the Parliament adopts a reform bill for the Union's Treaties to transform the Commission into a European Executive led by a President of the Union, increase European competences, restrict unanimity voting in the Council and increase its role in the budget and diplomacy. It also asks the European Council to call a Convention to revise the Treaties.
- On 22 November two days after its adoption by the Council, MEPs give their definitive approval to the 2024 budget, which stands at 189.4 billion euros in commitment appropriations, up from 182.7 billion euros in 2023.
- On 22 November the Commission pays 1.5 billion euros in assistance to Ukraine, as part of the macro-financial assistance package worth up to 18 billion euros.
- On 23 November Frontex announces it is reinforcing its officers on the Finnish-Russian border, amid suspicions that Russia is behind the wave of migrants arriving in Finland and which has prompted Helsinki to safeguard its eastern border. On 28 November, Finland closes its last remaining border crossing with Russia.
- On 23 November there are fierce clashes in Dublin led by far-right groups

during a protest rally in the aftermath of the stabbing of five people in a neighbourhood with a large migrant population.

- On 27 November the Council gives its definitive approval to the free trade agreement between the Union and New Zealand.
- On 28 November the Commission proposes harmonizing the legal definitions and sanctions on human trafficking throughout the Union, with sentences of up to 15 years in prison to enhance efforts to combat this kind of crime.
- On 30 November the former Italian Prime Minister and former president of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi warns that the EU can no longer function under its current model and should become a state in order to survive.

Arab League

- On 11 November the Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation, meeting in Riyadh, unanimously condemn the Israeli offensive on Gaza and the humanitarian crisis it has unleashed.

December 2023

In Portugal, the PS elects a new secretary-general. In Spain, there are changes in the government, Podemos MPs abandon the Sumar parliamentary group and there is a strong surge in migrant arrivals to the Canary Islands. France concludes its military withdrawal from Niger and approves a controversial Migration bill. Italy withdraws from China's New Silk Road project. In Croatia, the Economy Minister is dismissed. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the former Intelligence chief and the Supreme Court president are arrested. Montenegro carries out its population census. Serbia holds early parliamentary elections. In Kosovo, an agreement is reached to end the dispute over payment for electricity in northern Kosovo. North Macedonia calls presidential and parliamentary elections for April and May 2024 and its Supreme Court confirms the conviction of the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski. In Albania,

the Constitutional Court suspends the migration agreement reached with Italy and the former Prime Minister Sali Berisha is placed under house arrest. In Greece, a new political formation is set up as a splinter party of Syriza. Greece and Türkiye sign a friendship and good neighbourliness declaration. In Türkiye, the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Commission approves Sweden's bid to join NATO, hundreds of police officers are suspended over links to the cleric Fethullah Gulen and numerous arrests are made of alleged Daesh members. Tensions mount on the borders between Israel and Syria and Lebanon over the conflict in Gaza. The Lebanese Parliament approves a comprehensive pension system. Egypt holds presidential elections. In Libya, Mahdi Barghathi, the former Defence Minister of the Government of Unity dies in police custody. Tunisia holds local and provincial elections. In Mauritania, the former President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz is sentenced to five years in prison.

Portugal

- On 8 December the ship Toconao loses 6 containers off the coast of Viana do Castelo causing a tide of plastic pellets which, over the coming days, spreads to Portugal's northern coastline and Spain's Cantabrian coast, activating emergency plans for marine pollution.
- On 16 December Pedro Nuno Santos is elected with 62% of the votes as new secretary-general of the PS and prime ministerial candidate in the early legislative elections scheduled for March 2024.

Spain

- On 1 December it is announced that 50,000 irregular migrant arrivals have been recorded in the Canary Islands in 2023, according to data from the Foreign Ministry.
- On 5 December Podemos MPs withdraw from the Sumar coalition and move to the mixed group, thereby confirming the split between both left-wing parties and reducing the support for the PSOE-led government coalition.

- On 14 December the new Algerian ambassador to Spain arrives in Madrid, Abdelfettah Daghmoum, ending 19 months of diplomatic crisis over Spain's support for Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara.
- On 17 December thousands gather in Pamplona to protest against the no-confidence vote supported by the socialists and Basque pro-independence parties, thereby giving the mayoralty of the Navarran capital to the pro-independence coalition EH-Bildu.
- On 29 December the Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announces the appointment of Carlos Cuerdo as Economy Minister to replace Nadia Calvino, elected on 8 December as president of the European Investment Bank (EIB). The Treasury Minister Maria Jesus Montero will be the new First Vice-President of the government.

France

- On 2 December a French national of Iranian origin kills a German-Filipino tourist in Paris, shouting "Allah is great," increasing security concerns ahead of the 2024 Olympic Games.
- On 6 December the government agrees to ban the far-right Martel Division group for inciting violence and racial hatred.
- On 6 December the coup-leading governments of Niger and Mali announce the cancellation of their tax agreements with France, amid the diplomatic crisis between Paris and the regimes that have emerged in the Sahel. On 22 December, Paris concludes the withdrawal of all troops from Niger, three months after suspending all military cooperation with the country, in response to July's military coup.
- On 9 December the Interior Ministry reports the completion of an unprecedented police operation that ended with the arrest in different places in France of 80 men suspected of being involved in a child sexual abuse network.
- On 19 December the National Assembly approves the immigration bill backed by the government with votes from The Republicans (LR, Gaullist) and the far-right National Rally, but which was rejected by some MPs of the ruling Renaissance party (liberal), which is

plunged into a major crisis whose first consequence is the resignation of the Health Minister Aurelien Rousseau. The law increases the period before migrants can access welfare benefits and apply for nationality, again criminalizes arriving and staying in France without papers, removes automatic nationality for children of foreign nationals born in France, facilitates expulsions, withdraws nationality from binationals and establishes migrant entry quotas for the country.

- On 27 December France declares two Azerbaijani diplomats persona non grata in response to Azerbaijan's expulsion of two employees of the French embassy in Baku, in the context of Paris' strategic support for Armenia.

Italy

- On 6 December Italy announces its official withdrawal from China's New Silk Road project, four years after joining.

Croatia

- On 12 December the Economy Minister Davor Filipovic is sacked over alleged bribery and embezzlement of public funds. Filipovic's departure marks the 30th change in the Croatian cabinet since 2017. Over 15 ministers have been sacked during the two governments led by the Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic since 2016, many of them over corruption scandals.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 18 December the State Investigation and Protection Agency arrests the former intelligence chief Osman Mehmedagic and the president of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Supreme Court) Ranko Debevac for alleged abuse of power.

Montenegro

- On 3 December Montenegro begins its population census following the signing on 21 November of an agreement between the government and the opposition aimed at guaranteeing transparency and democratic standards throughout the process, through its

parliamentary supervision and the use of a software that citizens can use to control their data. The prime concern surrounding the headcount, repeatedly postponed since 2021, lies in the possibility that approximately 600,000 of the country's inhabitants could declare themselves to be Serbian. Likewise, there are predictions that around 50% of Montenegrins will declare they speak Serbian, which might see the Serbian language return to schools and reinstated as an official language.

- On 21 December the Parliament begins the process of removing the head of the Police Directorate Zoran Brdjanin, after the parliamentary Security and Defence Council refuses to validate his 2022 police reports, essentially due to the poor police response to the mass shooting in Cetinje in August 2022.

Serbia

- On 17 December Serbia holds early legislative elections called in October by the President Aleksandar Vucic in the face of pressure from the opposition and the anti-government demonstrations held since the shootings in May in Dubona and Belgrade. Vucic's SNS wins with 46.7% of the votes, against the 23.58% of the opposition, united in the electoral coalition Serbian against Violence. This vote coincides with the local elections in which SNS wins Belgrade's city council. On 18 December, thousands of Serbs protest outside the Election Commission, calling for the results in the Serbian capital to be annulled and accusing SNS of electoral fraud. On 24 December, new protests end with at least 35 arrests and two police officers injured in Belgrade.

Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244

- On 8 December Kosovo's prosecution office indicts 53 former members of Serbia's military and police forces for the 1999 massacre of over 370 Albanian civilians, in the largest accusation filed to date for the war crimes committed in the Kosovo conflict.
- On 8 December requests are submitted to Kosovo's Ministry of Local

Government to initiate a process to remove the Kosovo Albanian mayors elected in North Mitrovica Zvecan and Zubin Potok in April's local elections for northern Kosovo, which were boycotted by the Kosovo Serb majority.

- On 10 December Kosovo's energy company KEDS signs an agreement with the company Elektrosever, for the subsidiary of Serbia's state energy distributor to supply the four majority-Serb municipalities in northern Kosovo, thereby normalizing the power supply to the region. The agreement comes after on 12 October the Kosovo government announced that it would not continue to cover electricity costs in northern Kosovo, where the Serb majority has refused to pay for its power supply since 1998.
- On 23 December Kosovo's Central Bank establishes the euro as the only currency that can be used to undertake cash transactions and payments in the country.

North Macedonia

- On 1 December the OSCE summit in Skopje, boycotted by the Baltic countries and Ukraine in protest over the presence of the Russian Foreign Minister Serguei Lavrov, is brought to a close
- On 4 December the political parties agree to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in April and May 2024.
- On 5 December the US bans the former North Macedonian Deputy Prime Minister Koco Angjushev from entering the country, due to his alleged involvement in corruption.
- On 18 December after a 12-year-long trial process, it is ruled that the corruption case against three former executives of Makedonski Telekom (Mak-Tel) reached its statute of limitations, due to the new changes in the criminal code, before the Skopje Court of Appeal handed down its sentence. The three defendants were sentenced in March by a first-instance court to eight years in prison and to return a million euros to the State.
- On 20 December the Supreme Court rejects the appeal filed by the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, who has fled to Hungary, against his

seven-year prison sentence for corruption, handed down in 2022.

Albania

- On 13 December after 30 opposition lawmakers file a request to review its constitutionality, the Constitutional Court takes the precautionary measure of suspending the migration pact reached in November with Italy, which foresees the creation of migrant holding centres in Albania with a capacity of up to 3,000 people, and which, as of 2024, could receive up to 36,000 migrants intercepted in Italian waters on a yearly basis.
- On 21 December the Parliament lifts the parliamentary immunity of PDS leader Sali Berisha following a request by the SPAK because of corruption charges against him. On 31 December, Berisha is placed under house arrest.

Greece

- On 4 December a group of MPs, who left Syriza in November after 57 central committee members signed a text condemning the actions of the new leader Stefanos Kasselakis, announce the formation of a new party under the title the New Left (NA).
- On 7 December the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan adopt a "declaration of friendship and good neighbourliness" in Athens, thereby committing to commercial development, migratory cooperation and mutual military trust.
- On 19 December a broad parliamentary majority votes in favour of a legal amendment that will allow migrants to apply for temporary residence permits if they are already working or have an offer to work in Greece, under certain conditions.

Türkiye

- On 14 December a court in Ankara blocks access to Eksi Sozluk (Sour Dictionary), accusing it of undermining national security and the public order. This is the third ban imposed on the social media platform after accusations of the authorities' poor management following February's earthquake.

- On 14 December Türkiye agrees with Germany on a gradual withdrawal of imams from Türkiye's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyamet) from German mosques.
- On 26 December the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Commission gives the green light to Sweden's NATO membership, thereby leaving the definitive authorization in the hands of the general assembly, after the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan gave his approval in October.
- On 29 December 445 police officers are suspended over alleged links with the preacher Fethullah Gulen, who stands accused of planning the attempted coup in 2016.
- On 30 December the Interior Ministry announces the arrest of 189 people suspected of having links to Daesh in a large-scale two-day operation across 37 cities and provinces. The operation follows one carried out on 22 December, which ended with 304 arrests.

Cyprus

- On 2-3 December 252 migrants reach Cyprus in three vessels. Two on-board are arrested for human trafficking.

Syria

- On 12 and 19 December factions with links to Hezbollah launch missiles from Syria at the Golan Heights. Israel responds with attacks targeting the missile launch sites.
- On 17 December Türkiye announces it has killed Sirvan Hasan, a senior leader of the PKK, in an operation in eastern Syria.
- On 25 December Razi Musavi, a senior member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, is killed in an Israeli airstrike in Damascus.
- On 26 December the SDF call on the population in northeastern Syria to hold out against the Turkish bombing campaign that began on 23 December in response to the SDF attacks that killed 12 Turkish soldiers.

Lebanon

- On 6 December Lebanon announces it will lodge an international complaint

against Israel to the United Nations Security Council over an Israeli attack on 5 December, which killed a Lebanese soldier.

- On 10 December Israel begins airstrikes on Hezbollah positions in south Lebanon, which the Shiite movement responds to over the ensuing days.
- On 17 December the Parliament approves a landmark law that establishes a comprehensive pension system for private sector workers and reforms the governance of the National Social Security Fund.

Egypt

- On 1 December the government announces that, to date, approximately 48,108 public workers have been relocated to workplaces in the New Administrative Capital near Cairo.
- On 10, 11 and 12 December Egypt holds presidential elections organized in accordance with the constitutional reform approved in 2019, which extends terms to six years and allows presidents to serve three consecutive mandates. The President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi is elected with 89.6% of the votes and an "unprecedented" turnout of 66.8%, according to the Egyptian Election Authority.

Libya

- On 11 December MSF publishes the report *You're Going to Die Here*, in which it decries abuses and maltreatment of asylum seekers held in the Abu Salim and Ain Zara detention centres, documented between 2016 and August 2023.
- On 17 December at least 61 migrants die in a shipwreck off the Libyan coast. According to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2,093 migrants have died along the central Mediterranean route between January and September 2023.
- On 21 December UNSMIL expresses its concern over the death in custody of the former Defence Minister of the Government of Unity Mahdi Barghathi and a further six people detained in Benghazi on 7 October by the eastern-based authorities.
- On 25 December Iraq reopens its embassy in Libya, which will be led by

Ahmed al-Sahhaf, until now the spokesman for the Iraqi Foreign Ministry.

- On 27 December the ship Ocean Viking rescues 244 migrants off the Libyan coast.

Tunisia

- On 11 December a pretrial arrest warrant for abuse of power is issued for Adel Grar, the former managing director of the state-owned al-Karama Holding, which manages assets seized in the 2011 revolution.
- On 13 December the opposition activist Chaima Issa (NSF) is handed a one-year suspended prison sentence for disobedience and insulting the Tunisian President.
- On 15 December Tunisia resumes migration and border collaboration with the EU. On 20 December, the EU approves 150 million euros to boost the Tunisian economy, framed within the migration deal signed in the summer.
- On 24 December Tunisia holds local and provincial elections with a turnout of just 11.66%, attributed to the poor public image the President Kais Saied has given the Parliament.
- On 30 December the government extends the state of emergency, in place since the 2015 attack, until the end of January 2024.

Algeria

- On 20 December Algeria summons the Malian ambassador in response to the coup-leading military junta summoning the Algerian ambassador to Mali, accusing Algeria of interfering with the Sahelian country's internal affairs by hosting meetings with Tuareg rebels without Bamako's knowledge. Against the backdrop of the conflict in Azawad, the meeting is based on the Peace Agreement signed in Algiers in 2015 between the previous Malian government and the rebels.

Morocco

- On 11 December the government and education labour unions agree on wage hikes, which turn out to be insufficient to put an end to the strike and demonstrations which began in

October and continue throughout December.

- On 15 December Driss Lachgar and Nabil Benabdellah, leaders of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) and Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS), sign a memorandum for joint political action, thereby putting an end to over a decade of confrontation.
- On 22 December the EU approves 177 million euros in aid to help Morocco in its reconstruction efforts following September's earthquake in Marrakech-Safi.
- On 22 December the president of the Oriental Regional Council Abdenbi Bioui and the president of Wydad football club Said Naciri are arrested, along with a further 23 people, in an investigation into their involvement with the jailed drug smuggler el-Hadj Ahmed Ben Ibrahim, known as the Sahara's Pablo Escobar.

Mauritania

- On 5 December the former President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz is sentenced to five years in prison for money laundering and illicit enrichment.
- On 6 December Mauritania and Chad approve the dissolution of the G5 Sahel alliance, following the withdrawal from the regional bloc of its other members, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, in the aftermath of the coups orchestrated in these three countries.
- On 21 December the EU allocates an additional 2.6 million euros to assist Mauritania in dealing with the humanitarian emergency sparked by the increase in refugee arrivals from Mali in recent months.

EU

- On 11 December the former President of the European Council Donald Tusk is appointed Prime Minister of Poland after his party, Civic Platform (PO, socio-liberal), won the elections on 15 October and thanks to the support of the opposition to the hitherto ruling Law and Justice party (PiS, Christian democratic), thereby putting an end to eight years of a Eurosceptic government. The situation in Poland comes as a relief to the EU after the victories of Geert Wil-

ders's far-right Freedom Party (PVV) from the Netherlands on 22 November and the Eurosceptic and pro-Russian Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD) of Robert Fico in Slovakia on 30 September.

- On 13 December the Commission unblocks 10.2 billion euros in cohesion funds for Hungary in an effort to persuade the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban not to block Europe's support for Ukraine in the European Council meeting of heads of state and government on 14 – 15 December. Finally, and thanks to the withdrawal of the Hungarian veto, the Council approves the opening of accession talks with Ukraine and Moldova. It also indicates that accession talks can begin with Bosnia and Herzegovina, if it meets the required conditions before March 2024, and grants candidate status to Georgia. Hungary, however, does veto the agreement to revise the Financial Framework and supply Ukraine with a €50 billion aid package. In addition, the Council adopts its 12th package of sanctions against Russia.
- On 14 December the European Council and Parliament agree to reform the electricity market to reduce dependency on oil and gas prices, protect consumers from price hikes and accelerate the deployment of renewable energies.
- On 15 December Germany and the Netherlands thwart plans for Hamas attacks in Europe with the arrest in Berlin and Rotterdam of four people that were smuggling weapons into the German capital.
- On 20 December the Parliament and Council reach a political agreement on the Pact on Migration and Asylum Pact which provides for greater control of the Union's external borders, tighter asylum rules and allows Member States to avoid hosting migrants relocated from overburdened states through alternatives like the payment of compensation if they reject the transfer.
- On 20 December the Council reaches a political agreement for a fiscal rule reform to lower the high levels of public debt resulting from 15 years of systemic crises.
- On 21 December the EU joins the creation of an international armada announced two days ago and which will

enjoy the participation of the US, Italy, France, Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Norway, Canada, Bahrain and Seychelles to guarantee navigation freedom in the Red Sea, faced with the successive attacks carried out by the Iranian-backed Yemeni Houthi militias on western commercial vessels, in connection with the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

- On 27 December Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission between 1985 and 1995 and one of the great architects of European integration, dies in Paris.

Gibraltar

- On 3 July Gibraltar completes the removal from the sea of the bulk carrier OS 35, which shipwrecked in August 2022.
- On 25 August Gibraltar asks Spain for an explanation for changes introduced the previous night to the passport control regime, which causes long queues on the border.
- On 30 August Spain issues a verbal note to the United Kingdom protesting against various incidents that took place during the month: a confrontation between Gibraltar and Spanish customs patrols, harassment of Andalusian fishermen and the spilling of 2,000 litres of fuel into the Bay of Gibraltar during a bunkering operation on 1 August, for which the captain of the Gas Venus ship is charged, as announced by Gibraltar on 21 August.
- On 12 October Gibraltar holds general elections in which the Socialist Labour Party-Liberal Party Alliance, headed by Fabian Picardo, wins with 50.04% of the votes, ahead of Keith Azopardi's Social Democrats, who win 48.15%.
- On 14 December the 14th round of negotiations on the future of relations between Gibraltar and the Union after Brexit comes to an end without an agreement.

Western Sahara

- On 21 January Brahim Ghali is re-elected as secretary-general of the Polisario Front.

- On 22 March Spain confirms it has started negotiations with Morocco for the transfer of the control over Sahrawi airspace to Morocco.
- On 16 May the US withdraws its support for the autonomy plan Morocco has proposed for Western Sahara.
- On 5 July Italy describes Morocco's efforts to find a solution to the Sahrawi issue as "serious and credible," following a meeting in Rome between the Italian and Moroccan Foreign Ministers, Antonio Tajani and Nasser Bourita.
- On 6 July the German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock affirms that Rabat's autonomy plan for Western Sahara represents "a basis" on which to negotiate.
- On 17 July Israel recognizes Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.
- On 29 July the Dominican Republic expresses its support for the Western Sahara autonomy plan and Moroccan sovereignty over the territory.
- On 1 September Abba Ali Hamudi, member of the National Secretariat of the Polisario Front, and another three militants are killed in clashes between the Moroccan army at the separation wall.
- On 4 September after receiving authorization from Rabat, Staffan de Mistura, the UN's special envoy for Western Sahara, arrives in Laayoune in his first visit to the territory since he took over the post in October 2021.
- On 9 October the Polisario Front warns of "serious consequences" if the Sahrawi territory is included in the 2030

Football World Cup, which FIFA has decided will be co-hosted by Spain, Portugal and Morocco.

- On 28 October a Polisario Front bomb attack in Smara leaves at least one person dead.
- On 30 October the Security Council approves renewing the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 31 October 2024.
- On 21 December Spain refuses to renew the residency permit of Sahrawi activist Aminatou Haidar, who has been living in Spain for 16 years.

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