



**Turkey, Saudi Arabia:** Perception of Saudi involvement in Khashoggi's disappearance is having consequences, but governments will wait until dust settles

**Bottom Line:** Although the whereabouts of journalist Jamal Khashoggi remains unknown, the perception of Saudi involvement has already had consequences for Riyadh, including on its equities and an upcoming investor conference. However, the Saudi government is pushing back against these accusations, including by threatening to retaliate against any sanctions that may be levied. Le Beck assesses that other countries, especially Saudi allies, are unlikely to make any concrete moves until more is known, and that absent clear evidence of Saudi involvement, retaliatory measures will be limited if they are implemented at all.

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1. What do you make of Brunson's release and what does this say about the state of relations between Washington and Ankara?



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## Perception of Saudi involvement in Khashoggi's disappearance is having consequences, but governments will wait until dust settles

- ❑ Although the whereabouts of journalist Jamal Khashoggi remains unknown, the perception of Saudi involvement has already had consequences for Riyadh, including on its equities and an upcoming investor conference.
- ❑ However, the Saudi government is pushing back against these accusations, including by threatening to retaliate against any sanctions that may be levied.
- ❑ Le Beck assesses that other countries, especially Saudi allies, are unlikely to make any concrete moves until more is known, and that absent clear evidence of Saudi involvement, retaliatory measures will be limited if they are implemented at all.

**Analysis:** The disappearance of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi will shortly enter its third week (see [Oct. 1-7 Weekly Security Brief](#)) and despite speculation and various accusations, what exactly happened remains unclear. At this time, Saudi Arabia maintains its original position that Khashoggi left the consulate, although there has yet to be video evidence showing his exit. Turkish media, for their part, released some CCTV footage, with officials claiming that they have video and audio evidence that indicates Khashoggi was killed, which Riyadh denies. These claims, however, are not [without](#) some discrepancies, including the revelation that footage allegedly showing a member of the 15-man Saudi team was taken in 2013 and not on October 2.

Although the circumstances surrounding his disappearance remain unclear, there are already consequences for Saudi Arabia on the political, diplomatic, and even business scene. Saudi equities, for example, took a hit in the aftermath of comments by US President Donald Trump who both indicated that he didn't want the incident to interfere with Saudi arms purchases while also promising "severe punishment" and/or "very powerful" consequences in the event that Khashoggi was, in fact, killed at the Consulate. In addition, the former US Energy Secretary suspended his position on the board of NEOM, a planned cross-border mega-city; one lobbying firm reportedly cancelled its contract with Riyadh; and multiple participants - both news outlets and companies (including Uber, JP Morgan, and Ford) - pulled out of their participation in an upcoming investor conference in the Saudi capital.

These actions highlight the fact that, regardless of whether or not Saudi Arabia was responsible for the disappearance, there appears to be the *perception* that it was. Contributing to this are, for example, Turkish statements that Riyadh is not cooperating with the ongoing investigation and various [reports](#) claiming that, prior to his disappearance, Saudi Arabia was attempting without success to convince Khashoggi to return.

Assumption of Saudi involvement can also contribute to concerns regarding both the rule of law and perceived irrational decision-making, both of which have already come under scrutiny in recent years: the former during the 2017 corruption arrests (there were and still are allegations that this was as much a power play as it was a fight against corruption) and the latter during incidents like Lebanese PM Saad Hariri's 2017 announced resignation from the Saudi capital (Riyadh is persistently accused of detaining him in an effort to increase pressure on Hezbollah). Such concerns, whether justified or not, can impact the willingness and interest of companies and investors in doing business with and in the country, damaging ongoing efforts by authorities to send the opposite message, including through social reform like permitting women to drive and developing the entertainment sector.



The fact is that if Khashoggi was killed and if this was ordered by the Saudi government, it would represent a highly irrational move: targeting a prominent journalist living in the US and doing so on foreign soil is highly risky under any circumstances. In other words, the potential benefits of silencing a sometimes critic (Khashoggi had, for instance, also praised certain reform efforts) does not appear to be worth the consequences discussed above.

Saudi leadership is also pushing back against these allegations and the seemingly accompanying assumption of its involvement). Along with denials and efforts to emphasise that there is, in fact, a Saudi team in Turkey assisting with the investigation, some local media outlets are [alleging](#) that this crisis was manufactured by Turkey, Iran, and Qatar in order to damage the country's reputation. Such accusations indicate that the current rift with Qatar is liable to only be cemented further by this situation. Moreover, and more importantly, they have threatened to retaliate in kind to any sanctions that may be levied.

At this time, and while this threat and Trump's comments certainly hold the potential for relations to be strained between the two allies (and with other countries calling for a probe), it is unlikely that governments will make a concrete move until more is known about Khashoggi's whereabouts. In this context, absent concrete evidence of Saudi involvement, Le Beck assesses that retaliatory measures will be limited if they are implemented at all.

## Turkey manages to enforce Idlib deadline for withdrawal of heavy weaponry, yet faces uphill battle to filter out jihadists

- ❑ While there are no clear indications that jihadists withdrew from the demilitarised zone, HTS did signal its acceptance of the Russia-Turkey agreement in Idlib and Ankara managed to enforce the withdrawal of heavy weaponry.
- ❑ HTS's acceptance is likely to continue to cause internal divisions, with more radical elements likely to break away from the group.
- ❑ This is something that plays in Turkey's hands, given Ankara's efforts to filter out jihadists, yet this process may well take years.

**Analysis:** On October 10, the deadline for opposition forces to evacuate heavy weaponry from the demilitarised zone along the Idlib frontline in northern Syria was met by Turkey in the framework of an agreement signed between Moscow and Ankara. October 10 was, indeed, the first out of two such deadlines mentioned in the agreement, the second one requiring that all radical groups also pull out from the zone by October 15. In the longer term, reports also suggest that the agreement includes the reopening of the main highways traversing the opposition-held pocket.

At this time, there are no clear indications that the main radical group operating in Idlib, namely, Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, a coalition of jihadist and radical groups, including the former al-Qaeda (AQ)-linked Jabhat al-Nusra) had withdrawn. The group, however, did release a statement that, while mentioning it would not abandon its weapons or fight against the regime, implied that they would not oppose the demilitarised zone. The release, while relatively ambiguous, stated that the group "value[d] the efforts of all those striving - at home and abroad - to protect the liberated area and prevent its invasion and the perpetration of massacres in it", suggesting that it did not want to be seen as the reason for the resumption of a regime offensive. In this context, HTS is likely concerned that it would be seen as responsible for the collapse of the agreement and launch of a massive regime response that would, in turn, endanger its already fragile popularity. Not to mention that by spoiling the agreement, HTS may well prompt a Turkish response, as Ankara has deployed significant forces in Idlib.

It is further important to note that while HTS could have easily toppled the agreement by carrying out attacks against the regime, it did not do so. This is not to say, however, that the decision was an easy one. HTS does appear to be struggling with how to cope with the agreement. It likely does understand that this deal may well be intended in the long-run to see Turkey slowly divide HTS (between those willing to integrate into a more moderate coalition and those unwilling to do so) thereby weakening it while building up the moderate opposition.

This has led HTS to decide against opposing the agreement and, in fact, to quietly remove some of the potential spoilers to it. Indeed, there are reports that a latent conflict between HTS and its more radical rival, Hurras al-Din (a group of AQ loyalists that split out of HTS when the group formally declared the severance of ties to AQ) recently escalated. This includes a wave of tit-for-tat assassinations and, more importantly, some reports suggesting that HTS even arrested several Hurras al-Din cells that planned to carry out major attacks against the regime in order to try and sabotage the agreement negotiated between Turkey and Russia.

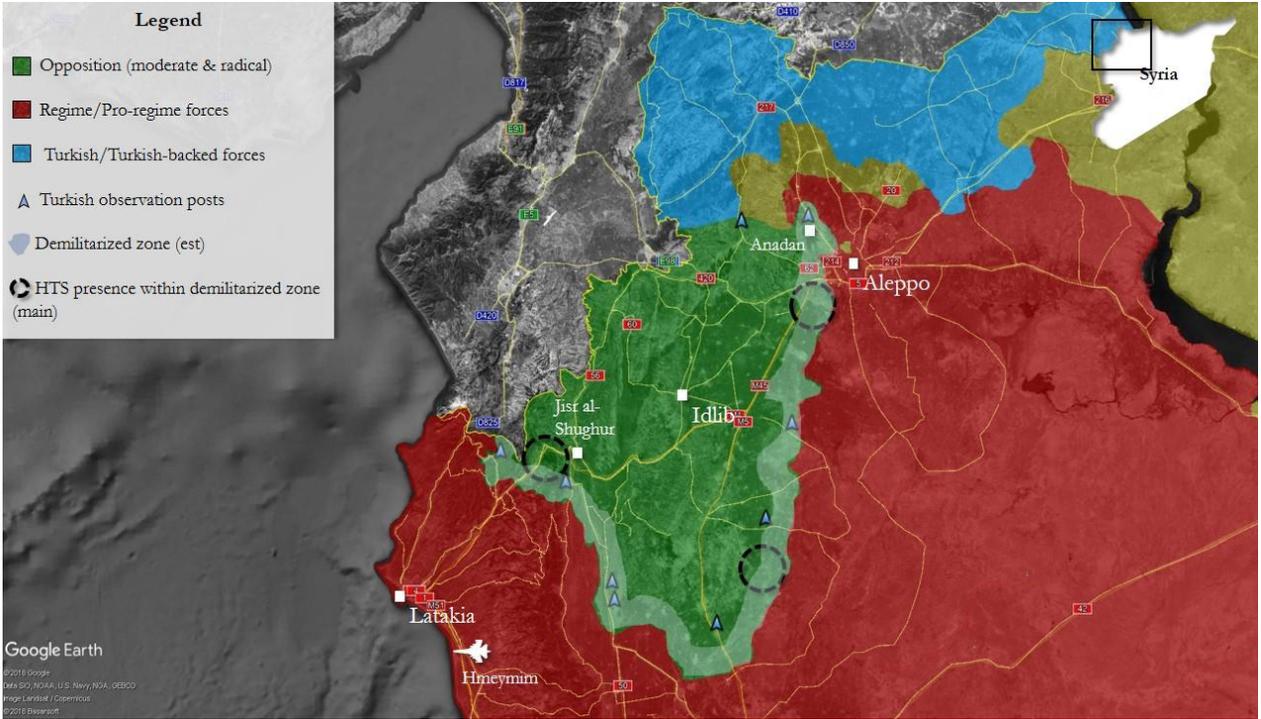
In this context, the growing rivalry created by the agreement was one of its expected consequences. To be sure, the main goals of Ankara were to avoid a massive influx of refugees, while also keeping some leverage in Syria in a bid to have a say in the future of the country.



Yet, Turkey also long stated that it would try to filter out jihadist elements to form a mainstream and internationally-acceptable opposition. This was clearly stated by the Turkish FM when Ankara first entered Idlib and deployed south of the then-Kurdish-controlled Afrin Canton in 2017. It is thus likely that Turkey will now focus on continuing to try and reintegrate some elements within HTS to the broader National Liberation Front (NLF) made of various Turkish-backed groups, while isolating those unwilling to do so. This is likely to be a long process that could take years.

During this period, Russia is liable to continuing using the threat of an offensive to push Turkey to be more aggressive in its efforts to effectively divide the opposition between the moderates and radicals. Thus, Ankara faces an uphill battle, with the weight of maintaining the quiet almost entirely on its shoulders.





*Figure 1: Idlib demilitarised zone (estimated)*

## Iran draws down presence in key areas of eastern Syria likely as a result of Russian pressure

- ❑ Reports suggest that, over the past week, Iran withdrew units from several key areas, including the T4 airbase near Palmyra and several cities near the Syria-Iraq border
- ❑ While Iran also has its own incentive to do so, including to deflect international pressure, it is also likely that the decision stemmed from some form of Russian pressure, particularly as Russian forces were deployed near the border.
- ❑ This highlights Le Beck's prior assessment that Moscow may see the deployment of the S-300 as an opportunity to de-escalate the Israel-Iran confrontation in Syria. Still, it's unlikely that Russia will truly commit to actually fully removing Iranian influence.

**Analysis:** During the past week, several sources suggest that Iran suddenly evacuated multiple bases and positions in eastern Syria, including units based at the T4 airbase near Palmyra, while also withdrawing some (but not all) of its proxies near the border with Iraq, including Albu Kamal and al-Mayadin. The T4 airbase had thus far been one of the main operational centres for Iranian forces in Syria, and was subsequently the target of multiple Israeli strikes, including one against a drone command centre following the infiltration of a drone into Israeli territory earlier this year. Further sources, including pro-regime outlets, further indicated that Russian forces entered the cities where Tehran withdrew some of its proxies, in the first such Russian deployment in this area since the beginning of the Russian intervention in the country.

The evacuation of Iranian bases, particularly from such strategic positions along the “Iranian corridor” through Iraq and Syria, is a significant change. Iranian militias had thus far made notable efforts to consolidate their presence in eastern Syria, particularly near this area along Iraq's border, that was likely meant to be used as a transit point for Iranian units moving from one country to the other. This presence and the possibility that Tehran would be able to use the corridor, either to facilitate the passage of weapons or units, or even in the longer-term as an economic or cultural “axis”, had raised significant concerns in multiple countries, including the US, Israel, and, to a lesser extent, Saudi Arabia.

In this context, the evacuation, along with the deployment of Russian forces in an area that was thus far almost exclusively controlled by Iranian and Iranian-backed militias, is unlikely to have occurred without some form of international pressure. To be sure, Iran may have an interest in becoming less visible to avoid fueling growing efforts to ensure that Tehran will not be able to maintain its presence in Syria. There are, indeed, reports that Iran is pushing some of its more local Syrian proxies to reintegrate into regular units within the Syrian military in a bid to pre-emptively thwart attempts by outside actors to fully remove its influence. Yet, given the significant resources Iran committed to this specific area and its strategic importance, the evacuation was likely triggered by international negotiations that pushed Moscow to deploy along the Iraq-Syria border.

Although there has been no confirmation that the Iranian evacuation and the Russian deployment is tied to this, the timing of these two developments after the Russian deployment of the S-300 highlights Le Beck's previous [assessment](#) regarding the window of opportunity this opened. In our last Weekly Security Brief, we highlighted the possibility that Moscow could use this deployment as an opportunity to de-escalate the previously accelerating conflict between Iran and Israel in Syria.





While, as we discussed, the deployment of the S-300 does not prevent Israel from operating in Syria on the military level, on the political one it does heighten the risks associated with any new strike. It appears that Moscow may have understood that this, in fact, created a very dangerous situation given that Israel would still have to continue its air campaign if Iran used this window as an opportunity to accelerate its activities in Syria. Conversely, Russia could both prevent an escalation and even possibly kick start a de-escalation and obtain some concessions from Israel (including, for example, the reopening of the Quneitra border crossing, which marks Israel's de facto acceptance of Assad's rule in Syria) if it was able to convince Iran to draw down its activities in Syria.

Beyond that, this strategy may be even more valuable for Moscow given the recent shift in the US's Syria policy (also mentioned in Le Beck's previous Weekly Security Brief), from one solely focused on the Islamic State (IS) to one that is more aggressively meant to counter Iran. By convincing Tehran to evacuate some of its bases, Moscow portrays itself as a credible interlocutor for Washington, and thus also puts itself in a position to negotiate concessions from the US. However, although this may, indeed, push Iran to become less visible in these areas, it's unlikely that Russia truly has the resources and will actually be able to more seriously monitor Iranian activities, particularly because, as mentioned above, Iran is integrating some of its more local proxies into regular Syrian units in a bid to pre-emptively thwart that scenario.

## Escalating violence in Gaza, Israeli halt to fuel shipments, and threats leaves short window to avoid escalation



- ❑ Over the past week, tensions in Gaza continued to escalate, with an uptick in violence on the ground, subsequent Israeli threats to launch a ground operation, and a decision to halt all fuel shipments.
- ❑ Despite the volatility of the situation, Le Beck continues to assess that neither side truly wants an escalation, but are rather trying to increase their leverage while responding to domestic factors.
- ❑ In this context, it is largely up to Cairo to work out a way for everyone to save face and prevent violence from ramping up to levels seen earlier this year.

**Analysis:** Over the past week, tensions in the Gaza Strip continued to escalate both on the ground and behind the scenes, as Egypt engaged in a last-ditch effort to salvage the situation. On the ground, tensions are high due to an increasing numbers of incendiary balloons/kites (some of which are attached to small explosive) and rising violence and casualties during border fence protests. Most recently, on Friday, October 12, there also was an IED attack at the border that tore a hole in the fence and saw as many as 20 Gazans enter Israeli territory, a number of whom were fatally shot.

On Saturday, October 13, Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Liberman further announced that deliveries of fuel and gas to the Gaza Strip will cease "until violence [...] stops entirely, including the launching of incendiary balloons and the burning of tires near Israeli communities". This halt seemingly includes Qatari-bought fuel, which recently began being delivered despite objections from the Palestinian Authority (PA). Israeli officials, including PM Benjamin Netanyahu, appeared to once again wave the threat of a ground operation in Gaza, only to [rule it out](#) in a cabinet meeting on Sunday and postpone any decision regarding this issue for a week to give space to the intense negotiations going on behind the scenes.

Indeed, both Netanyahu's statement and Liberman's announcement are intended to increase pressure on Hamas to reduce the violence, while also stemming from domestic considerations. In this context, Le Beck [continues to assess](#) that this rising violence is intimately tied to stalled negotiations regarding both a ceasefire with Israel and the implementation of the reconciliation agreement with the PA. Such lack of progress on these fronts leaves Hamas with limited tools to change the status quo (i.e. to pressure both Egypt and Israel) except violence. Thus, while it is certainly possible that this could convince the group to crack down, there is also the very real chance that a halt to fuel and gas shipments, which would serve to worsen the already deteriorating economic situation, could trigger an escalation in attacks if the beginning of an agreement isn't reached in the coming days.

The weight of the crisis, at least diplomatically, appears to be entirely on Cairo, which is doubling down on efforts to broker a long-term ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, after initially freezing these talks. Egyptian delegations are slated to visit both Gaza and Tel Aviv, with the Egyptian general in charge of the Palestinian dossier poised to speak with his Israeli counterparts in a rare such visit. While tensions are certainly at their highest, Le Beck continues to assess that neither side truly want an escalation, and are rather responding to their own internal pressures. There are [rumours](#), for example, that Hamas may be willing to limit incendiary attacks and protests in exchange for aid, while the Israeli military consistently highlights the dangers of even a limited operation in Gaza, given the socio-economic conditions there: in fact, the Israeli military is largely pushing the government to alleviate the pressure on the Strip.

With this in mind, there is still a limited window of opportunity for Egypt to prevent an escalation no party really wants. Yet, this window is closing fast, and while neither Hamas nor Israel wants a conflict, the situation on the ground may return to that seen before negotiations on a long-term ceasefire accelerated, with short but extremely intense (and thus dangerous) outbursts of violence, followed by short-lived ceasefires.



## Chances of early elections rise due to disagreements on conscription bill, upcoming High Court deadline, and PM's interests



- ❑ Like in March, the chance for early elections is rising due to the same issue of ultra-Orthodox conscription, but now with an upcoming Dec. 2 High Court deadline.
- ❑ Although the votes by MKs opposing the draft legislation are not necessary in order for it to pass, PM Netanyahu is pushing for coalition unity, which could pave the way for early elections.
- ❑ Along with polls showing that Netanyahu's party will maintain or gain seats, he sees another mandate as able to influence the decision for or against indictment or, if he is indicted, convince his coalition partners to remain.

**Analysis:** The possibility of early elections appears to be rising for the second time since March (see [Mar. 12-18 Weekly Security Brief](#)) and related to the same issue: legislation on the conscription of the ultra-Orthodox. At this time, the compromise draft law has support from all ultra-Orthodox parties except the three Members of Knesset (MKs) from Agudat Yisrael, who oppose the stipulation that the law be automatically cancelled if the gradually increasing enlistment targets are not met for three years in a row. Reports indicate that Agudat Yisrael's leadership instructed the three MKs to reach a compromise or refuse to vote for the bill, but not exit the coalition. However, Defence Minister Avigdor Liberman, heads of the secular, right-wing Yisrael Beitenu, does not appear willing to compromise.

Similar to the situation in March, votes by the MKs opposing the legislation are not necessary in order to pass the bill but PM Benjamin Netanyahu, while claiming that he does not want the government to collapse, is pushing for coalition unity. And, like earlier this year, it is certainly possible that he is using this simply as a pretext to go to early polls, a situation he was previously unable to achieve due to a lack of support for elections on his preferred June date. However, this time there is an upcoming December 2 deadline set by Israel's High Court to pass this legislation, which would be extended in the event that Knesset (Parliament) dissolves.

Le Beck assesses that Netanyahu perceives the holding of snap elections as a net positive for a variety of reasons. Firstly, despite the ongoing corruption investigations into the PM (and his wife) (see [Feb. 12-18 Weekly Security Brief](#)), Netanyahu and his Likud Party have not lost support and, rather, would [maintain](#) or [even gain](#) seats according to various recent polls (with the latter potentially at the expense of his natural allies/coalition partners). This is despite the possible establishment of two new parties, one by former chief of staff of the Israeli military, Benny Gantz, and another by Orly Levy-Abekasis, an independent MK who resigned from Liberman's Yisrael Beitenu due to a lack of attention on social issues. Netanyahu, and the right-wing bloc generally, do not see these two potential new parties as threatening given that their stances and [polls suggest](#) that they would primarily take seats from other centre or centre-left parties. The only scenario that would likely be seen as alarming would be if these centre/centre-left parties formed a united bloc, something that is highly unlikely at this time, including due to strong personalities like Yesh Atid head Yair Lapid and Labour head Avi Gabbay.

More importantly, Netanyahu perceives another term as PM as able to positively influence his position, namely, that a victory in the "court of public opinion" would reduce the chance that the attorney general would indict on the various corruption cases or, if he does, that his future coalition partners would be less inclined to pursue his ouster if he just won a new mandate. Here, it is important to note that Netanyahu would not be legally obligated to resign even if he was indicted.

Thus, in the event of snap elections and assuming that no indictment is handed down before they would be held, the next governing coalition is liable to be similar to the present one. Should Likud gain even more seats than it has now, this would mean a similar government but with Netanyahu holding more power over his coalition partners (he could always threaten to replace smaller size partners with other parties). It is not clear whether this would be an overall positive or negative development but it could, for example, mean an increased ability to push for support for the to-be-announced US peace plan.

However, it is important to reiterate that the decision to hold new elections largely resides in the Netanyahu's hands, i.e. whether he will insist on coalition unity or pass the bill without those three MKs. Moreover, even if the bill is passed, this does not mean that the PM could not find another reason to push for early elections.



## Labour strikes, protests in Iran unlikely to escalate into large-scale movement, including due to harsh crackdown by authorities

- ❑ A general call for strikes to protest against Iran's economic situation saw shops in over forty cities close on October 8, amid a nationwide strike by truck drivers.
- ❑ Iranian authorities have cracked down on such protests, preventing any significant escalation, although the harsh response, including death sentences, has been explicitly criticised during demonstrations.
- ❑ Given this crackdown, while such protests are likely to continue occurring sporadically given Iran's long-standing institutional weaknesses and the increasing unlikelihood of economic reform, a large-scale protest movement is unlikely.

**Analysis:** Shops and bazaars in over forty cities were closed on October 8-9 following a call for a general strike in order to protest against the economic situation and deteriorating living conditions. Strikes were reportedly witnessed in several cities, including Tehran, Isfahan, Tabriz, and Kermanshah. The strikes further came amid a new wave of protests, beginning in late September, by truck drivers who have been sporadically demonstrating since May against low wages and high prices of automotive parts. This past week saw thousands of truck drivers protesting in over 320 cities nationwide.

Iranian authorities, in particular the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp. (IRGC), have cracked down on such demonstrations in a bid to prevent any further escalation, including through arrests: at least 17 truck drivers were sentenced to death for crimes such as "spreading corruption" and over 30 received prison sentences of up to 20 years. While some protests (albeit relatively small-scale) have also explicitly condemned such harsh penalties, the authorities have managed, thus far, to quell these and the other manifestations of (economic) discontent. Indeed, although last week's strikes and the truck drivers' protest mark the latest outburst of discontent, there has been no development or signs of development of any large-scale movements.

Such a protest movement is absent, and will likely continue to be, due to several factors. Firstly, any further demonstrations are likely to be met with a similar harsh response. Beyond that, the protests lack centralisation and any sort of unifying leader. Indeed, while the recent demonstrations have, at their heart, all been largely focused on economic issues, participants are demonstrating in distinct groups, failing to coalesce into a large-scale movement. For example, this past week saw merchants demonstrate in parallel to but not in conjunction with Iranian truck drivers' ongoing (albeit intermittent) strikes.

Thirdly, in addition to the aforementioned lack of any organised movement, the recent protests have largely failed to attract support from the middle-class. In this context, it is worthwhile mentioning that, while bazaars in Tehran reportedly closed as part of the October 8 strike, no such demonstrations appear to have taken place in Tehran's Grand Bazaar. Contrary to the June protests, which saw "elite" bazaaris co-opt socio-economic tensions in a bid to further their own domestic political aims (see [June 25-July 1 Weekly Security Brief](#)), the recent protests seem to have failed to spread beyond working-class Iranians, and therefore do not represent a significant enough portion of the population to constitute a real threat to the regime. It is, furthermore, worthwhile noting that the June protests offer further evidence of the IRGC's ability to quash such demonstrations, with the protests waning within days.





Although such demonstrations are unlikely to escalate beyond a means for participants to voice their grievances regarding Iran's static economic situation and the rapidly depreciating Rial (approximately 140,000 IRR to 1 USD), they are likely to continue. As previously assessed, Iran's economic woes largely stem from long-standing institutional weaknesses (resulting from factors including poor economic management, lack of economic reform and corruption), exacerbated by the US sanctions reimplemented following Washington's withdrawal from the nuclear deal (see [April 9-15 Weekly Security Brief](#)).

With Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's influence and power declining as the promised economic benefits of the JCPOA are becoming increasingly unattainable, there is little chance that his government will be able to implement any meaningful economic reforms. Moreover, in light of the aforementioned US sanctions, Iran is moving increasingly back toward a tightly controlled "resistance economy", further rendering Rouhani's economic agenda unlikely. Consequently, failing the means/ability to address protesters' grievances, protests and strikes such as those seen this past week are unlikely to die down permanently.

***Question: What do you make of Brunson's release and what does this say about the state of relations between Washington and Ankara?***

**Le Beck:** Following an October 12 court hearing during which several witnesses recanted their testimonies as to Pastor Andrew Brunson's alleged ties to Fethullah Gulen, a court in Izmir sentenced the Pastor to time served and lifted travel restrictions. The Pastor was thus free to come back to the US where he met with President Donald Trump.

The release of Pastor Brunson does certainly pave the way for a renewed push to bolster Turkish-US relations, yet Le Beck's assessment is that, while politically significant, the detention of the Pastor was by far one of the least significant issues driving the bilateral relations, as assessed at the time.

To be sure, the release does decrease the possibility that the crisis will further escalate given that some sanctions imposed on Turkey will likely be lifted, giving the Turkish economy some breathing space (though most of the factors behind Turkey's economic difficulties are unrelated). The return will further decrease the political pressure on both sides to escalate the crisis and save face. An initial refusal by Turkey to abide by a purported agreement it had reached with the State Department and President Donald Trump had propelled the issue to the frontpage, with President Trump also likely using the issue for domestic purposes.

Yet, the rift between Ankara and Washington goes far beyond the detention of the Pastor, and the crisis triggered by Turkey's refusal to free him in July was likely an attempt by Ankara to force Washington into additional concessions more than anything else. Issues such as Ankara's resolve to purchase the Russian S-400, the US support for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Syria, as well as a growing and persistent wave of anti-American statements and publications among pro-government outlets and figures, were and still are at the core of the crisis. These issues remain largely unresolved, and a previous attempt to solve them was largely undermined by the unanticipated Brunson crisis.

## Other Notable Developments

- ★ **Iran:** Iranian authorities [arrested](#) a member of Iran's military and summoned 11 other military personnel in connection with last month's Ahvaz military parade attack.
- ★ **Iran:** The Iranian Parliament [approved](#) the bill relating to the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism by a relatively narrow margin, although the Guardian Council must approve the legislation before it becomes law. The decision follows Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's reversal of his initial stance criticising such international conventions.
- ★ **Israel, Syria:** After a closure of more than four years, the Quneitra border crossing between Israel and Syria [reopened](#) on October 15.
- ★ **Jordan, Syria:** The border crossing between Jordan and Syria also [re-opened](#) today.
- ★ **Jordan:** In what is [described](#) as efforts to demonstrate the government's commitment to economic reforms, including addressing corruption and reducing public spending, Jordan's PM implemented a cabinet reshuffle on October 11.
- ★ **Lebanon:** A minor accused of joining Islamic State (IS)-affiliated groups [was arrested](#) in Akkar and is accused of planning to manufacture an IED to detonate remotely against a passing army patrol.
- ★ **US, Iran:** The US [urged](#) the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to throw out a case filed by Iran seeking to recover approximately two billion USD worth of assets frozen by the US Supreme Court and awarded to victims of a 1983 bombing in Lebanon, among other Iran-linked attacks.

## Upcoming Dates

- The IISS Manama Dialogue, a major security-focused summit held annually in Bahrain, will be held from **October 26-28**.
- October 28** marks the anniversary of the 2016 protests in al-Hoceima, Morocco that erupted when a fishmonger was crushed by a garbage truck after police confiscated his fish. In 2017, authorities [banned](#) protests on the anniversary.
- Istanbul New Airport will open **October 29**, which is also Republic Day. Despite earlier reports that all flights will be diverted there from Ataturk International Airport on that day, Turkish Airlines [announced](#) that all operations would not move to the new facility until **December 30**.
- Now that Iraq's President and PM were appointed, the latter has 30 days to form a cabinet, a period that ends on **November 1**.
- [More sanctions](#), including those on Iran's energy sector, will be re-implemented on **November 4** following the end of the second wind-down period.

