



AN ANALYTICAL INTELLIGENCE WIRE PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS  
OF EMBRY-RIDDLE AERONAUTICAL UNIVERSITY IN PRESCOTT,  
ARIZONA

**Eagle Eye 344 | November 8, 2019**

In This Issue

EGYPT: Ongoing Protests Indicate Growing Resentment of Sisi	2
ISLAMIC STATE: Leader's Death Likely to Cripple Regional Influence	4
IRAN: Relations with Israel Likely to Deteriorate After Bahrain Conference	5
NORTH KOREA: Short Range Missiles Fired into Sea of Japan	6
RUSSIA: Backdoor Hacking Targets Iran	7

## **EGYPT: Ongoing Protests Indicate Growing Resentment of Sisi**

**Summary:** Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi is facing protests and dissent after a video surfaced describing his rampant corruption and nepotism in addition to poor economic and societal conditions in Egypt. Sisi quickly made moves to clamp down the protesters, but these protests likely indicate further resistance against Sisi and will likely destabilize Egypt and heightened security in the surrounding area.

**Growing Support for Regime Change Among New Demographics:** The large protests represent a decline in popularity for Sisi. The protests sparked on 21 September as the result of an anti-Sisi video posted by former military contractor Mohammed Ali illustrating Sisi's rampant corruption and nepotism in the Egyptian government. These protests, the first major protests demanding Sisi's resignation since he came to power in 2013, mark a major shift in public opinion towards the government. Most importantly, the vast majority of the protestors come from the younger and lower-class demographic. Unlike traditional opponents of Sisi with links to the Muslim brotherhood, these protesters reflect a serious erosion of Sisi's base of support among those who had once opposed Morsi in favor of Sisi.

**Increasing Economic Hardships:** The protests likely stem in part from economic grievances and insecurities felt across the majority of the Egyptian population. Currently, 31% of Egyptians live below the poverty line, an increase of at least 2.6% from 2010. Majority of Egyptians perceive that only the well-connected prosper. This poor economic outlook comes after the IMF granted Cairo a 12-billion-dollar loan intended to propel the Egyptian economy. Instead, Sisi invested the majority of this money on extravagant infrastructure projects like New Cairo, rather than industry or public institutions that could help increase social mobility among the lower class. Additionally, the corruption videos released by Mohammed Ali described how Sisi used public money to construct extravagant palaces and buildings for his family's personal pleasure as the majority of Egyptians struggle to acquire basic needs. Many fear that the government will eventually fail to provide basic services to its 100 million people to avoid bankruptcy. Sisi currently faces cutting public spending or government salaries. He will likely cut government salaries to not make enemies in the military who provide Sisi with his power and security. Egyptians citizens likely see the resignation of Sisi as a means to fix the abuse of their economy.

**Sisi's Expansion of Power:** A recent referendum passed this Spring, with allegations of election tampering by Sisi, increased his inherent constitutional powers as president. This transitioned the government to a more centralized, authoritarian system. Firstly, the referendum significantly expands presidential terms limits until 2034, allowing Sisi more time to pull more government power inwards. Additionally, this referendum permits Sisi to appoint top judicial officials, greatly damaging the rule of law and politicizing the courts in Sisi's favor. Lastly, the referendum grants the military the ability to directly intervene in Egyptian domestic politics, a tool Sisi will likely use to legally suppress opposition. Overall, Egyptian citizens likely believe

that Sisi's efforts to centralize power means he will remain as President long-term despite deteriorating economic conditions and furthering corruption.

**Sisi's Reaction to Revolution:** The recent crackdown on journalists, human-rights activists, and political dissenters, including over 3,000 arrests, likely indicates Sisi's desire to crush any anti-government opposition. Sisi will likely continue to use his control over the military to suppress all forms of political dissent both on the ground and online. Egyptian officials have admitted they questioned at 1,000 in response to the protests. Additionally, his response to the opposition will likely continue to escalate past the arrest and suppression of protests. A series of sophisticated cyber-attacks on journalists, academics, and human rights activists indicates that significant escalation already occurred, and the Egyptian government will likely continue to counter the threat that social media to authoritarian regimes and track down and arrest anyone who incites protests. Sisi will likely also continue to utilize the secret police given their success in purging the Muslim brotherhood from Egypt, and the government control of communication infrastructure will likely allow SISI to limit the protestors ability to organize and field any meaningful resistance.

**Outlook and Implications:** A new opposition to Sisi fueled by poor economic conditions, fear of dictatorial rule, and facing human rights abuses and suppression indicate a growing likelihood of an attempted revolution in Egypt. Additionally, these protests coincide with protests in Iraq, Lebanon, Algeria, and Azerbaijan calling for an end to corruption similar to Egypt, signaling that unrest throughout the Middle East may increase.

Sisi will most likely continue to suppress the protests with an increasing amount of force. He likely recognizes that failing to suppress revolt will threaten his ability to maintain power. Sisi's command of the military and the infrastructure that he used to eliminate the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013 will make suppressing protests exceedingly easy. Sisi led a revolution against Morsi in 2013, and consequently, Sisi likely understands what it takes to lead a successful revolution in Egypt and how to stop it.

Least likely, Egypt will see Sisi leave power peacefully and begin undergoing democratization that would see Sisi leave power peacefully. The oppositions power politically, and military compared to Sisi's make it easier for him to quash the protests without repercussion. Although, he risks losing international financing from the IMF and World Bank which helps him maintain his power by keeping the Egyptian economy afloat, allowing full funding of the military.

Most impactfully, civil war in Egypt similar to that of Syria could break out. Sisi's harsh treatment of protesters can possibly trigger a violent uprising pushing the country into a deadly civil war. This will likely trigger a refugee crisis in the most populous middle eastern state which Europe will likely not be able to support, causing a huge humanitarian disaster in the region.

### **ISLAMIC STATE: Leader's Death Likely to Cripple Regional Influence**

**Summary:** Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State (IS) blew himself up during a raid by U.S. commandos. His second in command, Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajir, died during the raid as well. Remaining IS members may launch a retaliatory strike, but will likely have diminished regional influence.

**Development:** On 26 October, US Commandos raided Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's compound in the rebel-held Idlib Province of Syria. As soldiers enclosed on Baghdadi's position, he strapped an explosive vest onto his body and fled with three of his children. Upon arrival Baghdadi detonated his vest killing himself and three of his children. On 29 October, Andreas Krieg, a London official publicly stated to the media that Baghdadi's death carried significant symbolic meaning. Later he went to state that countries should continue to expect more hostilities from IS as its movement is not completely destroyed.

**Analysis:** Despite its major setback, IS will likely continue to interact in open hostilities globally. If Middle Eastern countries take advantage of this time and crack down on the remaining IS militant groups, this setback will likely transition to a permanent state. If IS quickly appoints a new leader, then it will likely recover from the setback of the raid and plan an immediate retaliatory strike.

[Patrick Komanowski, Melea Tucker, Brandon Schude, Kysa Miller]

### **IRAN: Relations with Israel Likely to Deteriorate After Bahrain Conference**

**Summary:** Following Israel's attendance of the Bahrain Conference, Israel will likely strengthen military/defense contingency programs.

**Development:** On 30 October, Tehran deployed long-range missiles in Yemen and on 21 October, over 60 countries met in Bahrain to discuss security specifically focused on Iran. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that Iran can deploy long-range missiles in Yemen that have the capability to strike anywhere in the Middle East. Netanyahu added that Iran aims to develop precision-guided munitions that could hit any target within 16 to 32 feet. On 23 October, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) unveiled a new plan dubbed "Momentum" to improve military training and increase their arsenal.

**Analysis:** The conference's anti-Iran tone likely angered Tehran, increasing tensions between Iran and the attending nations. Iran's likely deployment of long-range missiles to Yemen as an attempt by Tehran to showcase their newly developed missile capabilities to warn surrounding countries. Iran probably views Jerusalem as more vulnerable currently, making the threat of an attack more possible. Jerusalem will likely continue to strengthen military/defense contingency programs. Israel likely believes that Tehran poses a legitimate threat to their nation's security.

[Danielle Jamieson, Abigail Clark, Emily Lewis]

## **NORTH KOREA: Short Range Missiles Fired into Sea of Japan**

**Summary:** Pyongyang launched two KN-25 short-range missiles into the Sea of Japan, likely reflecting its displeasure over stalled nuclear negotiations.

**Development:** On 31 October, Pyongyang fired two KN-25 short-range missiles from the South Pyongan province to the Sea of Japan. The missiles traveled 350-400 km and reached approximately 100 km in altitude before landing outside Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone. The launch occurred in the afternoon, a departure from the typical dawn launch time. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff are monitoring for additional launches. The launch followed increased frustration over the pace of nuclear negotiations and sanction relief. Kim Jong Un expressed satisfaction over the launch.

**Analysis:** Pyongyang will likely continue to conduct missile launches to show its irritation over the nuclear negotiations, directly violating international sanctions. Its continued missile testing likely also serves to keep North Korean citizens wary of a possible attack from the US. Pyongyang's threats to resume missile tests demonstrate Pyongyang will likely continue to disregard sanctions. Continued missile launches will likely provoke Japan and South Korea and escalate tensions between the nations.

[August Kather]

## **RUSSIA: Backdoor Hacking Targets Iran**

**Summary:** Russian hacker groups infiltrated other countries' hacker groups, causing difficulty in assigning blame and putting state secrets at risk.

**Development:** On 21 October, BBC News reported Russian hacker groups, including Turla, leeches information from other countries' hacker groups. Russian hacker's strategy included denial of service and deception attacks. Turla hacked into Iranian hacker groups and stole espionage-related information. Iran initially took the blame, but further analysis revealed Turla carried out attacks while cloaked as the Iranian hackers.

**Analysis:** Russia will almost certainly use these attacks to manipulate other nations' information. Turla's advanced attack vectors give them access to a myriad of information. Turla's access to sources and methods mean Turla will likely manipulate the information, leaking and deceiving other countries. An undetected attack could cause friction between allied nations when information leaks. Additionally, as attacks continue, Turla will almost certainly gain access to Western assets, potentially even those in Russia itself. If this occurs, the assets will likely find themselves in grave danger. Punishment for attacks will almost certainly become more difficult as well, as cybercrime analysts will almost certainly struggle to pinpoint the aggressor of an attack.

[Maxime Dowla]

**This is a global intelligence briefing prepared by the students of the Global Security and Intelligence Studies program at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona. The views expressed in this briefing are those of the students, not the university.**

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**For questions or comments, contact Editor in Chief Zach Coffee at [editorsee@gmail.com](mailto:editorsee@gmail.com) or Eagle Eye Faculty Advisor Dale Avery at (928) 777-4708**