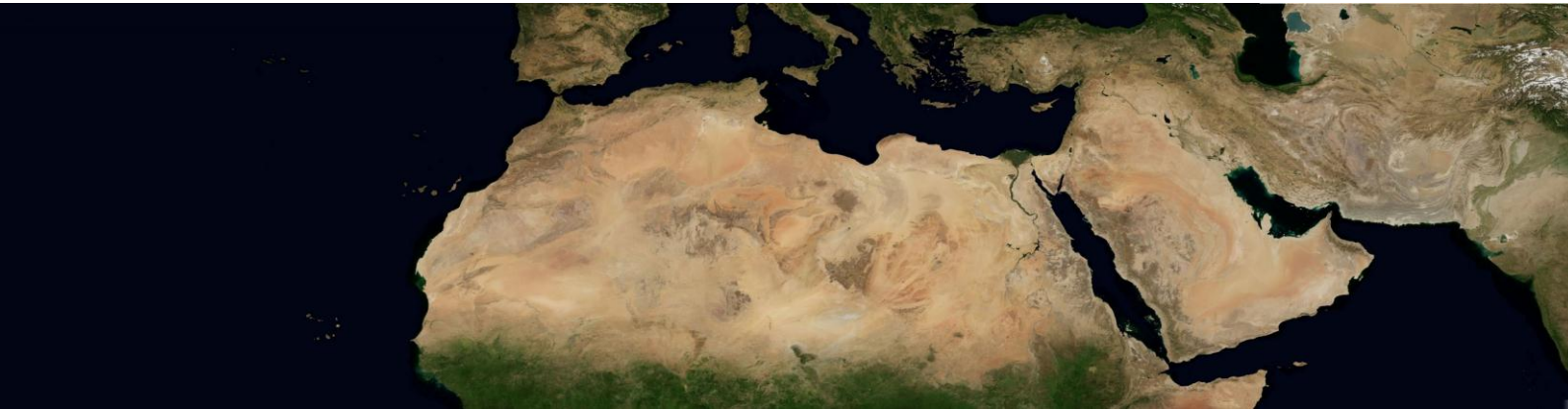




THE INKERMAN GROUP



MENA EXAMINER

26 October 2011

The Inkerman MENA Examiner is an informative weekly assessment of developments taking place across the Middle East and North Africa, providing travellers and businesses operating in these countries with a comprehensive overview of regional risk.

2. REGIONAL OVERVIEW

3. EGYPT

4. ISRAEL / JORDAN

5. LEBANON / SYRIA

6. IRAN / IRAQ

7. SAUDI ARABIA / OMAN

8. KUWAIT / QATAR / UAE

9. SAUDI ARABIA / YEMEN

10. LIBYA / MOROCCO

11. ALGERIA / TUNISIA

REGIONAL FORM AT A GLANCE – 26 OCTOBER 2011

KEY: ↑ IMPROVEMENT
↓ DETERIORATION
↔ UNCHANGED

In what is being called the 'Arab Spring' the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa are continuing to demand reforms from their governments. This has caused mass protests and unrest as well as the potential for sweeping changes across the region influenced by social, economic and political factors.

1. EGYPT
 RISK LEVEL: HIGH
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↔
 SUPPORT FOR SCAF TO CONTINUE RULE

5. SYRIA
 RISK LEVEL: EXTREME
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↓
 CRACKDOWN ON PROTESTS CONTINUES

9. OMAN
 RISK LEVEL: MEDIUM
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↑
 OMAN GIVEN "POSITIVE" RATING

13. SAUDI ARABIA
 RISK LEVEL: LOW
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↓
 SUCCESSION SPECULATION

2. ISRAEL
 RISK LEVEL: MEDIUM
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↔
 PRISONER SWAP ANNOUNCED

6. IRAN
 RISK LEVEL: HIGH
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↔
 PRO-AHMADINEJAD MINISTERS IMPEACHED

10. KUWAIT
 RISK LEVEL: LOW
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↔
 THREAT TO BRITISH EMBASSY

14. YEMEN
 RISK LEVEL: EXTREME
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↓
 CONTINUED VIOLENCE OVER SALEH'S RULE

3. JORDAN
 RISK LEVEL: MEDIUM
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↑
 NEW GOVERNMENT

7. IRAQ
 RISK LEVEL: EXTREME
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↓
 ALL US TROOPS TO WITHDRAW

11. QATAR
 RISK LEVEL: MEDIUM
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↔
 QATAR ADMITS TO TROOPS IN LIBYA

15. LIBYA
 RISK LEVEL: EXTREME
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↓
 NATO TO FINALISE EXIT STRATEGY

4. LEBANON
 RISK LEVEL: HIGH
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↓
 CROSS BORDER RAIDS CONTINUE


8. BAHRAIN
 RISK LEVEL: MEDIUM
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↔
 ROYAL COMMISSION DECISION POSTPONED

12. UAE
 RISK LEVEL: LOW
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↔
 BLOGGERS' VERDICT DUE IN NOVEMBER


16. MOROCCO
 RISK LEVEL: MEDIUM
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↓
 YOUTH CONDUCT MORE SIT-INS

17. ALGERIA
 RISK LEVEL: HIGH ↓
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↓
 SECURITY ISSUES PLAGUE ALGERIA


18. TUNISIA
 RISK LEVEL: MEDIUM
 WEEKLY SITUATION: ↑
 TUNISIA HOLDS SUCCESSFUL ELECTION

EGYPT		SITUATION: Unchanged
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: HIGH
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: HIGH


SITUATION TO DATE:	<p>During a telephone conversation on 25 October 2011, US President Barack Obama urged Egypt's army chief, Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, to lift a state of emergency and end military trials for civilians, whilst stressing the need for free polls. The call, which was reported by the White House, is yet to receive any column inches in the Egyptian press as a siege mentality continues to exist around the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) following the Maspero clashes of two weeks ago, which have increased the popularity of its stringent security measures. Moreover, despite a 21 October 2011, meeting between the SCAF Deputy Sami Anan, and a delegation of Coptic Christian leaders (which sought to reassure them that investigations were continuing in an attempt to identify and punish those responsible for instigating the sectarian unrest in Cairo), the public feeling continues to condemn the minority Christian sect for the violence, without a fair balance from the SCAF to inform that it remains unaware as to the identity of the agitators. This has helped reaffirm support for the SCAF's commitment to military rule for the near future. Recent SCAF statements have stressed that it is committed towards establishing a democratic state based on "equality among all citizens and religions", something which is yet to be tested and some see this as a sign to the international community of progress towards the post-election environment in Egypt rather than a genuine wish to do so especially if it conflicts with many of the military's primary business interests. Ultimately the SCAF continues to find it hard to show it is transparent enough towards the public especially as they are still unaware of the impact of breaking open a political stalemate in the country via elections. The SCAF remains keen on giving the appearance that it is following through with its promise of elections, while doing everything it can to maintain the status quo. That status quo entails having the military remain as the vanguard of the state, while the political opposition remains far too weak and divided to do anything meaningful. If the military's core imperatives are first understood, then it is possible to also understand why the military's pledge for free and fair elections is likely to remain an insubstantial one. Major security incidents like the sectarian riots continue to be used by the SCAF to justify greater crackdowns and could still lead to a suspension of elections at any point in time, especially if they feel they are not yet ready for elections set to take place in just over a month's time. Egypt's various opposition factions are starting to pick up on this trend and are making more visible their growing disillusionment with the military regime and this can be seen through the spate of new anti-military graffiti in Tahrir Square. However, it is important to also stress that there is now also a growing section of the Egyptian elite who are looking to the military to re-impose order so that they can resume business as usual and start making money again to restore the economy.</p>
THE WAY AHEAD:	<p>Although the SCAF's recent concessions may somewhat defuse tensions, Copts as well as other sympathetic groups can be expected to continue to stage rallies to denounce the earlier unrest. Additionally, gatherings against the SCAF should be anticipated following Friday prayers in Cairo and other major cities. The forthcoming 30 October 2011 date for the restart of the trial of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and former Egyptian Interior Minister Habib al-Adli, at the Cairo Criminal Court, is also expected to provide a trigger for protest. Meanwhile, the ongoing industrial action by low ranking police officials continues to rumble on from an initial 6,000 strong strike action held on 24 October 2011, which included protesters blockading a road in Cairo and a rally outside the interior ministry building, located near Tahrir Square. This has since spread to police stations around Egypt. The industrial action was launched to demand better working conditions, an end to military trials for members of the police, and the removal of all interior ministry members who were part of former president Hosni Mubarak's regime from senior posts, particularly Interior Minister Mansour El-Essawy. Heavy-handed tactics by the police fuelled the anger that led to the nationwide protests against the former president earlier this year. And when police lost control of the streets, the army was called in. In July 2011, 650 officers were dismissed, but activists said a deeper overhaul was needed, including training. Morale in the service has plunged and many low-ranking officers, who typically depended on tips or bribes to make up for their low salaries, feel aggrieved and as a result some protesting police personnel have stated that they will not participate in securing the 28 November 2011 parliamentary elections. This industrial action can be expected to continue in Cairo Alexandria and Suez, until the authorities reach an agreement with the protesting members.</p>

ISRAEL		SITUATION: Unchanged
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: MEDIUM
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: MEDIUM


SITUATION TO DATE:	<p>Israel has declared that, with US assistance, it has reached an agreement with Egypt to secure the release of Ilan Grapel. Grapel, who has dual Israeli and US nationality was arrested in Egypt in June 2011, when he was reportedly working for a non-profit group to help refugees. He is charged with spying for Israel, in addition to sedition and inciting protesters to violence. He is to be exchanged for twenty-five Egyptians, including three minors, held in Israeli jails. Although no date has been given for the release, officials said that they anticipate it will take place “within days”, suggesting that Grapel may become the second Israeli to be freed in October 2011, following the much publicised release of Gilad Shalit earlier this month. In contrast to that case, in which many of those released were convicted of involvement in deadly terror attacks, it is believed that none of the prisoners in the deal with Egypt are classified as security prisoners.</p>
THE WAY AHEAD:	<p>This agreement appears to provide further evidence of a low-key working relationship between Israel and Egypt’s transitional government, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, despite evidence of strained relations between the two since former President Hosni Mubarak was ousted in February 2011. Some of the most damaging incidents have included the storming of the Israeli Embassy in Cairo in September 2011, an attack which is said to have been motivated in part by anger over the killing of five Egyptian police officers in August 2011 by Israeli forces pursuing suspects believed to have been responsible for an attack in Eilat which killed eight people. Israel is conscious of the fact that, with Mubarak gone, the long-simmering popular Egyptian hostility against the Jewish state now has the opportunity to come to the fore, and thus, in a testament to the importance of a strong working relationship between the two countries, Israel took the rare step of apologising for the deaths. For its part, Egypt has described the prisoner swaps as part of its efforts to increase stability and security within the region. It also serves as a useful demonstration of Cairo’s influence in the region. Based on this pragmatic approach, relations between the two countries are expected to remain cordial in the coming months.</p>

JORDAN		SITUATION: Improvement
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: MEDIUM
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: MEDIUM


SITUATION TO DATE:	<p>There has been much focus this week on the restructuring of the Jordanian Government following the forced resignation of former Prime Minister, Marouf al-Bakhit on 17 October 2011. The new government, which is being led by Awn Khasawneh who has been tasked with bringing about political reform, was officially sworn in by King Abdullah II on 24 October 2011. Khasawneh proclaimed that he had decided to accept the position as he felt “that the situation was really turning dangerous in the country” and felt that if he failed to take on the role it would “slide and nosedive” and therefore it was “the right thing to do for my country”. His appointment has proved a popular move with the Jordanian people who view him as a political outsider that has managed to remain relatively untainted by the country’s widespread political corruption. Encouragingly, following the announcement of the new prime minister thousands took to the street in support calling Khasawneh “the reformer”.</p>
THE WAY AHEAD:	<p>Despite the initial optimism, Khasawneh’s prospects are far from certain. Traditionally, the Prime Minister’s role in the region has been as a buffer between the King and the people, meaning that in the past half-century it has been rare for a prime minister to remain in power for more than a year. How long Khasawneh lasts in the position will largely depend on how quickly he brings about the reforms promised by King Abdullah II in order to quell the unrest inspired by uprisings in other nations in the MENA region. Despite escaping much of the mass upheaval experienced elsewhere there have been some fundamental changes in Jordan. In particular, complaints about corruption have grown increasingly loud and any slight indication that Khasawneh has engaged in corrupt practices will be likely to instantly lose him the support of the people. Worryingly for King Abdullah II, in recent months the old taboo of openly criticising the monarchy in public is becoming less prevalent and another failed prime minister could be equally disastrous for his relatively strong grip on control.</p>

LEBANON		SITUATION: Deterioration
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: HIGH
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: HIGH


SITUATION TO DATE:	<p>Concerns continue to grow in Lebanon regarding the implications of the continued crackdown in neighbouring Syria on protesters by the regime of President Bashar al-Assad. Many of those fleeing persecution have sought refuge in Lebanon, however, as previously detailed in this report, there have been numerous reports of Syrian security forces crossing the border in Lebanon to pursue these member of the opposition. Lebanese people in the border area are now said to be in fear of the possibility of an eruption of violence, concerns which appear to be warranted given the lack of restraint being currently displayed by the Syrian forces. Substantiating these concerns, last week an incursion into the village of Qaa left two local residents, both of whom were reportedly Syrian, dead. In addition, a third Syrian man was reportedly killed in a raid on Aarsal, some ten kilometres away, in attacks which caused panic in the local population.</p>
THE WAY AHEAD:	<p>Lebanon and Syria share a porous 330-kilometre border which does not have an official demarcation, meaning that it is painfully easy for people to cross into neighbouring territory. Whilst requests have been made for the Lebanese army to increase its presence in the area, the country's response appears constrained by the dominant role that Shia militant group Hezbollah play in the coalition which comprises the Cabinet. Hezbollah is closely allied to the Syrian regime, and has remained notably silent on the issue of events across the border. In contrast both the UN and the US have condemned the incursions, which are being widely viewed in the international community as an effort by Damascus to prevent weapons smuggling and prevent dissidents and army defectors from moving out of their reach, ultimately convincing the opposition of the futility of attempting to seek refuge. Given Hezbollah's dominance in the government, and its impotence in the face of Syria, it is unlikely that the situation on the border will improve in the immediate future.</p>

SYRIA		SITUATION: Deterioration
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: HIGH
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: EXTREME


SITUATION TO DATE:	<p>On 26 October 2011, Umayyad Square in central Damascus saw up to 30,000 supporters of President Bashar al-Assad rally for his cause in what has become a weekly show of support organised by authorities. This show of perceived unity for the President came as millions of his opponents staged co-ordinated national strikes to mark an Arab league mission visit aimed at bringing the two sides together for talks. People in the central city of Homs and Deraa, both hotbeds of unrest against the regime, held a 1 million-strong general strike to protest al-Assad's crackdown against seven months of unrest. Meanwhile, in the latest attack in an armed insurgency emerging alongside the campaign of street protests, defected Syrian troops killed nine soldiers in an attack on a bus with a rocket-propelled grenade in the town of Hamrat, north of Homs, on 24 October 2011, whilst in a linked incident ten soldiers were killed during an attack on an armoured convoy at a roadblock in Maarat al-Noman, also in Homs. Despite this sporadic resistance recent pro-government gatherings in Damascus are a reminder that al-Assad continues to enjoy significant support in the city, making it difficult for the opposition to gain a stronghold in the protracted stalemate.</p>
THE WAY AHEAD:	<p>The regime has responded with a massive crackdown which has claimed more than 3,300 lives and with the authorities having to rely on brute force to maintain their grip on power; all amid increasing military defections and moves by opposition elements to take up arms. The outlook for the medium term is one of continued violence and political stalemate. At least forty-four people were killed across Syria between 19 - 21 October 2011, most in the Deir Baalaba district of the central Syrian city of Homs. Others also died in Deraa, Hama, Al-Qusayr, Homs province, and in Damir, on the outskirts of the capital Damascus. On 24 October 2011, fresh protests were held under the slogan: "It's your turn" (a reference to al-Assad aiming at forcing him out of power in the way Libyans ended the rule of Muammar Gaddafi). The Arab League delegation aims to open dialogue between al-Assad and his opponents to find a resolution to the crisis, but Damascus is denouncing the League's actions claiming the organisation is acting against Arab interests.</p>

IRAN		SITUATION: Unchanged
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: HIGH
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: HIGH


SITUATION TO DATE:	Iran's parliament began the impeachment process against two of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's ministers on 23 October 2011, in a new wave of pressure against his administration. Unhappy about the government's handling of a US\$2.8 billion bank fraud and other policy failings, fifty-one parliamentarians signed motions to start impeachment proceedings against Economy Minister Shamseddin Hosseini and Energy Minister Majid Namjou. The government has denied any link to the alleged bank fraud, but critics claim some senior members of the cabinet were involved, including the president himself, in what is being described as the country's biggest embezzlement. The central bank and the ministry of economy have removed four senior bankers in recent weeks as Tehran sought to protect these cabinet members.
THE WAY AHEAD:	Namjou, who oversees electricity and waters, but not the oil sector, was predicted to be the next of (any fall guys) to be blamed for the President's current combative stance towards the clerical elite, as he has already survived an impeachment motion in March 2011 by just one vote after his ministry failed to pay debts to contractors and power plants. The impeachment moves show the conservative-dominated parliament is determined to keep up pressure on Ahmadinejad who many hardliners accuse of being in the thrall of a "deviant current" of advisers seeking to undermine the authority of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. In June 2011, some 100 lawmakers signed an impeachment motion against Ahmadinejad but parliament's presiding board held back from proceeding with the complaint. Many analysts cite the reluctance being due to influence from Khamenei, who may be happy to have a weakened Ahmadinejad, but does not want the political upheaval of him leaving office with less than two years of his term left. The heightened pressure on Ahmadinejad comes as he prepares the ground for the forthcoming parliamentary election in March 2012, which can set the platform for the presidential poll in 2013, an event which is expected to see the power struggle escalate further in the coming months.

IRAQ		SITUATION: Deterioration
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: EXTREME
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: EXTREME


SITUATION TO DATE:	US President, Barak Obama, ended months of speculation on the 21 October 2011, by announcing that US troops would be withdrawn by the 31 December 2011, deadline. Currently, 39,000 US troops remain in Iraq, down from a peak of 165,000 in 2008. Obama declared rather optimistically that the US and Iraq were in "full agreement" on how to move forward, adding that the "US leaves Iraq with our heads held high". Unsurprisingly, the announcement did not see an end to the continued violence, with a spate of attacks targeting Iraqi traffic police on 24 October 2011. These included a suicide bomber in the west central Mansour district, and an incidence of gunmen opening fire on a group of traffic police near the Sarafiya Bridge in northern Baghdad. These incidents were followed by a number of explosions on 26 October 2011, in eastern Mosul, killing five and wounding a further twenty-two. Once again these attacks ask questions of the now confirmed strategy of US troop withdrawal and also demonstrate that despite security improvements, insurgents are still able to carry out coordinated attacks with relative ease.
THE WAY AHEAD:	Although the announcement was far from unexpected there had been some HOPE that around 5,000 US troops would be able remain behind in a training capacity, but, following a declaration from the Iraqi parliament that their residence would not come with diplomatic immunity, the proposition had become increasingly untenable. Further to this it was announced by the US Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction on 24 October 2011, that the US State Department lacks diligence and subsequently the current training programme is turning into a "bottomless pit". Also, the report highlighted well documented disagreements within the Iraqi Government which eventually led to a breakdown in negotiations between Washington and Baghdad. Iraqi Deputy Interior Minister Adnan al Asadi had told the inquiry that he questioned the program's benefits and viewed it as unnecessary. There is little doubt that the future of the region is now even more uncertain particularly without the presence of robust security forces.

BAHRAIN		SITUATION: Unchanged
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: MEDIUM
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: MEDIUM


SITUATION TO DATE:	The retrial proceedings for medical staff convicted of serious crimes arising from the country's March 2011 protests, reopened on 23 October 2011, and saw twenty doctors and nurses appear before the High Court of Appeal. The medical professionals are seeking to overturn a decision on 29 September 2011, which convicted them on charges including: weapons possession, inciting hatred against the regime, and "forcefully occupying" the capital Manama's main Salmaniya Medical Complex, where they worked. The medics argue that they were simply doing their jobs when they treated scores of injured protesters who were brought to the hospital over the course of weeks of demonstrations. If these charges are not overturned then mass protest action from all sections of the public may be expected. Meanwhile, the expected 23 October 2011, publication of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI)'s investigation into alleged human rights violations during anti-government protests throughout February-March 2011 has been delayed until 23 November 2011.
THE WAY AHEAD:	Anti-government rallies continue to be held in and around the capital Manama, which are receiving little to no international coverage at present. However, as a result of its opposition campaign, and last week's condemnation by the Bahraini Government, senior officials from the Al-Wefaq opposition party visited Egypt this week to meet with politicians, in order to gain regional allies and also to correct what they claim is the misconception that Bahrain's opposition is sponsored by Iran. Al-Wefaq deem such meetings to be strategically important to its future ability to be recognised as a key constituent of the political make up of Bahrain going ahead, as linking in with a variety of burgeoning democratic and Islamist factions in Cairo would potentially give them experience kick on. The governments have dismissed the importance of the trip and have instead blamed the group for instigating nightly clashes between police and Shi'ite villagers and other forms of civil disobedience, which it claims continue to damage the economy of the banking and tourism hub.

OMAN		SITUATION: Improvement
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: HIGH
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: MEDIUM


SITUATION TO DATE:	In a validation of Sultan Qaboos bin Said al-Said's decision to implement political reforms in his country, US based ratings agency Moody's has this week described the passage of powers to the elected parliament as "positive" for the Gulf state's credit rating. Previously, the Shura Council had the role of questioning ministers and advising the government on socio-economic issues but had no legislative power or role in defence, internal security or foreign policy. However, following rare protests in the country earlier this year, the Sultan has proposed a host of reforms, including that the Council be granted some legislative and regulatory powers. Whilst vague plans of this nature were mooted in April 2011, on 20 October 2011, they were formalised as the country's Basic Law was reformed to include the right for the Shura Council to propose laws and suggest changes to government regulations. Under the new legislative power given to the Council of Oman, henceforth, all legislations will have to go through the Council of Oman, unless it is not in session. The Sultan has also changed the rules over the law of succession: although, ultimately, the ruling family council are to choose the next Sultan (al-Said does not have any children), if they fail to come to a consensus, the Shura Council will play a role in confirming the country's next leader.
THE WAY AHEAD:	Observers consider that the Sultan's willingness to make reforms reduce the potential for discontent and further protests in the country, with reforms which enhance government accountability described as "credit positive". However, it has been the changes to the country's labour laws which appear to have been the most welcome: not only has the Sultan pledged to create 50,000 new public sector jobs and raise the minimum wage, he has also introduced social insurance and a two day weekend. The demands of the protesters remain relevant, as illustrated by the election of three activists in elections on 16 October 2011, however, the proposed reforms are widely viewed as positive. The increased government spending is expected to be funded by an anticipated increasing in oil revenue.

KUWAIT		SITUATION: Deterioration
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: LOW
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: LOW


SUMMARY:	<p>The British Embassy based in the Capital of Kuwait City, took the unexpected precaution of closing the Embassy on 19 October 2011, after they received notice of a significantly increased threat to the mission. Initially the exact nature of the threat remained undisclosed, other than the rather vague comment that “there is a general threat from Terrorism in Kuwait. Terrorists continue to issue statements threatening to carry out attacks in the Gulf region.” It was also declared that a threat to wider British interests could not be discounted. It has now been reported that the threat to which the embassy had been alerted was that terrorists may be planning to assassinate British diplomats. Having received the information the embassy had notified the country’s security authorities and demanded that they investigate the issue thoroughly. It was also suggested that a British delegation would shortly visit the country to discuss security issues with Kuwaiti officials “especially since there is evidence that some sleeper terrorist cells have links with al Qaeda.” Despite the continued threat to embassy staff it was re-opened on 23 October 2011, although it is likely that this will be under the proviso of increased security measures around the embassy as well as the increased use of special security for diplomats.</p>
-----------------	--

QATAR		SITUATION: Unchanged
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: LOW
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: LOW


SUMMARY:	<p>As Doha hosted a crucial meeting to discuss Libya's future on 26 October 2011, Qatar revealed for the first time that hundreds of its soldiers fought alongside Libyan rebel forces to depose Muammar Gaddafi. Previously Qatar said it had only lent air support to NATO-led operations to protect civilians during the eight-month uprising, however, a statement issued from Major General Hamad bin Ali al-Atiya said the Qataris had been running the training and communication operations and "had supervised the rebels' plans because they are civilians and did not have enough military experience, so we were the link between the rebels and NATO forces". Libya's interim leader Mustafa Abdel Jalil confirmed this, stating that Qatar had been “a major partner in all the battles we fought”. Meanwhile, the National Transition Council's (NTC) interim leader called for the NATO mission to continue until end of 2012 to stop Gaddafi loyalists from escaping, especially as Gaddafi's son and heir-apparent Seif al-Islam is believed to still at large, though the Western military alliance is keen to wind up its formal mission within days. Qatar was one of the first countries to recognise the NTC as the legitimate authority in Libya and supplied the anti-Gaddafi forces with water, weapons and more than US\$400m in aid. Qatar also provided help in marketing and selling Libyan oil.</p>
-----------------	--

UAE		SITUATION: Unchanged
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: MEDIUM
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: LOW


SUMMARY:	<p>On 23 October 2011, it was announced that a court in the UAE will issue its verdict in the trial of five activists accused of attempting to undermine public order and publicly “insulting” the country's president and top officials on 27 November 2011. Blogger Ahmed Mansoor and Nasser bin Gaith, who lectures at the Abu Dhabi branch of the Sorbonne University, were detained in April 2011 along with activists Fahid Salim Dalk, Hassan Ali Khamis and Ahmed Abdul Khaleq. They deny all the charges, and their supporters contend that their online commentary merely constituted “constructive criticism” of government policies. The defendants have thus far boycotted the trial, which has been dismissed as “more a political theatre than a trial” by the NGO Human Rights Watch, due to alleged mistreatment and have contested that they believe the outcome of the proceedings has been “predecided”. Due to its vast oil wealth and rapid growth, the UAE has been largely insulated from the political dissent which has swept the region since December 2010, and the small and very limited protests which did take place failed to gain momentum. However, there remain a number of issues in the country, including income inequality.</p>
-----------------	---

SAUDI ARABIA		SITUATION: Unchanged
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: MEDIUM
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: MEDIUM


SITUATION TO DATE:	The continued speculation as to who would succeed current ruler King Abdullah took a dramatic turn this week in Saudi Arabia, with the news that Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Saud, first-in-line, had finally succumbed to colon cancer on 22 October 2011. As was reported last week, the Crown Prince, who was in his eighties, had been experiencing significant health problems which had kept him in the US since June 2011. His funeral was held on 25 October 2011, and in a testament to both Saudi's and his status in the region the guestlist included: Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces chief Mohamed Hussein Tantawi and Sudanese President Omar al Bashir.
THE WAY AHEAD:	Debates as to who would succeed King Abdullah had already been rife following his recent trip to hospital, as many believed that following his chairing of the weekly cabinet meeting in Abdullah's absence, Prince Nayef, the kingdom's veteran Interior Minister, who had widely been regarded as second-in-line since he was named second deputy prime minister in 2009, would be the most likely candidate. This decision is still expected to be the outcome of what will be the first test of the thirty-four member 'allegiance council' which was introduced by Abdullah in 2006, with the aim of ensuring that the succession process would be a smooth one. Although the announcement of Nayef as successor appears to be essentially a foregone conclusion, other names that have been suggested as potential candidates include Prince Khaled bin Sultan, the son of the late crown prince who headed Saudi forces in the first Gulf War, and Riyadh Governor, Prince Salman, who is regarded as the most senior royal after the king and Nayef. Although it appears more likely that Salman, due to his status, will be named as second deputy prime minister, a job previously held by Nayef, making him second-in-line to the throne.

YEMEN		SITUATION: Deterioration
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: EXTREME
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: EXTREME


SITUATION TO DATE:	Nineteen people were killed in Sana'a between 25 – 26 October 2011, breaching a fresh but tentative cease-fire agreement between the Yemeni Government and dissidents shortly after it was announced. The pledge, the third ceasefire breached since May 2011, was made between government forces, troops allied to defected General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar and Hashid tribal leader Sadeq al-Ahmar with a cessation of hostilities scheduled to take effect from 1500hrs (local time) on 25 October 2011. However, President Ali Abdullah Saleh's forces continued to shell targets in the northern al-Hasaba and Sofan neighbourhoods killing three people, whilst at least seven people were also killed in the southern province of Taiz. After the fighting seemed to continue state television said that the truce was "stabilising" and that a mediation committee set up to negotiate the ceasefire was still "making contact with all parties". Government and rival forces were due to remove checkpoints and barricades set up throughout the capital as well as to exchange hostages kidnapped by both sides, which is yet to be seen. Yemeni troops loyal to Saleh have fired on crowds of protesters calling for his removal multiple times in the past week, killing almost forty people in total. Meanwhile Yemen's opposition coalition Common Forum called upon the UN to force Saleh to step down unconditionally on 26 October 2011, following Saleh's meeting with the US ambassador in Sana'a, in which he pledged to follow the GCC deal.
THE WAY AHEAD:	The continuing hostilities in the capital show that at this stage any concept of a ceasefire is unlikely to be successful due to violations from almost all actors despite it coming four days after a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution condemned the violence in Yemen and urged Saleh to sign a Gulf-brokered initiative that would see him leave office. Saleh continues to face an increasingly entrenched uprising against his rule and unless he makes clear progress towards genuinely stepping down, anti-regime demonstrations can be expected to maintain both their frequency and high levels of attendance in the capital, particularly in the al-Qaa district and Change Square, the epicentre of the nationwide movement calling for Saleh's resignation, as well as other urban centres such as Taiz and Aden.

LIBYA		SITUATION: Deterioration
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: EXTREME
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: EXTREME


SITUATION TO DATE:	<p>Reports on 26 October 2011 indicate that NATO has delayed its decision deadline on whether it will end its mission in Libya. NATO had been expected to finalise its plans on 26 October 2011, as to whether it should continue its bombing campaign in the conflict-ridden country now that the former reviled dictator Muammar Gaddafi is dead, and National Transitional Council (NTC) forces have officially declared the country “liberated” following the capture of Sirte. Initial reports suggest that NATO will end its patrol over Libya’s skies at the end of October 2011, in a significant step towards Libya’s democratic transition leading up to its elections, which are tentatively scheduled for 2013. The news comes after NTC officials asked NATO on 25 October 2011, to continue its mission in Libya for at least another month. Meanwhile, there has been renewed anxiety surrounding the ever-increasing number of Libyan weapons pouring into already unstable neighbouring African countries, with the New York-based Human Rights Watch the latest to draw attention to the issue. On 25 October 2011, the organisation said it spotted two sites near Sirte that contained thousands of unguarded weapons, including surface-to-air missiles (SAMs).</p>
THE WAY AHEAD:	<p>NATO is expected to be in Libya for the long haul as the country’s security situation looks increasingly fragile. Although NATO announced its desire to terminate its campaign by the end of October 2011, the NTC cannot proceed without at least some sort of Western assistance, especially as there continues to be an ever-increasing number of reports pointing to a massive weapons fallout across Africa. As shown by a recent Human Rights Watch report, which had repeatedly warned NTC leaders and NATO about Libya’s missing weapons, Libya’s transition is not over, and is creating a security nightmare for Africa in general. With pockets of pro-Gaddafi forces remaining along the Niger border, loyalists could use weapons such as SAMs to take down planes, or employ IEDs for use in car bomb attacks, mirroring tactics used in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those unhappy with the direction the NTC may take, either Islamists, secularists or rival tribal groups, could also easily use such weaponry to foil attempts at a peaceful democratic transition. Although NTC Chairman Mustafa Abdel-Jalil officially declared liberation on 21 October 2011, the news reaffirms the air of uncertainty in post-Gaddafi Libya. Businesses must therefore proceed with caution, as the country is not expected to become whole again for a while, a point reaffirmed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)’s announcement on 26 October 2011, that Libya’s economy will decrease by more than 50% in 2011.</p>

MOROCCO		SITUATION: Deterioration
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: MEDIUM
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: MEDIUM

SITUATION TO DATE:	<p>Nearly 4,000 unemployed youths held a second day of peaceful demonstration in the country’s business capital of Casablanca, demanding more public sector jobs, on 25 October 2011. The youths, who claimed to part of the “National Association of Jobless University Graduates”, staged a sit-in in front of Casablanca’s stock exchange, in a move echoing the “Occupy Wall Street” protests which have been undertaken throughout the world. On 23 October 2011, Moroccan youth, reportedly inspired by revolts in Tunisia and Egypt, organised a demonstration to demand stronger political reforms in a country headed by King Mohammed IV. Sources in Casablanca said that the demonstration was largely peaceful and lasted for nearly two hours before the protesters dispersed. The news comes amid news on 24 October 2011, that Morocco received 151 votes from the UN’s members in the first round of voting, more than the two-thirds needed, and will gain a seat in the rotating fifteen-member UN Security Council in January 2012. Morocco was reportedly praised for its support of democratic transition in North Africa.</p>
THE WAY AHEAD:	<p>Although Morocco has been singled out by the UN for its leadership in supporting democratic change in the Maghreb, it has a long way to go to confront rising tensions facing its own country. Currently, nearly one third of youths are unemployed in a country that already has high poverty rates, significant corruption, and a poor education system. Although King Mohammed IV reacted to the “Arab Spring” by passing a series of reforms which arguably lack substance, including those that delegate authority to locally elected officials, the king still has final say on all issues. As Moroccans gear up for parliamentary elections scheduled to take place on 25 November 2011, the on-going protests suggest that more unrest may be yet to come.</p>

ALGERIA		SITUATION: Deterioration
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: HIGH
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: MEDIUM

SITUATION TO DATE:	Spanish officials have asked the United Nations to assess the security situation facing Sahrawi refugee camps in western Algeria, after three aid workers, including one Italian and two Spanish nationals, were kidnapped in the region on 23 October 2011. On 25 October 2011, Spanish Foreign Minister Trinidad Jimenez said she believed a combined Maghreb region effort was necessary to help secure the release of the victims, all of whom were taken from a camp near Tindouf, Algeria. Tindouf is considered to be a hub of the Polisario Front, a group which seeks the independence of the disputed Western Sahara. Moroccan Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri agreed with Jimenez's assertion, saying that although al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) may have conducted the kidnappings, Algeria bore the brunt of the responsibility to improve its internal security issues. The news comes amid emerging reports which suggest that Algeria may be the next country to experience the "Libya effect", as many of its citizens are growing increasingly discontented by the corruption in the Abdelaziz Bouteflika regime, which has been in power since 1999.
THE WAY AHEAD:	The news that both Spanish and Moroccan officials have called on the Algerian Government to assist more in anti-terrorism campaigns only underscores the further isolation of Algeria within the Maghreb and Europe, as its neighbours appear to be increasingly resentful over the various decisions, or rather lack of decisions, that the Algerian leadership has made in recent months, including its choice to house members of Gaddafi's family, as well its determination to seek control over the disputed Western Sahara territory, which Morocco sees as its own. Additionally, in the past, several foreign actors, including the US, have repeatedly criticised Algeria for its perceived lack of concern with regards to the security threat that the Algerian-based AQIM, poses to the region, despite Algeria's attempts in recent months to ramp up its anti-terror campaign. The political fallout comes as there appears to be simmering political discontent facing the country, leading to the possibility that Algeria may be the subject of the next wave of a Maghreb revolution. Like Libya, Algeria is a North African oil-producing powerhouse, with the US purchasing about 30% of its crude-oil exports, accounting for 3.6% of total American petroleum imports in 2010. Additionally, as most of Algeria's natural gas headed to Europe, the Algerian Government is growing increasingly afraid that it will face a similar fate to that of Libya.

TUNISIA		SITUATION: Improvement
		EVACUATION RISK RATING: MEDIUM
		PERSONNEL RISK RATING: MEDIUM

SITUATION TO DATE:	As predicted by the Inkerman Group, Tunisia's Islamist party, al Nahda, has claimed victory in the country's first democratic elections since the fall of former leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in February 2011, a movement which sparked the beginning of the Arab Spring. After votes were tallied on 25 October 2011, Rached al Ghannouchi's al Nahda Party won the most votes, but fell short of capturing the majority. Al Nahda's main rival, the secular-based Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), has admitted defeat, however, al Nahda is expected to share power with the PDP and other organisations. The election saw an unprecedented 90% voter turnout in an event that is arguably the Maghreb's litmus test for democracy. On 24 October 2011, opinion polls showed that al Nahda was leading with between 20 and 30% of the vote. Reports indicate that there have been few security issues in the election. However, on 23 October 2011, some voters allegedly harassed Ghannouchi on his way to the polls, telling him to "go away" and calling him "a terrorist and an assassin".
THE WAY AHEAD:	The lack of serious violations during the election indicates that democracy is indeed possible in North Africa and the Middle East. However, looking ahead, there may still be some snags along the process of democratisation, as Tunisia's new assembly is expected to be deeply divided among secular and Islamic based groups, despite the fact that al Nahda had the largest number of votes—this is a situation facing many democracies around the world. This could pose a problem, as the assembly is expected to provide both legislative and executive authority. Although al Nahda will be the country's dominant party, it has declared its intention to work closely with its rivals. However, whether or not al Nahda remains true to its word remains to be seen.

DISCLAIMER

The contents of this Report are confidential and may also be privileged; any unauthorised disclosure, use or dissemination, either whole or partial, without the express permission, in writing, of the supplier, is prohibited. The contents of this document and any attachments do not constitute any commitment by the supplier, except where provided for in a written agreement between you and the originator. Whilst we undertake to use all reasonable care and skill in providing these services to our Clients, we cannot accept any liability for any losses suffered by the Client, where we have exercised such reasonable care and skill. In any event, the supplier does not accept liability for any consequential loss or damage of whatever sort, however caused to or incurred by the Client, in acting or relying upon any information provided to it by the Supplier and our liability is restricted solely to the restitution of our charges.

OPERATIONS CENTRE
INKERMAN HOUSE
3-4 ELWICK ROAD
ASHFORD KENT TN23 1PF

T + 44 (0) 1233 646940
F + 44 (0) 1233 646840

enquiries@inkerman.com
www.inkerman.com

THE INKERMAN GROUP
1 CORNHILL
LONDON EC3V 3ND

T + 44 (0) 20 7589 5338
F + 44 (0) 20 7589 5339

THE INKERMAN GROUP
AM MEERKAMP 17-19
40667 MEERBUSCH

T + 49 (0) 2132 968 5151
F + 44 (0) 2132 967 9582

REG IN ENGLAND NO: 3085655
VAT REG NO: 787297952
CONSUMER CREDIT LICENCE
NO: 420332
DATA PROTECTION: Z6511514