

# Geographic Snapshot: Near East



A summary of INFER forecasts on elections, diplomacy, and geopolitical events in the region.

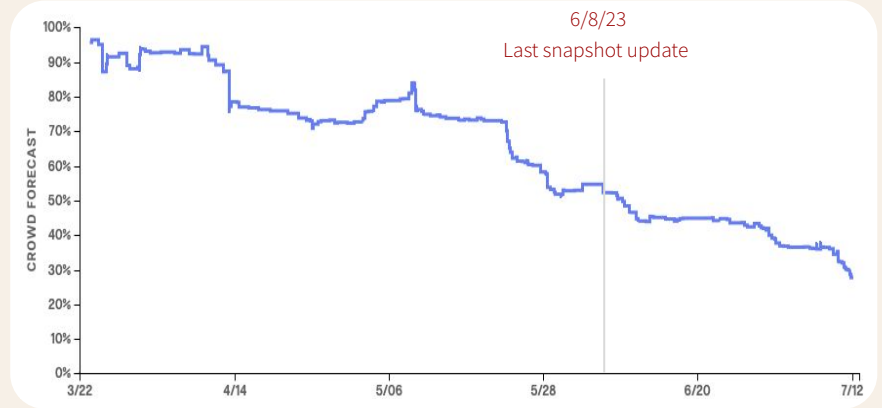
Data as of 13 July 2023

## Near East (Middle East and Northern Africa) Region

Will Egypt's urban inflation rate be greater than or equal to 40% for any month between March and August 2023?

**28%** chance

↓ **Down 24% from 6/8/23**  
Based on 258 forecasts

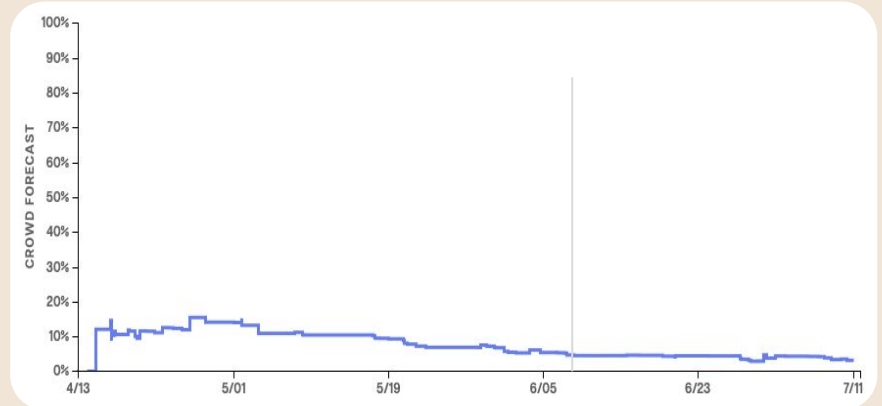


[See detailed forecast rationales](#) • [See consensus trend and crowd profile](#) • [Read blog post comparing forecaster and expert perspectives](#)

Will the value of 1 US Dollar equal or exceed 800,000 Iranian Rial on the open market (or 80,000 Toman, as reported on Bonbast) before 1 September 2023?

**3%** chance

↓ **Down 2% from 6/8/23**  
Based on 98 forecasts

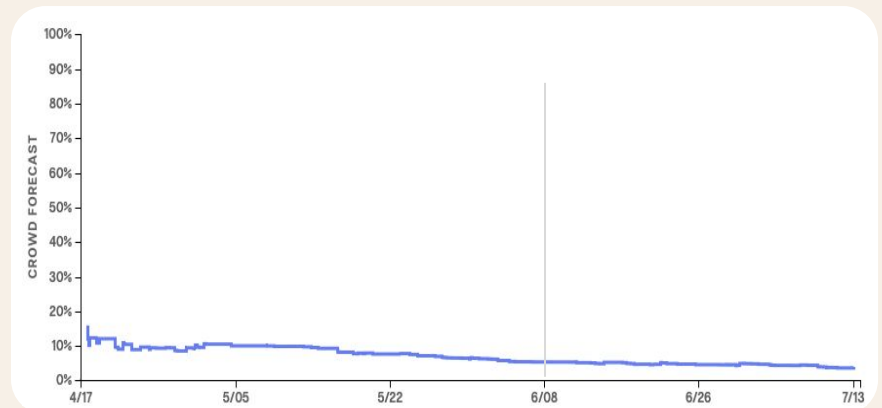


[See detailed forecast rationales](#) • [See consensus trend and crowd profile](#)

Will Ali Khamenei flee Iran or cease to be Supreme Leader before 1 March 2024?

**4%** chance

↓ **Down 1% from 6/8/23**  
Based on 173 forecasts



[See detailed forecast rationales](#) • [See consensus trend and crowd profile](#)

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A summary of INFER forecasts on elections, diplomacy, and geopolitical events in the region.

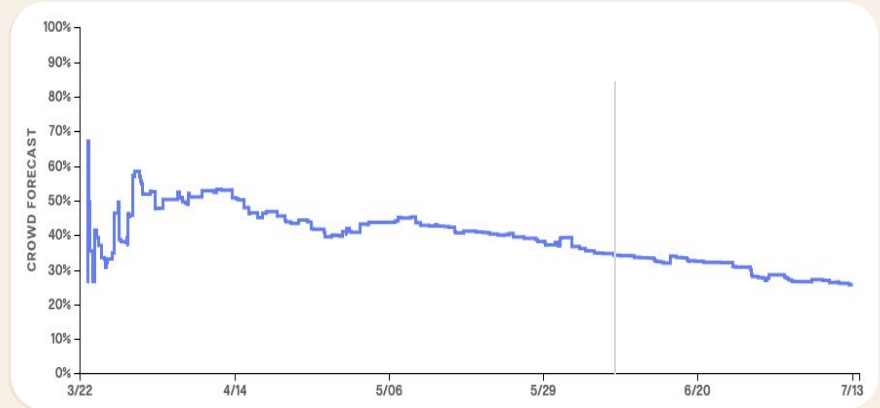
Data as of 13 July 2023

## Near East (Middle East and Northern Africa) Region

Will any listed Muslim-majority country sign an agreement establishing or normalizing diplomatic relations with Israel by 31 December 2023?

**26%** chance

↓ **Down 9% from 5/5/23**  
Based on 239 forecasts

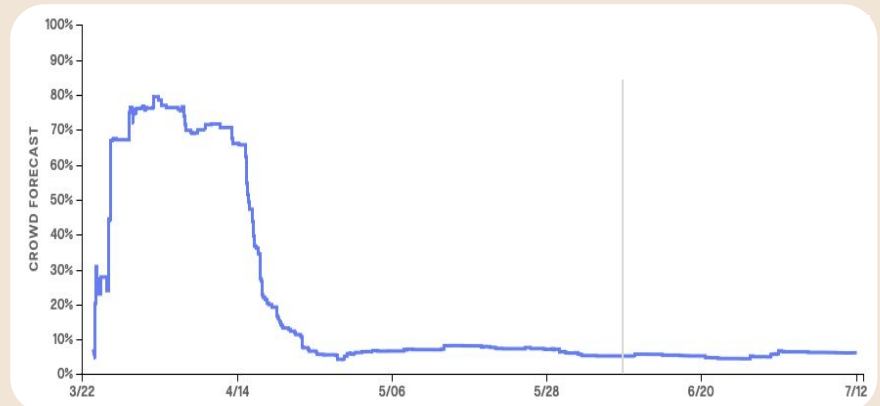


[See detailed forecast rationales](#) • [See consensus trend and crowd profile](#)

Will Israel and Sudan sign an agreement normalizing diplomatic relations by 31 December 2023?

**6%** chance

↑ **Up 1% from 5/5/23**  
Based on 351 forecasts

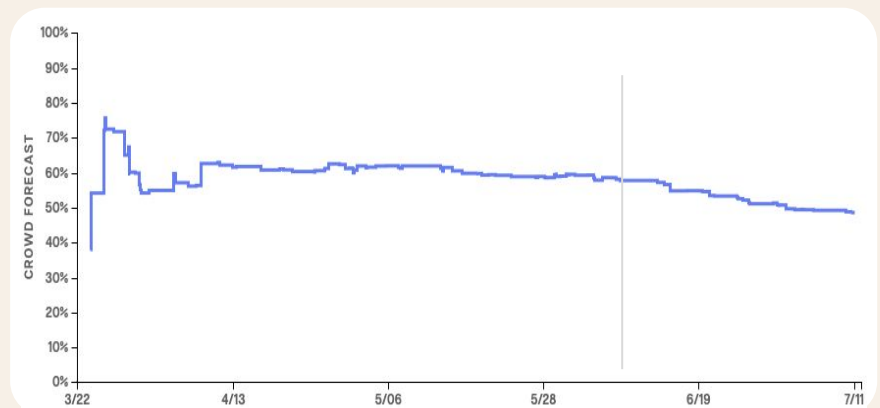


[See detailed forecast rationales](#) • [See consensus trend and crowd profile](#)

Will the Lebanese parliament elect a president by 31 December 2023?

**49%** chance

↓ **Down 9% from 5/5/23**  
Based on 128 forecasts



[See detailed forecast rationales](#) • [See consensus trend and crowd profile](#)

## APPENDIX: Forecaster Rationale Summaries

This section presents a high-level summary of forecasters' rationales for each question in the report, along with the crowd forecast and change in consensus since the last report (in parentheses). Rationales can be found in full by clicking “See detailed forecast rationales”, and a list of sources linked within rationales can be found by clicking “See source links”. The data in this report is from 1 June through 13 July 2023.

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Will Egypt's urban inflation rate be greater than or equal to 40% for any month between March and August 2023, inclusive?

**Crowd Forecast: 28% chance (+24%)** | [See detailed forecast rationales](#) | [See source links](#)

Higher probability forecasts discuss...	Lower probability forecasts discuss...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High inflation:</b> Inflation reached 32.7% in March 2023 and 35.7% in June 2023. Some forecasters believe only a moderate increase would be needed to reach 40%.</li> <li>• <b>Currency devaluation:</b> Egypt devalued its currency in March 2022. Currency devaluations often lead to higher inflation as imports become more expensive.</li> <li>• <b>Rising costs:</b> Food and energy prices have soared globally, putting upward pressure on Egyptian inflation.</li> <li>• <b>IMF bailout:</b> Egypt is in the midst of receiving an IMF bailout loan of \$3 billion to be delivered over a 46-month period, which may require steep economic reforms like subsidy cuts and currency devaluation that could rapidly increase inflation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Time constraints:</b> As of June 2023, the inflation rate was at 35.7%. Some forecasters believe a relatively significant spike would be necessary for the inflation rate to reach 40% by the end of August.</li> <li>• <b>Expert forecasts:</b> Trading Economics, Reuters, and other polls expect inflation to remain in the low to mid 30% range over the next few months.</li> <li>• <b>Economic policies:</b> Egypt has imposed price controls on some goods which could help limit price increases. The Egyptian Central Bank has expressed a commitment to containing inflation, and has tools such as interest rate hikes to do so.</li> <li>• <b>Falling costs:</b> Global food and energy prices have come down from their peaks, which could alleviate external inflationary pressure on Egypt.</li> </ul>
<p>Read detailed perspectives in the blog post "<a href="#">INFER forecasters: Egypt's inflation will get worse before it gets better</a>".</p>	

Will the value of 1 US Dollar equal or exceed 800,000 Iranian Rial on the open market (or 80,000 Toman, as reported on Bonbast) before 1 September 2023?

**Crowd Forecast: 3% chance (↑2%)** | [See detailed forecast rationales](#) | [See source links](#)

Higher probability forecasts discuss...	Lower probability forecasts discuss...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Crisis:</b> Unforeseen shocks, like a collapse in oil prices, a war or conflict in the region, a natural disaster, or another global recession could rapidly destabilize Iran's economy and impact the exchange rate.</li> <li>• <b>Economic instability:</b> Iran continues to face many economic challenges, including high inflation, revenue shortfalls, and political uncertainty that could further weaken its currency.</li> <li>• <b>Economic sanctions:</b> U.S. sanctions remain in place, limiting Iran's ability to trade in global markets and access foreign currency. This shortage of hard currency contributes to the Rial's weakness.</li> <li>• <b>Geopolitical uncertainty:</b> If nuclear negotiations collapse or tensions with the West rise again, it could negatively impact the Rial. Investors tend to shy away from Iranian assets during periods of heightened geopolitical risk.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Time:</b> The current exchange rate is around 50,000 Toman according to Bonbast. The exchange rate would have to change dramatically in a short period of time to reach 80,000 Toman by September.</li> <li>• <b>Economic conditions:</b> The Rial has been relatively stable recently and even gained some value. While inflation remains high, economic conditions in Iran have improved slightly, reducing the likelihood of a drastic devaluation of the Rial.</li> <li>• <b>Improving relations with the West:</b> Iran's relations with the West are improving, which could lead to increased trade and a stronger Rial. There is a possibility of a U.S.-Iran nuclear deal which could lift some sanctions and strengthen the Rial.</li> <li>• <b>Government action:</b> The Iranian government and central bank have tools to help stabilize the Rial, even if temporarily. While these tactics have not always been effective, they could prevent a drastic drop in value in the near-term.</li> </ul>

# Will Ali Khamenei flee Iran or cease to be Supreme Leader before 1 March 2024?

**Crowd Forecast: 4% chance (↑1%)** | [See detailed forecast rationales](#) | [See source links](#)

Higher probability forecasts discuss...	Lower probability forecasts discuss...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Health concerns:</b> Khamenei is 84 years old and has suffered from serious health issues. If his health deteriorates further, he may have to step down.</li> <li>• <b>Political discontent:</b> There have been protests against Khamenei's rule and calls for his removal — this could escalate into a crisis that forces him out of power.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staying power:</b> Dictators and authoritarian leaders today tend to have more staying power due to strategies like alienating minority populations and antagonizing democratic countries. Khamenei has pursued these tactics to ensure Iranians remain devoted to Islamic principles, clerical control, and his leadership.</li> <li>• <b>Political stability:</b> Khamenei appears to remain firmly in control of Iran; there have been fewer protests and less dissent in recent months.</li> <li>• <b>Seemingly stable health:</b> Khamenei's health seems stable, and he continues to make public appearances. As long as this continues, it is unlikely he will step down or lose power.</li> </ul>

## Will any listed Muslim-majority country\* sign an agreement establishing or normalizing diplomatic relations with Israel by 31 December 2023?

*\*The listed Muslim-majority countries are Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Brunei, Comoros, Djibouti, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Niger, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen.*

**Crowd Forecast: 26% chance (+9%)** | [See detailed forecast rationales](#) | [See source links](#)

Higher probability forecasts discuss...	Lower probability forecasts discuss...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Momentum from past agreements:</b> Some forecasts cite past normalization agreements like the Abraham Accords as evidence that momentum exists for further normalization agreements. There is hope that additional Muslim countries may follow the lead of UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco, which signed the Abraham Accords in 2020.</li> <li>• <b>Possibility of backchannel negotiations:</b> A few forecasts mention possible backchannel talks or negotiations already occurring, especially between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Some see the U.S. as likely pushing for a deal.</li> <li>• <b>Potential benefits:</b> Normalization could provide economic benefits and geopolitical realignment for Muslim countries that sign on. It could also advance Israel's goal of broader acceptance in the region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Israel's right-wing government:</b> The current Israeli government under Netanyahu is seen as too right-wing and anti-Palestinian to make normalization palatable for Muslim countries. Its actions are tarnishing relations.</li> <li>• <b>Souring regional attitudes:</b> Some mention the Abraham Accords are actually starting to fray, with countries like Morocco postponing or canceling meetings. Momentum has slowed.</li> <li>• <b>Passage of time:</b> Most forecasts cite the passage of time and current tensions between Israel and Palestine as reducing the chances of new normalization deals in the near future. Recent Israeli military operations in the West Bank have drawn condemnation.</li> </ul>

## Will Israel and Sudan sign an agreement normalizing diplomatic relations by 31 December 2023?

**Crowd Forecast: 6% chance (↑1%)** | [See detailed forecast rationales](#) | [See source links](#)

Higher probability forecasts discuss...	Lower probability forecasts discuss...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Economic incentives:</b> Sudan's struggling economy and need for aid and investment could motivate its leaders to normalize relations with Israel. This was a factor in the recent Abraham Accords. Access to Israeli agricultural technology and water management systems could help address Sudan's needs.</li> <li>• <b>Mutual benefits:</b> Normalization could increase economic cooperation and investment opportunities for both countries. Some forecasters argue it would solidify Israel's regional integration and provide security benefits for Sudan in countering arms trafficking.</li> <li>• <b>History of covert ties:</b> There is historical precedent for clandestine relations between Israel and Sudan dating back to the 1950s. Secret negotiations and Israeli delegations visiting Sudan suggest potential for future overt ties.</li> <li>• <b>Regional encouragement:</b> Regional powers like the UAE have encouraged Sudan's normalization with Israel, seeing it as a stabilizing factor for the region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Internal conflict:</b> The ongoing conflict in Sudan will likely need to be resolved before normalization is possible. However, it is possible that the conflict becomes more complex and prolonged instead.</li> <li>• <b>Negative attitudes towards Israel:</b> Powerful domestic opposition remains in Sudan to normalization from Islamist factions and the wider public. Polls show a majority still reject recognition of Israel.</li> <li>• <b>Israeli-Palestinian conflict:</b> Tensions over Israel's policies towards Palestinians have hardened anti-Israel views in Sudan and the wider Arab world, reducing its credibility as a partner in the region and making normalization more difficult.</li> <li>• <b>Complications with Iran and Saudi Arabia:</b> Normalization with Israel could complicate Sudan's relations with other regional powers, like Iran and Saudi Arabia. The potential renewal of ties between Sudan and Iran in particular could complicate Sudan's relationship with Israel and make normalization less likely.</li> </ul>



## Will the Lebanese parliament elect a president by 31 December 2023?

**Crowd Forecast: 49% chance (+9%)** | [See detailed forecast rationales](#) | [See source links](#)

Higher probability forecasts discuss...	Lower probability forecasts discuss...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>External pressure:</b> There is increasing pressure from Iran and the militant group Hezbollah for Lebanon to elect a president and resolve the political deadlock.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Numerous failures:</b> The parliament has already failed numerous times to elect a president, suggesting deep divisions and dysfunction.</li> <li>• <b>Passage of time:</b> The passage of time without any progress reduces the chances a president will be elected.</li> <li>• <b>Lack of consensus:</b> No candidate has been able to secure the required parliamentary votes due to the conflicting interests of different political blocs. Ongoing economic crisis and political paralysis make compromise even more difficult.</li> </ul>

## B. The Forecasters

The forecasters who have participated thus far in these questions have the following profile:

- 131 total forecasters
- 51% are “INFER Pros” - participants in INFER’s Pro Forecaster Program, who were selected based on their accuracy track record of at least 1 year on INFER or other similar forecasting sites or programs.

### Demographics

Country	Ratio
USA	44%
Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand	10%
Europe	19%
Latin America, Caribbean	13%
Asia	12%
Africa	2%

## C. Report Methodology

Rationales of INFER forecasters have been selected and summarized by Claude, an AI assistant tool created by Anthropic. To build the rationale summaries presented in this report, we provided forecasts (probabilities and narrative rationales) to Claude to summarize into bulleted lists of arguments. We then manually edited the bulleted summaries for accuracy and readability to ensure that each list item accurately represented forecasters' rationales and was assigned to the proper list.

Each question in the report also includes links to the crowd forecasts, rationales, and source links used by forecasters.