



# MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

## GÜNLÜK ORTADOĞU BÜLTENİ

**Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries**

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

**The Restructuring Proces of Iraq**

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

**Energy Security**

Enerji Güvenliği

**Economy News**

Ekonomi Haberleri

**Peace Process**

Barış Süreci

**Ethnic and Secterian Groups**

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

**Non State Actors**

Devlet-dışı Aktörler

**Relations with the West**

Batı'yla İlişkiler

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**05 JANUARY 2018**

**NO: 2518**

<b>1. IRAQ.....</b>	<b>4</b>
• Suhail: Trans-Sectarian Alliances Will Be After the Elections Not Before .....	4
• U.K. describes Mosul liberation as the 2nd fiercest battle after World War II .....	4
• France's Macron Calls on Iraq to Disarm Hashd al-Shaabi .....	4
• Judge orders potential release of hundreds of illegals from Iraq .....	4
• Electoral commission says 296 billion IQD are needed to hold elections.....	5
• 9 people killed and wounded in explosions in Baghdad .....	5
• Iraq to set up joint parliamentary panel with Kurds .....	5
• Iraqi PM meets with Kurdish delegation in Baghdad .....	6
• More than half of Iraq's displaced have returned home .....	6
• Iraq PM Plans to Disarm Militias, Reduce Numbers by Half .....	6
• Railway: 2018 will see a new start with neighboring countries .....	6
• Iraqi forces and Hashd begin large anti-ISIS operation around Kirkuk By Rudaw 18 hours ago..	7
• U.S. Firms Interested In Boosting Oil, Gas Presence in Iraq .....	7
• UK defense minister in Baghdad to meet Iraqi officials .....	7
<b>2. SYRIA.....</b>	<b>8</b>
• ISIS offensive to capture key base, town in southwest Syria backfires terribly.....	8
• Syria forces attack militants' position in Idlib Governorate .....	8
• Iran has invested \$1 billion in Syria, IDF chief says .....	8
• UN sounds alarm on Syria violence .....	9
• North Korea Built a Nuclear Reactor for Syria (And Israel Destroyed It) .....	9
• Russia Confirms Syria Attack But Denies Seven Aircraft Got Destroyed As Photos Emerge.....	9
• UK must do more to help Syria - even if that means conceding to Putin, says charity adviser	10
• 70,000 reasons why Assad has no place in Syria's future .....	10
<b>3. IRAN.....</b>	<b>10</b>
• Iranian stocks see sharp decline after protests .....	10
• Iranian diplomat charges US with inciting protests .....	11
• Iran deploys Iraqi Mobilization Forces, Afghan mercenaries to quell protests .....	11
• Iranian army commander offers to help police suppress unrest .....	11
• Tabriz 2018 to boost Iran, regional development: Minister .....	11
• Russia warns US against interfering in Iran's affairs .....	12
• Time to Wake Up: Viewing the Protests From Inside Iran .....	12
• Iran: Security, Information Blockade to Quell Protests.....	12
• Security Council Holds an Extraordinary Meeting on Iran .....	13
<b>4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE.....</b>	<b>13</b>
• Palestinians slam Israel bill to execute 'terrorists' .....	13
• Gaza residents to pay Israel for electricity .....	13
• Israeli military police open formal investigation into killing of Abu Thurayya.....	13
• Israeli forces violently raid Bethlehem refugee camp, injure 10, including child .....	14
• Under Trump: US Aid to Palestine Hits All Time Low in 10 Years .....	14

• Mauritanian parliamentary group calls on Trump to reverse decision on Jerusalem .....	14
• India Cancels \$500m Deal with Israel, Opts for \$72m worth of Missiles Instead .....	14
• Samidoun in occupied Palestine highlights steadfastness under interrogation .....	15
<b>5. JORDAN and LEBANON.....</b>	<b>15</b>
• Hezbollah 'ready' if war is waged against them: Nasrallah.....	15
• Hezbollah leader ridiculed after he reveals \$1300 monthly salary from Iran.....	15
• Many Lebanese companies want to invest in Syria, Lebanese Ambassador says.....	16
• Lebanon Reopens Entrances to Downtown Beirut after 4 Years of Closure.....	16
• Mulki, Dutch defence minister discuss defence ties .....	16
• Geagea Slams Nasrallah for 'Acting as if There's No Lebanese State' .....	16
• Derian, Yaacoub tackle bilateral realtions.....	17
<b>6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA.....</b>	<b>17</b>
• Yemeni Official: The Situation in Iran Will Negatively Affect Houthis.....	17
• US returns Saudi Arabia to list of countries of concern .....	17
• Saudi Arabia says missile intercepted near Yemen border .....	18
• UN Migration Agency Helps 2,241 Migrants Get Home from Yemen in 2017 .....	18
• Iranian firm to export pharmaceuticals from Turkey to Qatar .....	18
• Sudan's VP hails Qatar's role in Darfur peace January 04 2018 11:41 PM .....	19
• Al-Wefaq condemns arrest of Shia cleric in Bahrain.....	19
• No money, no visa, no passport: 3,000 unpaid Indian workers stranded in Kuwait .....	19
<b>7. EGYPT.....</b>	<b>20</b>
• Egypt detains 75 people in human trafficking probe .....	20
• Sudan recalls its ambassador from Egypt amid tensions .....	20
• UAE-backed Egyptian forces arrive in Eritrea.....	20
• Former PM Ahmed Shafiq returns to his home: National Movement Party spokesperson .....	21
• Tajikistan-Egypt relations mulled .....	21
• Russia agrees to resume commercial flights to Egypt.....	21
• Shoukry in Amman to tackle Jerusalem's developments.....	21
<b>8. NORTH AFRICA.....</b>	<b>22</b>
• UAE, Tunisia continue flights, end row over women .....	22
• Anger after Amazigh activist abducted in Libya by forces loyal to Khalifa Haftar .....	22
• AFRICOM Warns Against Jihadists Attack Targeting Libyan Oil .....	22
• FLN party supports Charter on Public-Private Partnership .....	23
• Access to Information Act: The Home Stretch Till the Passing of the Bill .....	23
• Samira Chaouachi rejects UPL presidency .....	23
• Education official in east Libya murdered .....	23
<b>9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN .....</b>	<b>24</b>
• US suspends security assistance to Pakistan because of Haqqani network .....	24
• Pakistan says US military aid suspension 'counterproductive' .....	24
• Death toll from Kabul suicide bombing rises to 20 .....	24
• US-Pakistan relations cannot 'bear weight of contradictions,' US official says .....	25
• Imran criticises government over US aid cut, questions PM's role.....	25
• Residents Claim 10 Civilians Killed In Jawzjan Airstrike.....	25

• Georgian soldiers conduct exercise in Afghanistan .....	26
<b>10. TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST.....</b>	<b>26</b>
• At least 26 Daesh-linked suspects arrested in Turkey.....	26
• Turkey ready for cooperation to clamp down on foreign fighters.....	26

## 1. IRAQ

- **Suhail: Trans-Sectarian Alliances Will Be After the Elections Not Before**

The head of the Parliamentary Commission on Reconciliation and Accountability Hisham al-Suhail said "the alliances of blocs trans-sectarian will be after the elections not before." He told the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / "The alliances of the coming period are still in dialogues and did not identify any map of new alliances and we believe there is an intention to find alliances are different from the alliances of the previous period."

More Details:

[http://www.ninanews.com/News\\_Details.aspx?%252b1KkWEeegy6CksRGjShhJA%253d%253d](http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?%252b1KkWEeegy6CksRGjShhJA%253d%253d)

- **U.K. describes Mosul liberation as the 2nd fiercest battle after World War II**

U.K. Secretary of State for Defense Gavin Williamson stressed on Thursday his country's commitment to maintaining Iraq's security and stability and completing its reconstruction process as soon as possible. Speaking at a press conference in Baghdad following a meeting with his Iraqi counterpart Erfan al-Hiyali, Williamson said the liberation of Mosul from Islamic State was the second fiercest battle after the World War II.

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/u-k-describes-mosul-liberation-2nd-fiercest-battle-world-war-ii/>

- **France's Macron Calls on Iraq to Disarm Hashd al-Shaabi**

French President Emanuel Macron has called on Baghdad to disarm the Shi'ite militias of Hashd al-Shaabi, who are closely linked to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Marking the New Year during a speech to diplomats of his country on Thursday, Macron emphasized on the necessity of stripping all the militia groups of weapons to ensure the return of stability to Iraq, as reported by Kurdistan 24.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/404840>

- **Judge orders potential release of hundreds of illegals from Iraq**

A federal judge in Michigan has ordered the government to give bond hearings in preparation for releasing hundreds of illegal immigrants from Iraq into the community, saying the Constitution protects them from indefinite detention in the U.S. U.S. District Judge Mark A Goldsmith, an Obama appointee, earlier had halted deportations for nearly 300 Iraqis, saying that although they had long



been ordered removed, conditions on the ground in Iraq had changed and they deserved new hearings.

More Details:

[http://www.shafaaq.com/en/En\\_NewsReader/7cad6a91-bc78-4d85-a862-40a6903454b7](http://www.shafaaq.com/en/En_NewsReader/7cad6a91-bc78-4d85-a862-40a6903454b7)

- **Electoral commission says 296 billion IQD are needed to hold elections**

The electoral commission needs 296 billion IQD, to be able to hold the elections on schedule next May, Head of Independent Electoral Commission, Maan Abdul Hantoush said on Thursday. The Commission will receive the amount during this month, he added. The Commission will set a schedule of logistics operations and create the security conditions for the date set by the Council of Ministers in may according to the agreement, he further said.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/21909/Electoral-commission-says-296-billion-IQD-are-needed-to-hold-elections>

- **9 people killed and wounded in explosions in Baghdad**

One person was killed and eight others wounded in two separate explosions in Latifiya and Duanem in Baghdad. An Iraqi security source said that an explosive device exploded near the industrial neighborhood in Latifiya, south of Baghdad, killing one civilian and wounding three others, while five people were wounded in another bomb explosion in the area Duanem southwest of the capital.

More Details:

<https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/04/01/2018/9-people-killed-and-wounded-in-explosions-in-Baghdad>

- **Iraq to set up joint parliamentary panel with Kurds**

Iraq will set up a parliamentary committee to resolve disputes with its Kurdish region including control over border crossings and sharing of oil revenue, a member of Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi's ruling bloc has said. "The two sides are about to form a seven-member committee, including five members from Baghdad and two others from Kurdistan. The committee will review all controversial issues between the two sides," an MP of the Shiite National Alliance told the pan-Arab newspaper Asharq Al Awsat.

More Details:

<https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/iraq-to-set-up-joint-parliamentary-panel-with-kurds-1.692852>

- **Iraqi PM meets with Kurdish delegation in Baghdad**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Thursday met with representatives of Kurdish political parties for the first time since September's illegitimate poll on Kurdish regional independence. According to an Iraqi government statement, the Kurdish delegation included representatives of the Movement for Democracy and Justice and the Gorran and Komel parties, all of whom had been opposed to the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG)'s ill-fated poll in September.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/iraqi-pm-meets-with-kurdish-delegation-in-baghdad/1022785>

- **More than half of Iraq's displaced have returned home**

More than half of Iraqis displaced by conflict to other parts of the country have returned to their homes, the U.N. migration agency said Thursday. At the end of December, more than 3.2 million displaced Iraqis had gone home while 2.6 millions still lived away, the International Organization for Migration said. Iraqi forces have regained large swaths of the country from Daesh (ISIS) since the militants seized them in 2014, sending tens of thousands running for their lives.

More Details:

<https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2018/Jan-05/432523-more-than-half-of-iraqs-displaced-have-returned-home.ashx>

- **Iraq PM Plans to Disarm Militias, Reduce Numbers by Half**

Reuters is quoting Iraqi military officials who say that Prime Minister Hayder Abadi has hatched a plot aimed at greatly reducing the size and strength of Shi'ite militias in the country by tricking them out of heavy arms, a plot which probably is going to be greatly complicated by the fact that it's been publicized. Sources say the army is currently inventorying the heavy arms in the hands of the assorted militia forces and the plan is to take a bunch of those arms under the pretext of them needing "repairs" after the ISIS fight, and then just never giving them back.

More Details:

<http://news.antiwar.com/2018/01/04/sources-iraq-pm-plans-to-disarm-militias-reduce-numbers-by-half/>

- **Railway: 2018 will see a new start with neighboring countries**

The Director General of the Iraqi Railway Department, one of the formations of the Ministry of Transport, on Thursday, that the year 2018 will see a new and distinct start of the Iraqi Railway with a number of neighboring countries to serve the movement between Iraq and those countries with regard to passengers and goods. "At the request of the Iraqi-Saudi Coordinating Committee and the

Transport, Border and Ports Committee headed by Minister of Transport Kazem Al-Hamami, we have identified the initial route to link the railway plan from the Samawa railway station to the Saudi border. The commission assigned Iraqi engineers and surveyors, Specifications and requirements and that the project is feasible on the ground. ”

More Details:

<http://en.economiciraq.com/2018/01/04/railway-2018-will-see-a-new-start-with-neighboring-countries/>

- **Iraqi forces and Hashd begin large anti-ISIS operation around Kirkuk By Rudaw 18 hours ago**

A joint Iraqi operation to clear remaining ISIS elements in southern and western Kirkuk province as well as surrounding areas is underway on Thursday involving Iraqi armored divisions, the air force, and Iran-backed Hashd al-Shaabi paramilitary forces (PMF). Karim Nuri, a commander of the Shiite Hashd al-Shaabi, told Rudaw that the limited military operation is to clear the areas in question of ISIS militants as the group recently launched a series of attacks.

More Details:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/04012018>

- **U.S. Firms Interested In Boosting Oil, Gas Presence in Iraq**

U.S. companies are eager to strengthen bilateral cooperation with Iraq in all industry sectors, especially in oil and gas, the Iraqi Ministry of Oil said on Thursday after U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Douglas Silliman, met with Iraq Oil Minister Jabbar Al-Luiebi. Al-Luiebi invited U.S. companies to take part in tenders called by the Iraqi oil ministry, and said that Iraq was preparing more favorable work conditions for foreign companies investing and doing business in Iraq.

More Details:

<https://oilprice.com/Latest-Energy-News/World-News/US-Firms-Interested-In-Boosting-Oil-Gas-Presence-In-Iraq.html>

- **UK defense minister in Baghdad to meet Iraqi officials**

Iraq and the U.K. on Thursday penned an agreement to enhance military relations, according to Iraq's Defense Ministry. British Secretary of State for Defense Gavin Williamson arrived in Baghdad earlier Thursday to discuss bilateral security cooperation with Iraqi officials. The military cooperation deal was concluded during a meeting between Williamson and his Iraqi counterpart, Irfan al-Hayali.

More Details:



<http://aa.com.tr/en/europe/uk-defense-minister-in-baghdad-to-meet-iraqi-officials/1022667>

## 2. SYRIA

- **ISIS offensive to capture key base, town in southwest Syria backfires terribly**

An attempt by Islamic State-affiliated militants to capture a key town and base in southwestern Syria from rebel forces has backfired battle despite initially making good progress. According to reports, on Thursday, units of the ISIS-linked Jaysh Khalid ibn al-Walid (also called the Saifullah al-Maslul Army) militant group attempted to capture the town of Ash-Sheikh Saye'ed and its nearby army artillery base (abandoned by Syrian forces years ago) from Free Syrian Army rebels in southwestern Daraa province.

More Details:

<https://www.almazdarnews.com/article/isis-offensive-capture-key-base-town-southwest-syria-backfires-terribly/>

- **Syria forces attack militants' position in Idlib Governorate**

The Syrian government army has liberated six settlements in the southeast of the Idlib Governorate from the Al-Nusra Front terrorists, reported Al Mayadeen TV. According to Al Mayadeen, the soldiers have captured the strategic heights in Umm Ar Rajim village and are pursuing the adversary.

More Details:

<https://news.am/eng/news/429784.html>

- **Iran has invested \$1 billion in Syria, IDF chief says**

Iran has invested billions of dollars in Syria and hundreds of millions of dollars in Iraq to expand its influence in the region, Israeli state television reported IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot as saying Tuesday. Lebanon's Hezbollah allegedly receives between 700 million dollars and 1 billion dollars annually from Iran, the general said. In exchange, the militant Shia Islamist organisation has agreed to devote 40% of its resources to operations of interest to Iran in Syria and Yemen. Eisenkot claimed Iran also has over 2,000 advisors and experts as well as 10,000 Shia combatants in Syria.

More Details:

<https://en.insidesyriamc.com/2018/01/04/iran-has-invested-1-billion-in-syria-idf-chief-says/>

- **UN sounds alarm on Syria violence**

The United Nations humanitarian wing and its partners in Syria on Wednesday expressed deep concern about the protection and well-being of tens of thousands of civilians in north-eastern Hama and southern Idlib governorates, following increased hostilities, which have reportedly resulted in scores of deaths and injuries and displacement in the area. A UN spokesperson said seven people were reportedly killed and at least 18 people injured after an air strike hit the Khan Elsobol town in Idlib. On the same day, 25 people were reportedly injured and several shops and facilities were damaged when shelling hit the main vegetable market in Jisr-AshShugur city in western rural Idlib.

More Details:

<http://www.manilatimes.net/un-sounds-alarm-syria-violence/372261/>

- **North Korea Built a Nuclear Reactor for Syria (And Israel Destroyed It)**

Under no circumstances should an enemy state be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons. That is a fundamental doctrine of Israel's security policy shaped by Prime Minister Menachem Begin at the end of the 1970s. To this day, Jerusalem has tried to act accordingly – mainly in regard to Iran. For many years, military analysts around the globe have speculated about an Israeli air strike against the Iranian nuclear facilities.

More Details:

<http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/north-korea-built-nuclear-reactor-syria-israel-destroyed-it-23922>

- **Russia Confirms Syria Attack But Denies Seven Aircraft Got Destroyed As Photos Emerge**

The Russian Ministry of Defense has acknowledged an attack on its Khmeimim air base in Syria, but has disputed key details from an initial report, denying that seven aircraft had been destroyed in the incident. At the same time, unconfirmed pictures have begun emerging on social media showing significant damage to at least one Su-24 Fencer attack plane. On Jan. 4, 2017, the Russia's Ministry of Defense, by way of state-run media outlet TASS, said militants had attacked Khmeimim, also known as Hmeimim or Hmeymim, and killed two Russian service members in the process.

More Details:

<http://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/17365/russia-confirms-syria-attack-but-denies-seven-aircraft-got-destroyed-as-photos-emerge>

- **UK must do more to help Syria - even if that means conceding to Putin, says charity adviser**

The UK is not doing enough to save the sick and injured in besieged Syria and should be prepared to concede some political ground to Russia in order to do so, says a leading charity figure. Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, who is involved in the negotiations to evacuate sick children from besieged Syria, has called on the UK prime minister and foreign secretary to do more to safeguard the lives of civilians and medics.

More Details:

<https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/uk-must-do-more-to-help-syria-even-if-that-means-conceding-to-putin-says-charity-adviser-1.692910>

- **70,000 reasons why Assad has no place in Syria's future**

Barrel bombs are old containers filled with crude explosives and shrapnel that explode on impact. As instruments of terror, they are a cheap, crude and effective way of killing and maiming at random in places packed with humanity. It comes as little surprise that Bashar Al Assad has made extensive use of barrel bombs to terrorise and subdue Syrians. According to a report published this week by the independent Syrian Network of Human Rights, the regime in Damascus dropped nearly 70,000 barrel bombs between July 2012 and December last year. At least 10,763 Syrians, many of them children, have lost their lives to these flying killing machines.

More Details:

<https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/editorial/70-000-reasons-why-assad-has-no-place-in-syria-s-future-1.692875>

### 3. IRAN

- **Iranian stocks see sharp decline after protests**

The Tehran Stock Exchange saw its sharpest fall in more than one year following the protests, according to Iranian daily Dunya-yi Iqtisad (World Economy) on Thursday. The stock exchange had an upward trend before the start of the protests in the country and it fell two percent in just one week, the daily reported.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/iranian-stocks-see-sharp-decline-after-protests/1022733>

- **Iranian diplomat charges US with inciting protests**

Iran has accused the US of "inciting" anti-government protests that have gripped the country, and said the Trump administration had "flouted" international law and the principles of the UN charter by supporting the unrest in a series of "absurd tweets". In a letter sent to Antonio Guterres, UN secretary-general, on Wednesday, Gholamali Khoshroo, the Iranian ambassador to the UN, said the US had "crossed every limit" by "inciting Iranians to engage in disruptive acts".

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/iranian-diplomat-charges-inciting-protests-180104081813194.html>

- **Iran deploys Iraqi Mobilization Forces, Afghan mercenaries to quell protests**

Sources in Ahwaz told Al Arabiya.net that Iran has deployed members of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization forces to suppress the ongoing anti-regime protests. According to sources, they have been deployed alongside Iran's Revolutionary Guards and security forces in the streets of Abadan and Khorramshahr and in Al-Thawra neighborhood in Ahwaz.

More Details:

<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2018/01/04/Iran-deploys-Iraqi-mobilization-forces-Afghan-mercenaries-to-quell-protests.html>

- **Iranian army commander offers to help police suppress unrest**

Iran's army chief declared on Thursday that police had already quelled anti-government unrest that has killed 21 people but that his troops were ready to intervene if needed, as Tehran staged more pro-government rallies. The protests, which seem spontaneous and without a unifying leader, erupted a week ago in Iran's second city of Mashhad over economic hardships - mostly high youth unemployment, costly living standards and alleged corruption.

More Details:

<https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/04/01/2018/Iranian-army-commander-offers-to-help-police-suppress-unrest>

- **Tabriz 2018 to boost Iran, regional development: Minister**

Tabriz 2018 will provide the opportunity to introduce Iran's culture and literature to the world, and will contribute to Iran and the region's development, Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance said. 'Tabriz was chosen as the tourism capital of the Muslim World for 2018 by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) since it has been a symbol of Islam and it is regarded as the

first capital city of the Shia Muslim world,' Abbas Salehi said at the inauguration ceremony of Tabriz 2018 event attended by a number of foreign ambassadors and Iranian officials.

More Details

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82786195>

- **Russia warns US against interfering in Iran's affairs**

Moscow on Thursday urged the US not to intervene in the domestic affairs of Iran amid protests against the government. "We warn the US against attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov told official news agency TASS.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180104-russia-warns-us-against-interfering-in-irans-affairs/>

- **Time to Wake Up: Viewing the Protests From Inside Iran**

One outcome of recent protests in Iran has been a blizzard of commentary. Poking their heads up are the "Iran experts" that sit in comfy squishy chairs behind prestigious think tank desks bought with money from Saudi Arabia, the Israeli Lobby, and the warmongering industry. Alongside these are the tired delusional bleats from the Rajavi and Pahlavi cults, which are always guaranteed to be out of touch with reality. Mixed in with this crowd are the "regime change" cheerleaders and the pissed off losers that backed the anti-Assad "opposition-terrorists" who see an opening to punish Iran for its success in Syria. If you don't want to get blinded in this blizzard make sure to identify whose axe the commentator is sharpening and then ignore what they have to say.

More Details:

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/01/05/time-to-wake-up-viewing-the-protests-from-inside-iran/>

- **Iran: Security, Information Blockade to Quell Protests**

As protests in Iran entered their second week on Thursday, authorities escalated their security and information blockade to quell anti-government marches, informed local sources said. The UN Security Council is meeting on Friday to discuss Iran, after a US request for a special meeting on the protests.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1133886/iran-security-information-blockade-quell-protests>

- **Security Council Holds an Extraordinary Meeting on Iran**

United Nations Security Council will hold on Friday an extraordinary meeting at the request of Washington to discuss the wave of demonstrations that began in Iran on December 28. The United States made on Thursday a formal request for the extraordinary meeting.

More Details:

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewfullstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1705691>

#### 4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Palestinians slam Israel bill to execute ‘terrorists’**

Palestinians have reacted angrily to an Israeli draft law -- a preliminary reading of which was approved on Wednesday -- that would allow Palestinian “terrorists” to be sentenced to death. Palestinian officials say the bill aims to provide legal cover for Israel’s brutal repression of Palestinian rights. Proposed by Israel’s far-right Yisrael Beiteinu party, a first reading of the bill was approved on Wednesday in a Knesset vote of 52 to 49.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/palestinians-slam-israel-bill-to-execute-terrorists-/1022722>

- **Gaza residents to pay Israel for electricity**

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has requested that Gaza's residents begin regularly paying their electricity company for the first time to resume the power supply to the Strip. Gaza's residents would be required to pay a collective monthly fee of 10 million shekels (\$2.8m) to restore the amount of electricity the PA asked Israel to cut off from the Strip in June, a source from the PA, who asked to remain anonymous, told Al Jazeera.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/gaza-residents-pay-israel-electricity-180104125108369.html>

- **Israeli military police open formal investigation into killing of Abu Thurayya**

Israel’s Military Police Investigations Division (MPID) has opened an investigation into the 15 December killing of Palestinian protester Ibrahim Abu Thurayya, Haaretz reported Thursday. The decision to open an investigation, says the paper, is “due to the significant disparity in the findings of an army inquiry into the incident and those of Palestinian groups inside the Gaza Strip”.



More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180104-israeli-military-police-open-formal-investigation-into-killing-of-abu-thurayya/>

- **Israeli forces violently raid Bethlehem refugee camp, injure 10, including child**

Ten Palestinians were injured, including seven with live bullets, as Israeli forces raided the al-Duheisha refugee camp in Bethlehem city in the southern occupied West Bank on Thursday morning. Two of the seven Palestinians that were injured with live fire were reported to be in critical condition, while the other three injuries were with rubber-coated steel bullets.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=779720>

- **Under Trump: US Aid to Palestine Hits All Time Low in 10 Years**

The U.S. support for the Palestinian Authority during the first year of Donald Trump's presidency has decreased to its lowest level in the last decade. Tensions, already high since the Dec. 6 U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, mounted again after the Trump targeted the Palestinian Authority on the first day of the new year.

More Details:

<https://www.albawaba.com/news/under-trump-us-aid-palestine-hits-all-time-low-10-years-1069278>

- **Mauritanian parliamentary group calls on Trump to reverse decision on Jerusalem**

Fatima Bint al-Maidah, Head of the Mauritanian parliamentary group in support of the Palestinian cause Thursday called on US President Donald Trump to reverse his recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. She said during a protest in front of the US Embassy in Nouakchott, "We demand that the US president withdraw this decision, which was rejected by the entire world."

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=TRB722a95921474352aTRB722>

- **India Cancels \$500m Deal with Israel, Opts for \$72m worth of Missiles Instead**

India has pulled out of a half a billion-dollar anti-tank missile deal ahead of an official visit to Delhi by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, according to Haaretz. A spokesperson for production company Rafael Advanced Defense Systems confirmed yesterday that the company had received official notice from the Indian government that the deal for anti-tank weapons, also known as Spike missiles had been terminated.

More Details:

<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/india-cancels-500m-deal-israel-opts-72m-worth-missiles-instead/>

- **Samidoun in occupied Palestine highlights steadfastness under interrogation**

The Samidoun Network in occupied Palestine published a pamphlet about the arrest of Palestinian strugglers and the methods used by prisoners to confront their jailers with steadfastness under interrogation. “The Palestinian Arab people in occupied Palestine have accumulated lengthy experience in Zionist occupation prisons and the dungeons of interrogation, and in doing so have developed critical tactics of resistance and confrontation of the jailer. Because we believe in the need to continue to educate Palestinian struggles, particularly in regard to the different methods used by the occupation in Zionist detention centers in order to break their steadfastness through torture and establish their ‘guilt’ through confessions, it is important to provide this information.

More Details:

<http://samidoun.net/2018/01/samidoun-in-occupied-palestine-highlights-steadfastness-under-interrogation/>

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Hezbollah ‘ready’ if war is waged against them: Nasrallah**

Hezbollah’s Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah conducted an interview with Lebanon’s Al-Mayadeen TV, Wednesday, to discuss a number of regional topics, including the ongoing protests in Iran. The Hezbollah leader accused the U.S., Israel, and Saudi Arabia of meddling with Iran’s internal affairs, adding that their plans to overthrow the government in Tehran had failed.

More Details:

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/hezbollah-ready-war-waged-nasrallah/>

- **Hezbollah leader ridiculed after he reveals \$1300 monthly salary from Iran**

Activists in Lebanon ridiculed the announcement, during an interview with a TV station, by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah that his monthly salary, from Iran, was \$1300. Nasrallah, who tried yesterday to deflect the condemnation of Iranians shouting in the streets against Tehran’s funding of the Hezbollah militia while more than half of the Iranian people live below the poverty line, refused to disclose the amount paid to his militia from Iran.

More Details:

<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2018/01/05/Hezbollah-leader-ridiculed-after-he-reveals-1300-monthly-salary-from-Iran.html>

- **Many Lebanese companies want to invest in Syria, Lebanese Ambassador says**

Lebanese Ambassador in Damascus Saad Zakhia called for setting up joint executive programs and launching forums for Syrian and Lebanese businessmen especially since there are many Lebanese companies that want to invest in Syria. The Ambassador's remarks came during a meeting on Thursday with Tourism Minister Bishr Yazigi, in which the two sides discussed promoting bilateral relations.

More Details:

<https://sana.sy/en/?p=123303>

- **Lebanon Reopens Entrances to Downtown Beirut after 4 Years of Closure**

Lebanese security forces removed security barriers around Parliament Square on Wednesday, upon an order issued by Speaker Nabih Berri to reopen the entrances to the area, following the "decline in security threats". A military source supervising the opening of the passages surrounding the parliament said that as soon as Berri issued the order to loosen security measures, "military personnel started to remove all barriers but we have kept control points to intervene when necessary."

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1132896/lebanon-reopens-entrances-downtown%2%A0beirut-after-4-years-closure>

- **Mulki, Dutch defence minister discuss defence ties**

Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Hani Mulki and Dutch Minister of Defence Ank Bijleveld on Thursday discussed Jordanian-Dutch ties and means to boost cooperation, especially in the military field. Mulki and Bijleveld also went over political and security conditions in the Middle East, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/mulki-dutch-defence-minister-discuss-defence-ties>

- **Geagea Slams Nasrallah for 'Acting as if There's No Lebanese State'**

Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea lashed out Thursday at Hizbullah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah over the latter's overnight remarks to al-Mayadeen television. "Sayyed Nasrallah always

acts as if there are no Lebanese people, a country called Lebanon or a Lebanese state,” Geagea said in a press release. “I wish he had tasked the ministers of his party and his allies in the government to raise in Cabinet all the issues that he mentioned in his interview, so that all government components can take part in the discussions in order to shoulder their responsibilities before God, history and the people whom they represent,” Geagea added.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/240423-geagea-slams-nasrallah-for-acting-as-if-there-s-no-lebanese-state>

- **Derian, Yaacoub tackle bilateral realtions**

Grand Mufti of the Republic, Sheikh Abdel Latif Derian, received on Thursday at Dar al-Fatwa the new Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon, Walid al-Yaaqoub, accompanied by Embassy Charge d'Affaires Thamer Al Shbib, who came on a protocol visit. Talks reportedly touched on the current situation in Lebanon and the region, and means of bolstering the bilateral ties between the two countries.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/86989/Derian-Yaacoub-tackle-bilateral-realtions>

## 6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Yemeni Official: The Situation in Iran Will Negatively Affect Houthis**

The current situation inside Iran will undoubtedly reflect negatively on Houthi militias in Yemen, with the Iranian regime being their main supporter, according to Yemeni ambassador to Saudi Arabia Shaya al-Zindani. The legitimate government counts on the Yemeni people, said the ambassador, adding: "It is only natural that we count on our people and their will of living, and certainly the unrest inside Iran will negatively reflect on the militias situation since Iran is their main backer."

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1132876/yemeni-official-situation-iran-will-negatively-affect-houthis>

- **US returns Saudi Arabia to list of countries of concern**

The US State Department said it had restored ten countries including three Arab countries on a list of “countries of particular concern” because they tolerate flagrant violations of religious freedoms. The list included Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Eritrea as well as Iran, China, Myanmar, North Korea, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180105-us-returns-saudi-arabia-to-list-of-countries-of-concern/>

- **Saudi Arabia says missile intercepted near Yemen border**

Saudi Arabia on Friday intercepted a ballistic missile over the kingdom's south near the border with Yemen, state media reported, hours after Yemeni rebels said they had launched an attack. The Huthi rebels, locked in a war against Yemen's Saudi-backed government, said they had fired a missile at the kingdom's southwestern province of Najran in a statement tweeted by their Al-Masirah television channel.

More Details:

<http://www.arabianbusiness.com/politics-economics/387015-saudi-arabia-says-missile-intercepted-near-yemen-border>

- **UN Migration Agency Helps 2,241 Migrants Get Home from Yemen in 2017**

During the final days of 2017, IOM, the UN Migration Agency succeeded in completing two movements of stranded Somalis and Ethiopians out of Yemen, despite immense security challenges and difficult sea conditions. Two boats were deployed, one headed to Aden to evacuate Somali refugees, while the other went to Hudaydah to evacuate Ethiopians, who were considered especially vulnerable due to the dangers of rising violence near that port city. The 27 December operation was the 19th assisted voluntary humanitarian return conducted by IOM out of the city of Aden sea port, taking 138 Somali men, women and children home in cooperation with UNHCR.

More Details:

<https://www.iom.int/news/un-migration-agency-helps-2241-migrants-get-home-yemen-2017>

- **Iranian firm to export pharmaceuticals from Turkey to Qatar**

CinnaGen Pharmaceutical Group, which was established in Iran in 1994, and started to operate in Turkey in 2016 with a research and development (R&D) center and a factory investment, signed a 5 million euro deal with Ebn Sina Medical, Qatar's most established company in pharmaceuticals, for the first biotech drug export to Qatar. Under the agreement, biotech drugs will be exported from Turkey to Qatar for multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, cancer and blood diseases. The signing ceremony for the agreement between CinnaGen and Ebn Sina Medical, which operates as an Al Faisal Holding subsidiary Aamal Group and controls more than 50 percent of Qatar's pharmaceutical market, for the exports of biotech drugs was held in Doha with the participation of Turkey's ambassador to Doha Fikret Özer.

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/business/2018/01/05/iranian-firm-to-export-pharmaceuticals-from-turkey-to-qatar>

- **Sudan's VP hails Qatar's role in Darfur peace January 04 2018 11:41 PM**

Sudanese Vice-President Hassabo Mohamed Abdul Rahman hailed the role Qatar has played in supporting Sudan in achieving sustainable stability and tackling challenges on all fronts. Speaking to the media on Wednesday, the Sudanese vice-president referred to the Qatari achievements in Darfur through the reconstruction of villages and the establishment of mega development projects, while entrenching the peace agreement that completed the peace process in the region.

More Details:

<http://www.gulf-times.com/story/577041/Sudan-s-VP-hails-Qatar-s-role-in-Darfur-peace>

- **Al-Wefaq condemns arrest of Shia cleric in Bahrain**

Bahrain's opposition al-Wefaq National Islamic Society condemns the arrest of yet another senior Shia cleric as part of the Manama regime's ongoing suppression of dissidents. Sheikh Mahmoud al-Ali, the vice-president of the Islamic Scholars' Council, Bahrain's largest Shia religious and cultural organization, was arrested on Wednesday for voicing solidarity with Sheikh Isa Qassim, the spiritual leader of Bahrain's Shia majority.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/05/547881/Bahrain-alWefaq-crackdown>

- **No money, no visa, no passport: 3,000 unpaid Indian workers stranded in Kuwait**

Over 3,000 Indian workers are reportedly stranded in Kuwait after the company employing them has failed to pay their salaries. The fact that their visas have expired and the company has kept their passports has only added to their woes. The construction company, Kharafi National, said it doesn't have funds to pay salaries to the workers as projects have dried up. A Times of India report said that the company has not paid their salaries for a year.

More Details:

<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-no-money-no-visa-no-passport-3000-unpaid-indian-workers-stranded-in-kuwait-2572873>



## 7. EGYPT

- **Egypt detains 75 people in human trafficking probe**

An Egyptian prosecutor has ordered the detention of 75 people following an investigation into suspected human trafficking, state media reported on Thursday. A 14-month investigation by the Administrative Control Authority, the country's anti-corruption body, found that the group was made of government officials, Egyptian citizens, and foreigners, state news agency MENA said.

More Details:

<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2018/01/04/Egypt-detains-75-people-in-human-trafficking-probe.html>

- **Sudan recalls its ambassador from Egypt amid tensions**

Sudan has recalled its ambassador from neighbouring Egypt for consultations, the foreign ministry said on Thursday, without giving details on why or how long he would stay. Egypt's foreign ministry said it is evaluating the situation in order to take "appropriate action".

More Details:

<https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/04/01/2018/Sudan-recalls-its-ambassador-from-Egypt-amid-tensions>

- **UAE-backed Egyptian forces arrive in Eritrea**

Following coordination with the United Arab Emirates, Egyptian forces arrived in Eritrea today, Al Sharq has reported. The forces are armed with modern technology and heavy armoured vehicles. Sources told Al Sharq that a meeting was convened between the UAE, Egypt and the Sudanese opposition representing groups in Darfur and eastern Sudan. There are no reported military confrontations. The military presence in Eritrea may be a response to Sudan allowing Turkey to take over Suakin Island in Sudan temporarily last year, as part of a broader Turkish engagement policy in Africa. Suakin was once Sudan's largest port and governed by the Ottoman Empire but has fallen into disuse since the creation of Port Sudan in the 20th century just 60 kilometres to the north.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180104-uae-backed-egyptian-forces-arrive-in-eritrea/>

- **Former PM Ahmed Shafiq returns to his home: National Movement Party spokesperson**

Former Egyptian Prime Minister and presidential hopeful Ahmed Shafiq returned to his house earlier this week from staying in a hotel following his return from the UAE and the announcement of his potential candidacy in the upcoming presidential elections, National Movement Party spokesperson Khaled El-Amowi told Ahram Online on Thursday. According to El-Amowi, Shafiq returned back to his villa in New Cairo three days ago, where he continued his meetings with the leaders of National Movement Party, of which he is the founder.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/286573/Egypt/Politics-/Former-PM-Ahmed-Shafiq-returns-to-his-home-Nationa.aspx>

- **Tajikistan-Egypt relations mulled**

Tajik Ambassador in Cairo Khusrav Noziri met with Dr. Ahmed Al-Shoky, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Library and Archives of Egypt on January 4, Khovar reported. The main topic of discussion of that meeting was the establishment and development of cooperation between libraries and manuscript centers of the two countries. In this regard, Dr. Ahmed Al-Shoky suggested signing a memorandum on cooperation between the National Library and Archives of Egypt and the relevant institutions of Tajikistan.

More Details:

<https://en.trend.az/casia/tajikistan/2844132.html>

- **Russia agrees to resume commercial flights to Egypt**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has approved the resumption of regular air traffic between Moscow and Cairo after a two-year suspension, the state-run Sputnik news agency reported yesterday. The agency quoted a document published on the Russian government website. Putin's approval was effective from 2 January, though the document gave no timeline for the actual resumption of the service. Flights to and from Cairo have been given the go-ahead, but not other Egyptian destinations.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180105-russia-agrees-to-resume-commercial-flights-to-egypt/>

- **Shoukry in Amman to tackle Jerusalem's developments**

Egypt's Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry, will head to Amman, Jordan, on Saturday to take part in the meetings of the Six-Arab Countries Committee on Jerusalem, according to a Friday statement by

the Foreign Ministry. "This is the first meeting for the six-party committee on Jerusalem since it was formed upon the Arab League's urgent summit for Arab Foreign Ministers held on December 9," said Foreign Ministry's Spokesperson Ahmed Abu Zeid. Abu Zeid added that Shoukry will take part in this meeting along with his Arab counterparts from Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, in addition to the Arab League's Secretary-General. This meeting is expected to tackle developments that occurred as a result of the American recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the relocation of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the statement read.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptdailynews.com/detail/shoukry-in-amman-to-tackle-jerusalems-developments>

## 8. NORTH AFRICA

- **UAE, Tunisia continue flights, end row over women**

United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Tunisia announced late Thursday, they would end the crisis banning Tunisian women that started two weeks ago and continue flights. In a UAE Foreign Ministry statement that was shared by WAM news agency, it was announced that "the competent authorities in the UAE have decided that the standard processes will be reinstated to their normal state before the unforeseen circumstances."

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/uae-tunisia-continue-flights-end-row-over-women/1022956>

- **Anger after Amazigh activist abducted in Libya by forces loyal to Khalifa Haftar**

The abduction of a leading Amazigh activist by gunmen affiliated to military strongman Khalifa Haftar has created an outpouring of anger. Rabie al-Jayash, whose whereabouts remain unknown, was invited to attend a celebration of the Independence Day at the children's theatre in Benghazi on 27 December 2017.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/amazigh-human-rights-activist-abducted-forces-loyal-haftar-accused-espionage-2083681958>

- **AFRICOM Warns Against Jihadists Attack Targeting Libyan Oil**

US Africa Command has warned against a terrorist plot being prepared by ISIS militants against Libya's Oil Crescent, which is located 500 km east of the capital Tripoli, and includes the country's largest oil reserves and export terminals. In a statement to Asharq Al-Awsat, AFRICOM spokeswoman Robyn Mack said: "at the moment, we believe that the organization (ISIS-Libya) is likely to give

priority to the restructuring of security forces and infrastructure, and to launch strikes, which may include targets in the Libyan oil crescent.”

More Details:

<http://northafricapost.com/21568-africom-warns-jihadists-attack-targeting-libyan-oil.html>

- **FLN party supports Charter on Public-Private Partnership**

General secretary of the National Liberation Front (FLN) party, Djamel Ould Abbès announced Wednesday in Algiers the party’s support to the Charter of Public-Private Partnership, signed in late December, affirming that there "is no disagreement between the party and the government” about this matter.

More Details:

<http://en.aps.dz/algeria/22128-fln-party-supports-charter-on-public-private-partnership>

- **Access to Information Act: The Home Stretch Till the Passing of the Bill**

The draft bill on the controversial Access to Information Act was finally ratified on January 2 by the Justice, Legislation and Human Rights Committee of the Second Chamber of the Moroccan Parliament. The draft was on the agenda of the 2nd Chamber for its final adoption on January 2, however, the bill was voted in the presence of only six of the 20 members of the parliament, consisting of the committee headed by the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM).

More Details:

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/01/237651/access-information-act/>

- **Samira Chaouachi rejects UPL presidency**

Vice-president of the Free Patriotic Union (UPL) Samira Chaouachi, on Thursday, refused the proposal to head the party because of the rejection by the political bureau and regional and local structures of Slim Riahi's resignation. In a statement, the political bureau of the UPL called on the national council to meet, exceptionally, on January 27 and 28, to consider the resignation of Slim Riahi.

More Details:

<https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/9723067-samira-chaouachi>

- **Education official in east Libya murdered**

The Head of Education Office in Abyar town, some 50 km east of Benghazi, died of multiple gunshot wounds on Thursday. Local sources said unknown gunmen showered Salah Qaliwan with bullets

outside his house and escaped on Wednesday. His relatives rushed him to the hospital in critical conditions, but doctors could not do anything because of the multiple gunshot wounds.

More Details:

<https://www.libyaobserver.ly/crimes/education-official-east-libya-murdered>

## 9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **US suspends security assistance to Pakistan because of Haqqani network**

The US officials on Thursday announced the suspension of security assistance to Pakistan due to the presence of the terror sanctuaries in Pakistan, particularly the notorious Haqqani terrorist network. A spokesperson for the Department of State Heather Nauert told reporters “A few months ago we announced the suspension of \$255 million in the Foreign Military Assistance. That’s basically the money that we would provide to Pakistan; Pakistan then, in return, uses that money to buy equipment, military equipment, from the United States. That was all suspended. That was announced back in August.”

More Details:

<https://www.khaama.com/us-suspends-security-assistance-to-pakistan-because-of-haqqani-network-04198>

- **Pakistan says US military aid suspension 'counterproductive'**

Pakistan denounced Washington’s decision to suspend hundreds of millions of dollars in security assistance as "counterproductive" Friday, in a carefully-worded response to the frustrated Trump administration’s public rebuke over alleged militant safe havens. The United States has been threatening for months to cut aid to Islamabad over its failure to crack down on groups such as the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network, which it alleges operates from bases in Pakistan’s northwest.

More Details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/264884-pakistan-says-us-military-aid-suspension-counterproductive>

- **Death toll from Kabul suicide bombing rises to 20**

The death toll from the overnight suicide bombing in the heart of Kabul has risen to 20, a police official said on Friday. At least 27 policemen were wounded in the attack in the ninth police district near the Shinozada Private Hospital.

More Details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/01/04/death-toll-kabul-suicide-bombing-rises-20>

- **US-Pakistan relations cannot 'bear weight of contradictions,' US official says**

United States' (US) National Security Advisor H.R McMaster on Wednesday shed light on the US's recent change of tack with Pakistan, warning that Pakistan's relationship with the US can "no longer bear the weight of contradictions". In an interview with Voice of America (VoA), McMaster said US President Donald Trump was "frustrated at Pakistan's behaviour" for providing 'safe havens' to some militant groups and using banned outfits as "an arm of [its] foreign policy".

More Details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1380958/us-pakistan-relations-cannot-bear-weight-of-contradictions-us-official-says>

- **Imran criticises government over US aid cut, questions PM's role**

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman (PTI) Imran Khan on Friday criticised the incumbent government after the United States cut military aid to the country and questioned why was the prime minister not active in handling the situation. Imran was addressing a press conference at his Bani Gala residence which focused heavily on the measures taken against the country by the US after President Donald Trump's tweet accusing Pakistan of lies and deceit.

More Details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/175437-pti-chairman-imran-khan-addresses-media-from-bani-gala>

- **Residents Claim 10 Civilians Killed In Jawzjan Airstrike**

Faryab residents claim that they went to Jawzjan province to secure the release of an imam from Daesh when they were targeted by an airstrike. Some residents of Faryab province, in the north of Afghanistan, on Friday claimed that at least 10 civilians were killed and four others wounded in an airstrike in Jawzjan's Darzab district.

More Details:

<http://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/residents-claim-10-civilians-killed-jawzjan-airstrike>



- **Georgian soldiers conduct exercise in Afghanistan**

Georgian soldiers of the 3rd infantry brigade have conducted a coordinative-situational training in Mazar-i-Sharif military base, Afghanistan, within the NATO peacekeeping Resolute Support Mission. The training was elaborated on by the Georgian servicemen.

More Details:

<http://agenda.ge/news/93300/eng>

## 10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **At least 26 Daesh-linked suspects arrested in Turkey**

Turkish security forces arrested at least 26 people for their suspected links to Daesh terrorist organization in countrywide operations, an official statement said on Thursday. In a statement, eastern Bingöl province's Governor Office said the provincial security directorate coordinated with General Directorate of National Intelligence Agency in the nationwide operations conducted between July 24 and Dec. 28, 2017.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/turkey/at-least-26-daesh-linked-suspects-arrested-in-turkey/1022662>

- **Turkey ready for cooperation to clamp down on foreign fighters**

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Thursday that Turkey is ready to cooperate with countries to crack down on foreign fighters who have used the country as a route to Syria. Erdoğan said in the interview, broadcast Thursday by the French television stations LCI and TF1, "We have captured and deported a large number of foreign fighters to their original countries. Our determination on the matter will continue."

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2018/01/04/turkey-ready-for-cooperation-to-clamp-down-on-foreign-fighters>

*\*This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Firuze Yağmur Gökler**. It covers news and commentaries as reported by the national media sources publishing in the Middle Eastern countries. The views expressed are not those of ORSAM and their inclusion does not imply factual accuracy.*

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