



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

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Peace Process

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Non State Actors

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1. IRAQ

- **Interior Ministry Delegation Heads to Kurdistan for Technical Talks**

The delegation of the federal Ministry of the Interior headed to the Kurdistan region for technical talks to deal with the management of border crossings, IDs, passports and the unified card. An Interior Ministry source told NINA that "the delegation consists of the Undersecretary for Police Affairs Mowaffaq Abdul Hadi Al-Janabi and the Director General of Civil Status, Passports and Residence Maj. Gen. Mahdi Al-Waeli.

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?DBnTNZXXtV96neMSap9EXw%253d%253d

- **Clashes with Iraqi forces near Sulaymaniyah prison leave militant dead**

Clashes erupted on Monday between militants and counter-terrorism forces near the Chamchamal federal prison in Sulaymaniyah, a security source was quoted as saying. Speaking to Baghdad Today on Monday, the source said, "The clashes between the two sides near the Baghdad-run prison in Chamchamal left a militant dead and another injured."

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/clashes-with-iraqi-forces-near-sulaymaniyah-prison-leave-militant-dead/>

- **Abadi's Electoral Coalition Nipped in the Bud**

The electoral coalition Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi had announced on Sunday with Iranian-backed militia group of Hashd al-Shaabi, is now dissolved after a day only. Hadi al-Ameri, leader of Badir Brigade (a militia group operating under the umbrella of Hashd al-Shaabi), withdrew from Abadi's Victory Alliance after Ammar al-Hakim, another influential Shi'ite cleric, joined the coalition on Monday.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/407490>

- **Hakm mulls pulling out of Abadi coalition**

National Wisdom Movement, headed by Ammar al-Hakim, declared Monday it mulls withdrawing from the Abadi-led electoral coalition. This comes as the coalition, known as Iraq's Victory, has seen a string of withdrawals led by IMIS commanders who formed Fateh Coalition.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/22436/Hakm-mulls-pulling-out-of-Abadi-coalition>

- **Spain: Iraq not ready for our troops to withdraw**

The time to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq has not come yet, the head of the team of Spanish military trainers in Iraq Brigadier General Luis Zaldumbide said yesterday. Iraqi media quoted the official saying the Iraqi army is now able to maintain the country's security. Spanish forces have supported the Iraqi army since 2014 and promoted their ability to become able to afford security in the country.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180115-spain-iraq-not-ready-for-our-troops-to-withdraw/>

- **Baghdad reports 'atmosphere of trust' in talks with Kurdistan region**

Iraq's central government said "an atmosphere of trust" marked talks held on Monday with the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region to resolve a conflict that triggered armed clashes in October. Envoys of the two sides met in the Kurdish regional capital Erbil in northern Iraq and discussed issues including security, control over the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) land borders, airports, the oil industry, customs revenue and river dams, a statement from the Iraqi cabinet said.

More Details:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-kurds/baghdad-reports-atmosphere-of-trust-in-talks-with-kurdistan-region-idUSKBN1F425K>

- **Bahraini, Arab banks to boost ties with Iraq**

Top bankers from Bahrain and the Union of Arab Banks have pledged full support to Iraq in improving its stability and strengthening economic, trade and investment ties. This came during a recent visit of a high-level banking delegation including Adnan Ahmed Yousif, President and Chief Executive of Al Baraka Banking Group (ABG) and Chairman of the Bahrain Association of Banks (BAB), to the Iraqi Capital, Baghdad.

More Details:

<http://www.newsofbahrain.com/viewNews.php?ppId=41187&TYPE=Posts&pid=21&MNU=2&SUB=50>

- **Iraq, Iran exchange soldiers' remnants**

Iraqi and Iranian authorities exchanged the remnants of 101 soldiers who were killed in the war between the two countries in 1980s. The exchange took place through Shalamcha border outlet in Basra province, south of Iraq.

More Details:

<http://www.iraqtradelinknews.com/2018/01/iraq-iran-exchange-soldiers-remnants.html>

- **KDP will boycott Iraq elections in Kirkuk, disputed areas By Rudaw 14 hours ago**

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) will boycott Iraq's upcoming elections in the disputed areas, the party announced saying they will not give legitimacy to Iraqi occupation of the area. "The process of elections is to be held in a peaceful and free atmosphere so that people can choose freely, but Kirkuk and all other Kurdistan areas outside the authority of KRG are under military occupation and are unstable," read a statement published by KDP's Kirkuk and Garbiyan politburo on Monday.

More Details:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/150120184>

- **Iraqi parliament speaker calls for disarming 'militias'**

Iraqi Parliament Speaker Salim al-Jubouri on Monday stressed the need to disarm the "militias" currently operating in the country. Al-Jubouri made the assertion at a parliamentary seminar held with the aim of discussing means of preserving Iraq's "cultural and civilizational identity", especially in the war-battered northern Nineveh province.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/iraqi-parliament-speaker-calls-for-disarming-militias-/1031533>

- **Erbil, Baghdad Agree upon Kurdistan Region Airports**

A delegation from the Iraqi government arrived in Erbil on Monday to hold talks with the Kurdish officials to discuss the issues of the airports, border crossings and dams. An agreement regarding Kurdistan region airports was reached. The Secretary General of the Iraqi Council of Ministers, Mahdi al-Alaql headed the Iraqi delegation.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1144981/erbil-baghdad-agree-upon-kurdistan-region-airports>

- **Kurdish Scenarios for Upcoming Iraq Election**

The Iraqi Kurdistan's politics have stepped into a new chapter following the September 25 2017 secession referendum whose consequences marked the defeat of efforts of Masoud Barzani to separate the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in the north from Iraq. Now the questions are revolving around how the Kurds of Iraq will secure their place in the country's political stage and what political inclinations they will have.

More Details:

http://en.abna24.com/news/comment/analysis-kurdish-scenarios-for-upcoming-iraq-election_877614.html

2. SYRIA

- **Assad regime blasts US 'border force' plan**

Syria's Bashar al-Assad regime on Monday criticized the U.S.-led military coalition for its plan to draw up a border security force consisting of SDF, largely controlled and manned by the PKK/PYD terrorist organization in Syria, according to Syrian state media. Syria's official SANA news agency quoted an unnamed Foreign Ministry official as saying the U.S. plan for a border security force consisting largely of SDF fighters threatened to violate Syria's "sovereignty, unity and integrity".

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/assad-regime-blasts-us-border-force-plan/1031613>

- **Damascus fears U.S. plots to fragment Syria with forming new rebel army**

The Syrian government is concerned that the latest U.S. move to form a new army in northern Syria aims to fragment the country. On Sunday, reports cited the U.S.-led anti-terror coalition as saying that the U.S. is working to form a 30,000-strong border security force, which will be under the command of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance of Kurds, Arabs, and Assyrians supported by the U.S. in northern Syria.

More Details:

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/16/c_136897967.htm

- **Union of Councils of Member States of OIC Conference kicks off with participation of Syria**

The conference of Union of Councils of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Member States kicked off in Tehran on Tuesday with the participation of Syria. The Syrian delegation to the conference is headed by Speaker of the People's Assembly, Hammoudah Sabbagh.

More Details:

<https://sana.sy/en/?p=124492>

- **Tillerson to Present Lavrov with Western-Regional Paper on Syria**

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is expected to discuss with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov next week a paper prepared in Washington last week and which includes the principles for a solution in Syria. The Tillerson-Lavrov meeting hopes to produce a breakthrough in the Syrian peace talks, which UN envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura decided to hold in Vienna on January 26 after he failed to convene such a meeting in Geneva or Montreux.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1144956/tillerson-present-lavrov-western-regional-paper-syria>

- **Syria denounces US-led coalition 'border force' plan**

Syria on Monday denounced the US-led coalition's plan to create a 30,000-strong border force in the country's northeast, saying it would consider its members "traitors." The alliance fighting the Daesh group announced on Sunday that it was working with Arab and Kurdish fighters to establish a Border Security Force (BSF).

More Details:

<https://www.defencetalk.com/syria-denounces-us-led-coalition-border-force-plan-71074/>

- **Russia and US engage in 'military base race' in Syria**

A military bases race is underway between Russia and the U.S. as each nation seeks to expand its presence in Syria and counter asymmetric threats. The U.S. has a military presence in several key locations, but there are two areas with heavy U.S. troop presence that are being transformed to military bases, according to a military source: The first is located in Al Tabaqah near Al Raqqa north Syria, where the U.S. special forces troops are training Kurdish groups; the other is constructed in Al-Tanf where the U.S. troops prevent Syrian and Russian armed forces from crossing."

More Details:

<https://www.defensenews.com/global/mideast-africa/2018/01/15/russia-and-us-engage-in-military-base-race-in-syria/>

- **US wants to split Syria, must accept Iran deal**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said the United States "does not want to keep Syria as a state in its current borders", accusing Washington of seeking to establish a Kurdish-controlled entity along Turkish and Iraqi border zones. Speaking at an annual press conference in Moscow to review the past year's diplomatic activities on Monday, Lavrov also said Russia would not support Washington's attempts to change the Iran nuclear deal.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/russia-lavrov-slice-syria-180115083913742.html>

- **Syrian opposition leaders in DC aim to get more support from Trump administration**

Leaders of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) are in Washington, D.C. where they will meet with White House officials Tuesday. Their goal is to increase cooperation between FSA and the Trump administration, and at the same time warn of the consequences of ceding control to Russia and Iran. Last week they made their case to Congress.

More Details:

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/15/syrian-opposition-leaders-in-dc-aim-to-get-more-support-from-trump-administration.html>

3. IRAN

- **Speaker: Ties with Africa Sets Iran's Priority**

Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani underlined his country's willingness to further broaden relations with African states, including Senegal. "We have always had close ties with Senegal, and establishment of relations with Africa is one of Iran's priorities," Larijani said at a meeting with his Senegalese counterpart Moustapha Niasse on the sidelines of the 13th Conference of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states (PUIC) in Tehran on Monday.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961025001579>

- **Why the US should support Iran protesters**

In recent weeks, Iran has again been in the throes of an uprising. Signs of the regime change America had long hoped to see are on the horizon. In the unlikely cities — once the strongholds of the conservatives — Iranians have taken to the streets, demanding, not just reform, but a referendum. A nationwide referendum in March 1979, in which over 90 percent of Iranians marked Islamic Republic as their choice of government, gave legitimacy to the current regime.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180116-why-the-us-should-support-iran-protesters/>

- **Lavrov: We won't support attempts to modify Iran deal**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stressed on Monday that Moscow will not support attempts by the United States to modify the Iran nuclear deal, Reuters reported. Lavrov, speaking days after U.S. President Donald Trump said he would waive nuclear sanctions against Iran for the last time, claimed that modifying the Iran deal could also complicate diplomacy over North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

More Details:

<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/240731>

- **Islam religion of democracy, peace, not war: President Rouhani**

Islam is the religion of democracy and peace, and not war, said President Hassan Rouhani at the 13th Session of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC) Conference here on Tuesday. He urged the representatives of Muslim people at legislative assemblies of Islamic countries to do their utmost to help their leaders and political authorities to boost the spirit of fraternity and development-oriented unity.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82797552>

- **PUIC members examine Islamic human rights, women role in development**

Speaking at the 13th Session of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC) Conference on Tuesday, Iran's Parliament speaker emphasized the increasing economic cooperation between the Muslim countries. "In this union, we have considered different aspects of cooperation with Islamic countries, one of which is the formation of mechanisms for greater convergence for economic development. It is expected that this session will focus more on the issue," he noted.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/131307/PUIC-members-examine-Islamic-human-rights-women-role-in-development>

- **UN report accuses Iran and Saudis over Yemen**

A confidential UN report has concluded that Iran failed to block ballistic missile supplies from being used by Houthi rebels fighting a Saudi-led military coalition in war-torn Yemen. The report, now in the hands of the UN Security Council, does not identify the supplier of the weaponry but says missile debris inspected by UN experts was of Iranian origin.

More Details:

<http://us.cnn.com/2018/01/15/politics/un-report-iran-saudi-yemen/index.html>

- **Parliamentary economic, legal committees to decide on FATF: MP**

The economic and legal committees of the parliament will examine a bill to join the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an anti-money laundering organization, Majlis Economic Committee Chairman Mohammadreza Pourebrahimi has said. Pourebrahimi said the two committees' decision on the issue will take into account the considerations of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, Fars reported on Monday.

More Details:

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/420375/Parliamentary-economic-legal-committees-to-decide-on-FATF-MP>

- **PUIC Conference Kicks Off in Tehran**

The 13th conference of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Member States (PUIC) got underway in Tehran on Tuesday morning. Attended by top parliamentary officials from the Muslim countries, the PUIC conference is going to discuss the regional and international developments and the joint efforts among the parliaments of OIC members.

More Details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2018/01/16/1629321/puic-conference-kicks-off-in-tehran>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Israel Extends Detention of Palestinian Teenager Tamimi**

A Palestinian court extended for at least two more days on Monday the detention of Palestinian teenager Ahed al-Tamimi for slapping Israeli soldiers. Tamimi, 16, was filmed in December outside

her family home, pushing, kicking and slapping the soldiers, who fended off the blows without retaliating.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1144286/israel-extends-detention-palestinian-teenager-tamimi>

- **Palestinians should suspend recognition of Israel, PLO council says**

Palestinian leaders voted on Monday to call for the suspension of recognition of Israel as they met in response to US President Donald Trump's declaration of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. The vote ordered the Palestine Liberation Organisation to suspend its recognition of Israel until it "recognises the State of Palestine," cancels its annexation of East Jerusalem and stops settlement activity, a statement said.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/palestinians-should-suspend-recognition-israel-plo-council-says-2019350223>

- **Palestinian parties respond to Abbas' speech**

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, have criticized Mahmoud Abbas' speech to the Central Council of the PLO, describing it as a mere recitation of historical facts bit little beyond that. The spokesman of the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine, Daoud Shihab, said that the Palestinian Authority is really responsible for the failure of of the national project. He went on to say that withdrawing from the Oslo Accords project means rejecting the recognition of Israel and abandoning the discourse of the two-state solution.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180116-palestinian-parties-respond-to-abbas-speech/>

- **Palestinians to reconsider recognition of Israel**

Palestinian leaders on Monday called on the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to suspend recognition of Israel following recent developments over the status of Jerusalem. Members of the Palestine Central Council, a high-ranking body within the PLO -- an umbrella group that includes most major Palestinian political factions -- voted to call for the suspension at a major meeting in Ramallah.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/palestinians-to-reconsider-recognition-of-israel/1032004>

- **Trump's flawed policy doesn't help Palestine**

The Palestinian issue has been a pawn on the chessboard of the Middle East with international and regional powers being the players. US President Donald Trump said in a pair of tweets on January 2 that the US pays "the Palestinians hundreds of millions of dollars a year and gets no appreciation or respect." On January 5, Trump threatened Palestine to go back to the negotiating table or face a freeze in \$125 million funding for Palestinian refugees, an act to reshape US influence and sow discord in Middle East countries. It once again highlights the fact that the US does not actually aim to resolve the Palestinian issue.

More Details:

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1084897.shtml>

- **India must not forget its historic support for Palestine**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to India began on Sunday, when he was warmly received by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the tarmac of the airport in New Delhi. In contrast to the visit of late Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in 2003, there was calm on the streets. Protests by Muslims and civil society members were minimal, with just a few sloganeering against the visit.

More Details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2018/1/15/india-must-not-forget-its-historic-support-for-palestine>

- **Israeli army raids neighborhood in center of Ramallah, ransacks homes**

An Israeli army unit raided early Tuesday a neighborhood in the center of Ramallah, the base of the Palestinian Authority, and searched and ransacked homes, according to a witness. Zahran Hamed, a journalist, told WAFA that soldiers raided his building in Ein Minjid, south of Ramallah, blew up doors to several apartments and searched them leaving behind heavy damage.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=5si3OCa96060430290a5si3OC>

- **Leaked: PLO's Central Council Revised Agenda**

On Sunday, Anadolu news agency obtained a Palestinian document containing agenda for the forthcoming meeting of the Central Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The agenda has been approved by Political Committee of the PLO and its most important recommendations is to take actions against Israel under the auspices of the Security Council and the International Criminal Court.

More Details:

<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/leaked-plos-central-council-revised-agenda/>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Lebanon: Electoral Confrontations between Mustaqbal, Rifi Kicks Off from Tripoli**

A political conflict between the Future Movement, led by Prime Minister Saad Hariri and former Justice Minister Ashraf Rifi has reached a no return level, particularly after security forces arrested last week three supporters from Rifi's camp. The latest development between the two former allies opens the door for a political confrontation, with the rapprochement of the parliamentary elections in Lebanon next May.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1144966/lebanon-electoral-confrontations-between-mustaqbal-rifi-kicks-tripoli>

- **Jordan keen on better ties with UAE — Crown Prince**

HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Monday met with Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Supreme Commander Chief of General Staff of the UAE Armed Forces. During the meeting, which came on the sidelines of his participation in Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW) 2018, Prince Hussein conveyed His Majesty King Abdullah's greetings to the crown prince and wishes of prosperity to the UAE and its people.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-keen-better-ties-uae-%E2%80%94-crown-prince>

- **King visits Northern Military Zone**

His Majesty King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces, on Monday visited the border guards brigade 2 at the Northern Military Zone. The King was received by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lit. Gen. Mahmoud Freihat, and other high-ranking officers.

More Details:

http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=36988#.Wl3lma5l_cs

- **King to take part in a trilateral summit along with Cyprus leader, Greek premier**

His Majesty King Abdullah II will take part on Tuesday in a trilateral summit held in the Cypriot capital, Nicosia, along with Cyprus President, Nicos Anastasiades, and Greek Prime Minister, Alexis Tsipras. The summit talks will touch on prospects of joint cooperation between the three countries and the Mideast developments.

More Details:

http://petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site_id=1&NewsID=336138&CatID=13

- **Tersarkissian: we are moving towards legislative elections on schedule**

MP Serge Tersarkissian said on Tuesday, in an interview with the "Voice of Lebanon" radio station, that we were headed towards holding of parliamentary elections on the scheduled date, denouncing claims on the return to the law of the 1960. Regarding the decree on the promotion of officers of 1994, the MP said "no solution to this crisis exists at present, given the current presidential challenge."

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/87259/Tersarkissian-We-are-moving-towards-legislative-elections-on-schedule>

- **Riyadh set to seize Lebanese prime minister's assets: Report**

Reports have emerged indicating that Saudi Arabia is planning to seize the assets of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri in the kingdom as part of Riyadh's so-called anti-corruption campaign apparently targeting the crown prince's critics and opponents. The New Arab, citing an unnamed source close to Saudi authorities, reported on Monday that Riyadh is moving to acquire assets still owned by Hariri in the now defunct construction company, Saudi Oger, in return for cancelling outstanding debts.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/16/549088/Saudi-Arabia-Lebanon-Prime-Minister-Hariri-asset-seizure>

- **Berri Urges Firm Stance on Al-Quds at OIC Meeting**

Lebanese Parliament Speaker, Nabih Berri urged Arab and Muslim countries to announced firm stance on Al-Quds. During the the 13th Session of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC) Conference in Tehran, Berri calls for boycotting the administration of US President Donald Trump so as to retract its decision to recognize Al-Quds as Israeli capital.

More Details:

<http://english.almanar.com.lb/426578>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Trump praises Qatar for 'counter terrorism' efforts**

In an apparent shift in the White House's stance on the Gulf crisis, US President Donald Trump on Monday thanked the ruler of Qatar for "action to counter terrorism and extremism in all forms". Last year, Trump accused Doha of funding militant groups, saying the Gulf nation has historically supported terrorism "at a very high level".

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/trump-praises-qatar-counter-terrorism-efforts-968146284>

- **Zeinabeyyat: The Face of Female Militias in Yemen**

The so-called Zeinabeyyat is a women's military group established by Houthis to suppress and abuse women and arrest the families based on Iranian ethics, according to Yemeni officials and observers. Advisor to Yemeni Minister of Information Faisal al-Awadhi explained that Zeinabeyyat is a group of marginalized women trained by Iran-backed Houthi insurgents.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1144196/zeinabeyyat-face-female-militias-yemen>

- **Qatar denies intercepting UAE civilian jets**

Qatar has denied earlier reports that its fighter jets had intercepted a UAE civilian aircraft. The UAE claimed today that Qatari fighter jets intercepted two of its commercial airliners in international airspace on the way to Bahrain. The claim was made on UAE's state-run WAM news agency and cited the country's General Civil Aviation Authority.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180115-qatar-denies-intercepting-uae-civilian-jets/>

- **Hisham al-Omeisy: Yemen rebels release activist after five months**

A prominent Yemeni activist has been released by the rebel Houthi movement after five months in detention. Hisham al-Omeisy had provided regular commentary on Yemen's civil war to his 35,000

followers on Twitter until he went missing in Sanaa in August. He was reportedly never charged, nor given access to a lawyer or his family.

More Details:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42694603>

- **Saudi Arabia emerges as close Trump ally to counter regional rivals**

Saudi Arabia has emerged as US President Donald Trump's closest Arab ally. Over the past year it's been trying to influence several states in the Arab world to toe the Saudi line and contain Iran's growing influence in the region. The Gulf blockade and the crises in the Lebanese government were two notable examples.

More Details:

<https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/saudi-arabia-emerges-as-close-trump-ally-to-counter-regional-rivals-14280>

- **Ministry, UNDP sign cooperation agreement**

Youth and Sport Affairs Minister Hisham Mohammed Al Jowder and UN Resident Coordinator/ UNDP Resident Representative Amin Al Sharkawi have signed a project document to implement the King Hamad Youth Empowerment Award to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The King Hamad Youth Empowerment Award is the first of its kind in the region, aimed at strengthening the efforts of the ministries of the Kingdom with various organizations and bodies affiliated to the United Nations.

More Details:

<http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/820879>

- **Haley: U.S. Aid Helps 'Tens of Millions of Innocent People' in War-Torn Yemen**

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley heralded the Monday arrival of mobile cranes to a Yemeni port, a step forward in efforts to help alleviate the country's ongoing humanitarian crisis. The State Department successfully delivered the cranes to Hudaydah, Yemen, to offload aid supplies shipped there, the Washington Examiner reports. The Saudi-led coalition had blockaded the city as part of its fight against rebels who overthrew the previous government in Yemen, and the resulting economic disaster has drawn world attention.

More Details:

<http://freebeacon.com/politics/haley-u-s-aid-help-ten-millions-innocent-people-war-torn-yemen/>

- **Bahrain court upholds jail sentence against rights activist Rajab**

Bahrain's top court on Monday upheld a two-year prison sentence imposed last year by a lower tribunal on rights campaigner Nabeel Rajab over comments he was alleged to have made to journalists, a rights group said. The London-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) said in a statement that the Court of Cassation's ruling was the last level of appeal in a case that began in mid-2016 when Rajab was arrested over tweets suggesting that security forces had tortured detainees in a prison.

More Details:

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-bahrain-rights-rajab/bahrain-court-upholds-jail-sentence-against-rights-activist-rajab-idUKKBN1F426W?rpc=401&>

7. EGYPT

- **Military Reinforcements near Egypt's Suez Canal 'to Tighten Noose on Terrorists'**

Egyptian armed forces announced Sunday that its members have intensified security measures to protect vital targets and tightened control of crossings and land and coastal borders in strategic areas. Official spokesman of the armed forces Colonel Tamer al-Rifai said that the second and third field army forces bolstered their measures in cooperation with the security services of the Ministry of Interior to secure the crossings and ferries on the waterway of the Suez Canal.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1144126/military-reinforcements-near-egypts-suez-canal-%E2%80%98tighten-noose-terrorists%E2%80%99>

- **Late president's nephew pulls out of Egypt polls**

The nephew of Egypt's late president Anwar Sadat said Monday he will not run in this year's presidential election. "We decided not to participate in the polls," Mohamed Anwar Sadat told a press conference held in Cairo. Sadat, a former lawmaker, said he will not be "part of a farce". "The polls are not as we hoped for...we will not contest a lost battle," he said, adding that the current atmosphere in Egypt was not conducive to a competitive election.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/late-president-s-nephew-pulls-out-of-egypt-polls/1031508>

- **UK imams back leading Egyptian cleric amid rift with Sisi**

British scholars and imams have written a letter in support of the grand Imam of the al-Azhar university in Cairo, amid a growing rift between the revered religious institution and Egypt's president, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The letter, signed by 100 religious leaders, comes days before a landmark conference on Jerusalem where the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, is expected to speak.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uk-imams-back-leading-egyptian-cleric-amid-government-rift-1705568385>

- **Sisi vows to protect Egypt's water supply**

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi vowed Monday to protect Egypt's water supply while striving for peace with the Nile upstream countries of Sudan and Ethiopia, which is building a controversial dam. "Egypt will not go to war with its brothers," Sisi said on state television, although Cairo fears its water supply will be affected by Ethiopia's Grand Renaissance Dam.

More Details:

<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2018/01/15/Sisi-vows-to-protect-Egypt-s-water-supply.html>

- **'Egypt doesn't conspire or fight against its brothers': President Sisi tells Sudan and Ethiopia**

Egypt is not willing to enter into a war with brotherly nations, President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi affirmed on Monday during his inauguration of several development projects in the country. El-Sisi's statements come amidst recent rising tensions between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/288203/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-doesnt-conspire-or-fight-against-its-brother.aspx>

- **Menoufiya governor arrested on corruption charges**

The Administrative Control Authority (ACA) ordered on Sunday the arrest of several individuals including Menoufiya Governor Hisham Abdel Basset on charges of corruption. According to local media, the other detainees were two businesspersons. The arrests took place hours before a visit by President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, who inaugurated several projects on Monday in the city of Menoufiya.

More Details:

<https://dailynewsegypt.com/2018/01/15/menoufiya-governor-arrested-corruption-charges/>

- **New cabinet has 6 female ministers for the first time in Egypt's history**

"The merciful heart of the revolution," a title given by late President Gamal Abdel Nasser to Hikmat Abu Zaid, the first Egyptian woman to be named a minister when she was appointed as the Minister of Social Affairs in 1962. Fifty-six years later, Prime Minister Sherif Ismail appointed two new female ministers in the cabinet reshuffle, Rania al-Mashat as Minister of Tourism, and Enas Abdel Dayem as Minister of Culture.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/new-cabinet-has-6-female-ministers-for-the-first-time-in-egypts-history/>

- **Eritrean president denies presence of Egyptian troops in Eritrea**

On Sunday, President of Eritrea Isaias Afwerki denied the presence of any Egyptian troops at the Sawa base, which is on the Sudanese border. He also accused some circles in Ethiopia and Sudan of attempting to create conflicts between Asmara and Khartoum. This occurred during an interview with state media Eri-TV and the Dimtsi Hafash radio station on Sunday. In the interview, he assessed the claims that Egyptian troops are in Eritrea as fake news and slammed the Qatari Al-Jazeera TV channel which first broadcasted the news.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptdailynews.com/detail/eritrean-president-denies-presence-of-egyptian-troops-in-eritrea>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Libya's Tripoli airport clashes part of ongoing battle for hegemony**

Clashes around Tripoli's only civilian airport are part of an ongoing battle for hegemony between rival Libyan militias in the increasingly fragmented country, Libyan sources told Middle East Eye. At least 20 people have reportedly died in the fighting that forced the closure of Mitiga airport on Monday, officials said.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/clashes-around-tripolis-international-airport-about-controlling-tripoli-analysts-1940212662>

- **Freedom House: Tunisia's democracy downgraded**

A new report released by the international watchdog organisation Freedom House has raised concerns about Tunisia's democratic backslide. Data analysed by the NGO from 195 countries over the past year showed that Tunisia was still the only free country in the Arab world, but the North African state saw its political rights rating decreased from two to three, the report said on Tuesday.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/freedom-house-tunisia-democracy-downgraded-180116071918217.html>

- **Algeria, Libya agree to jointly manage oil fields on shared border**

Algeria's state-run oil company Sonatrach signed an agreement, Monday, with the Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC) to run a number of crude oil fields located on the borders between the two countries. The agreement included updating a study that was carried out on 2006 concerning Al-Rar and Al-Wafa oilfields, which located on the shared borders between Algeria and Libya, according to a statement by Sonatrach.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180116-algeria-libya-agree-to-jointly-manage-oil-fields-on-shared-border/>

- **Morocco to Build \$4.6 Bln Natural Gas Plant**

Morocco, which imports most of its energy needs, is planning to build a \$4.6 billion natural gas plant, part of its strategy to enhance its energy mix and autonomy. This project has been announced by the Moroccan Energy Minister Aziz Rabbah in Abu Dhabi, on the sidelines of his participation in the 8th session of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) held in Abu Dhabi Jan.12-14 and that was devoted to discussing opportunities and challenges in the renewable energy sector.

More Details:

<http://northafricapost.com/21743-morocco-build-4-6-bln-natural-gas-plant.html>

- **What Pretoria-Rabat Rapprochement Means for Africa's 2063 Agenda?**

In September 2004, upon South Africa's decision to recognize Western Sahara as an autonomous and self-determined country, the Kingdom of Morocco recalled its ambassador to Pretoria, engaging the two African giants in a series of implicit hostilities that lasted for over a decade. Recently, after 13 years of cold and unfriendly bilateral terms, Morocco and South Africa have finally agreed to end their diplomatic stalemate.

More Details:

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/01/238408/pretoria-rabat-western-sahara/>

- **Parliamentary by-elections for Tunisians resident in Germany: Administrative Court rejects legal remedy by Call of Tunisians Abroad**

The Administrative Court, on Monday, delivered a ruling on the legal remedy filed by the list of the Call of Tunisians Abroad against the preliminary results of the parliamentary by-elections for Tunisians resident in Germany. The legal remedy was accepted on form and dismissed on the merits. The judgment of the First Appeals Chamber has been upheld.

More Details:

<https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/9757360-parliamentary>

- **State of emergency declared in Libya's capital over clashes at Mitiga Airport**

The Presidential Council of the Government of National Accord (GNA) has announced the state of emergency in Tripoli until clashes at the Mitiga Airport end. Till this moment, the clashes between the Special Deterrence Force in the airport and the Brigade 33 of Tajura have left over 11 killed and 23 injured.

More Details:

<http://www.libyanexpress.com/state-of-emergency-declared-in-libyas-capital-over-clashes-at-mitiga-airport/>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Nawaz calls change in Balochistan a cruel joke**

Ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday asked his rivals instead of launching anti-government movement they should wait for general elections that were only four to five months away. Speaking to media outside the Accountability Court where he appeared to attend hearing of corruption reference against him, said timing of Tahirul Qadri's return from Canada was meaningful.

More Details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/269166-nawaz-calls-change-of-balochistan-cm-a-cruel-joke>

- **Hashimi takes oath as new member of election panel**

Syed Hafizullah Hashimi was sworn in as a new Independent Election Commission (IEC) member by Ashraf Ghani in Kabul on Tuesday morning. Vice President Mohammad Sarwar Danish, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr Abdullah, Attorney General Mohammad Hamid Faridi, Supreme Court member Mohammad Zaman Sangari also attended the oath-taking ceremony.

More Details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/01/16/hashimi-takes-oath-new-member-election-panel>

- **Chaudhry Nisar hits back at 'habitual sycophant' Pervaiz Rasheed**

Former interior minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan on Tuesday criticised fellow PML-N politician Pervaiz Rahseed some more as the war of words, which had started over the weekend with the latter's provocation in a TV interview, refused to die down. "Pervaiz Rasheed is continuously giving wrong statements and is a habitual sycophant," Nisar was quoted as saying by his spokesperson. "These are the only two specialties which make him PML-N's Aristotle."

More Details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1383300/chaudhry-nisar-hits-back-at-habitual-sycophant-pervaiz-rasheed>

- **Top US general says 'not giving up' on Pakistan ties**

Top US military officer, Marine General Joseph Dunford, has said he remains committed to the US-Pakistan relationship, which has been strained in recent weeks as Washington piles pressure on Islamabad to crack down on militants. "Do we agree on everything right now? No we don't. But are we committed to a more effective relationship with Pakistan? We are. And I'm not giving up on that," Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a small group of reporters during a trip to Brussels.

More Details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/177139-top-us-general-says-not-giving-up-on-pakistan-ties>

- **Afghan Special Forces continue pursuit of Taliban in the North**

The Special Operations Forces of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) continue to apply pressure on the Taliban through an aggressive winter campaign in the northern parts of the country. With the new fighting season is due to kick off in coming months, the size and strength of the Afghan Special Forces are also expected to increase with addition of the new commando forces.

More Details:

<https://www.khaama.com/afghan-special-forces-continue-pursuit-of-taliban-in-the-north-04277>

- **Dr. Abdullah, FM Rabbani Meets UNSC Members**

Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Minister of Foreign Affairs Salahuddin Rabbani met the delegation of the UN Security Council in a reception at the Storay Palace on the Foreign Ministry on Saturday evening. At the beginning, Minister of Foreign Affairs welcomed the Security Council delegation and praised their cooperation and support for Afghanistan.

More Details:

<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/politics/item/31666-dr-abdullah-fm-rabbani-meets-uns-members.html>

- **Five Taliban Insurgents Killed in Ongoing Baghlan Operation**

The Taliban insurgents, including two key members, were killed, and seven were wounded, during operations in Pul-e-Khumri city. At least five Taliban insurgents were killed in ongoing operations in northern Baghlan province on Monday, local officials confirmed Tuesday. In addition, seven other insurgents were wounded.

More Details:

<http://www.toloneews.com/afghanistan/five-taliban-insurgents-killed-ongoing-baghlan-operation>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkish parliament speaker meets Iranian counterpart**

Turkey's parliament speaker held a bilateral meeting with his Iranian counterpart in Tehran on Monday. Ismail Kahraman expressed the significance of unity between Turkey and Iran during his meeting with Ali Larijani, according to Iranian state newswire IRNA.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkish-parliament-speaker-meets-iranian-counterpart/1031902>

- **Turkey to conduct Afrin operation with Syrian opposition, Erdoğan says**

Turkey's anti-terror operation in northern Syria's Afrin will be conducted in cooperation with the Syrian opposition, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Tuesday. Speaking to the media after a parliamentary group meeting of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), Erdoğan said he was not considering to call U.S. President Donald Trump regarding the operation, adding that talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin continue.

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/01/16/turkey-to-conduct-afrin-operation-with-syrian-opposition-erdogan-says>

- **Turkish premier talks to Iraqi counterpart over phone**

Prime Minister Binali Yildirim spoke with his Iraqi counterpart Haider al-Abadi over the phone on Monday evening, according to a Turkish Prime Ministry source. The two premiers discussed bilateral ties and regional developments as well as the fight against terror groups, including the PKK and Daesh, the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to restrictions on talking to the media, said.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkish-premier-talks-to-iraqi-counterpart-over-phone/1031785>

- **Turkey key for global peace' says Cavusoglu**

Turkey is a key player for achieving world peace and tolerance, the country's foreign minister said Monday at the inauguration ceremony of the Turkish Consulate General in Vancouver, Canada. Referring to the regional crisis in the Middle East, Mevlut Cavusoglu said Turkey had been doing its best to help preserve the territorial integrity of Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/197882/turkey-key-for-global-peace-says-cavusoglu>

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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