



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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1. IRAQ

- **Islamic State imposes curfew in Tal Afar, local leaders arrested**

A local source in Nineveh Province revealed that the Islamic State group imposed a curfew in the majority of Tal Afar, and started to arrest its local leaders in the district, Alsumaria News reported on Wednesday. The source said, "The Islamic State group imposed a curfew in the majority of areas in Tal Afar, west of Mosul, amid intense spread of its armed detachments in main streets."

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/islamic-state-arrests-local-leaders-tal-afar/>

- **U.N. aid to Mosul paused on security concerns, to resume soon**

Security concerns forced the United Nations to pause its aid operations this week in east Mosul, which Iraqi forces recaptured from Islamic State last month, but they will resume soon, a U.N. humanitarian official said on Wednesday. "Based on reports of insecurity, the U.N. decided that we would not send missions into eastern parts of Mosul until we reassess security conditions," said Lise Grande, the U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq.

More details:

<http://ca.reuters.com/article/idCAKBN15U21P?rpc=401&>

- **Iraq: around 6,000 civilians return home to eastern Mosul**

More than 6,000 displaced Iraqi civilians have returned to their homes in areas recently recaptured from Daesh in eastern Mosul, according to an Iraqi aid official. Iraqi forces have driven Daesh from most of Mosul's eastern districts as part of a wide-ranging Iraqi army offensive launched last October to retake the city, which was overrun by the extremist group in mid-2014.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/iraq-around-6000-civilians-return-home-eastern-mosul-938350>

- **Velayati: Iran supports Iraq's territorial integrity**

Head of Strategic Research at the Expediency Council Ali Akbar Velayati said on Wednesday that the Islamic Republic of Iran defends integrated Iraq and believes that the type of prevailing democracy in Iraq should be regarded as an exemplary model among Arabic and Muslim countries. Velayati made the remarks in a meeting with the visiting Iraqi Secretary General of the Kurdistan Islamic Union Salaheddine Bahaaeddin in Tehran on Wednesday.

More details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82432017/>

- **Deadly suicide car bombing rocks Baghdad's Sadr City**

A suicide bomber detonated a pick-up truck packed with explosives in northern Baghdad on Wednesday, killing at least nine people, according to Iraqi officials. Thirty more were wounded in the powerful blast in the Habibiya area, near Sadr City, a Shia-majority neighbourhood in the Iraqi capital.

More details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/deadly-suicide-car-bombing-rocks-baghdad-sadr-city-170215165139606.html>

- **Iraqi Christian refugees protest against UNHCR resettlement delays**

Dozens of Iraqi Christians in Lebanon protested in central Beirut this week, demanding the UN to grant them quicker resettlement abroad. Between 150 and 200 demonstrators gathered outside a UN building, carrying placards that read: "the future of our children is wasted" and "our only demand is to [go] to countries that respect humans," among others.

More details:

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/02/4919428/>

- **US Special Ops chief: More than 60,000 ISIS fighters killed**

The US Special Operations head said Tuesday that the US and its allies had eliminated more than 60,000 ISIS fighters. "We have killed over 60,000," Gen. Raymond "Tony" Thomas, commander of US Special Operations command, told a symposium Maryland. Thomas oversees America's elite Special Operations troops, including Navy SEALs and Army Green Berets, which have played a large role in combating the terror organization, including raids against key leaders.

More details:

http://www.shafaaq.com/en/En_NewsReader/c84a7f1d-5049-4dab-b5d9-586568ede12c/US-Special-Ops-chief--More-than-60-000-ISIS-fighters-killed

- **Iraqi Prime Minister, Kurdistan President to Hold Talks in Munich**

Abadi and Barzani last met in September 2016 in Baghdad, ahead of the start of an operation to liberate the city of Mosul from jihadists. The two officials also met at the MSC conference in 2016. The MSC, which is an annual major global forum founded in 1963 and devoted to the discussion of key security issues, is scheduled for February 17-19. This year's conference agenda focuses on the

future of transatlantic relations and NATO after the election of Donald Trump, the state of European cooperation in security and defense matters, relations with Russia as well as the war in Syria, the security situation in the Asia-Pacific, and information warfare.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201702161050724800-iraqi-pm-kurdistan-president-meeting/>

- **Mosul will be completely 'destroyed' in battle to liberate it from Isis, senior Iraqi politician warns**

The Iraqi armed forces will eventually capture west Mosul, which is still held by Isis fighters, but the city itself will be destroyed in the fighting, a senior Iraqi politician has told The Independent in an interview. Hoshiyar Zebari, a Kurdish leader who until last year was the Iraqi finance minister and prior to that the country's long-serving foreign minister, says that Isis will fight to the last man in the densely-packed urban districts it still holds.

More details:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-mosul-battle-iraq-militants-east-west-baghdad-islamic-state-a7581956.html>

- **ISIL & Drones: Understand the Network to Defeat the Network**

The employment of weaponized drone technology by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is a unique innovation that demands the mobilization of the defense industry to develop an immediate solution. Well, not exactly. This sensationalistic narrative contains both fact and hyperbole - there exists documented evidence of an ISIL drone program and there have been several instances of ISIL successfully dropping small munitions on Iraqi military positions, but the enemy's use of drones is yet another demonstration of a materially weaker opponent adapting technology to exploit the vulnerabilities of a stronger foe.

More details:

<http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/isis-drones-understand-the-network-to-defeat-the-network>

- **Iraq: Looting, Destruction by Forces Fighting ISIS**

Armed forces fighting Islamic State (also known as ISIS) to retake a town and four villages near Mosul looted, damaged, and destroyed homes, Human Rights Watch said today. There was no apparent military necessity for the demolitions, which may amount to war crimes and which took place between November 2016 and February 2017. The Iraqi authorities should investigate allegations of war crimes and hold those responsible to account, Human Rights Watch said. The United States and other countries providing military assistance to the Iraqi Security Forces should press the

government to carry out these investigations. The United Nations Human Rights Council should expand the investigation it established in 2014 on ISIS abuses to include serious violations by all parties, including the Popular Mobilization Forces (known as the PMF or Hashd al-Sha'abi), units that were formed largely to combat ISIS, and are under the direct command of Prime Minister al-Abadi.

More details:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/16/iraq-looting-destruction-forces-fighting-isis>

- **Fiscal deficit continues to shrink in Kurdistan due to economic recovery**

Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) colossal budget deficit, aggravated by the the fall of global oil prices three years ago, has shrunk to unprecedented levels in more than two decades, according to a fresh report issued by the office of Kurdistan Region's Presidency. The report says that the deficit stood at around \$1,3 billion in December 2016 down from the staggering \$6,5 billion in December 2014.

More details:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/16022017>

- **Urgently needed medicines and medical supplies delivered to east Mosul**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has responded to an acute shortage of medical supplies in the newly retaken areas of Mosul by delivering medicines and other medical supplies to 16 primary health centers, one hospital and the Directorate of Health (DOH) in Ninewa. The donation will support treatment of patients with infectious diseases, chronic conditions, diarrheal diseases and trauma cases who have been deprived of medical care.

More details:

<http://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/urgently-needed-medicines-and-medical-supplies-delivered-east-mosul>

- **HRW says Iraqi pro-government militias demolish civilian property for no reason**

The Iraqi government should investigate looting and demolitions of civilians' property by armed forces combating Islamic State militants between November and February, Human Rights Watch said in a report on Thursday, casting light on violations by pro-government militias. "Armed forces fighting Islamic State (also known as ISIS) to retake a town and four villages near Mosul looted, damaged, and destroyed homes," Human Rights Watch said Thursday in a report. "There was no apparent military necessity for the demolitions, which may amount to war crimes," it added.

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/hrw-says-iraqi-forces-allied-militias-demolish-civilian-property-no-reason/>

- **97 Killed Across Iraq; Infants Starving to Death in Mosul**

Lise Grande, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, announced the suspension of aid to liberated eastern Mosul, as the security situation is still too unstable there. In western Mosul, which is still occupied, food supplies are growing thin and expensive, but residents claim that militant leaders are still receiving abundant supplies from Syria. About 750,000 residents are thought to be in the western half of the city.

More details:

<http://original.antiwar.com/updates/2017/02/15/infants-starving-to-death-in-mosul-97-killed-across-iraq/>

- **PUK's Politburo to discuss Kurdistan Region's Roadmap**

The Political Bureau of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan will hold a meeting on Thursday, 16 of February, to discuss a roadmap aimed to address Kurdistan Region's problems, the meeting will be supervised by Mr. Kosrat Rasul First Deputy of PUK's Secretary-General. Mr. Saadi Ahmed Berah Member of PUK's Politburo announced in a statement that the meeting will stress on a roadmap draft to address the problems which Kurdistan Region is facing, adding, that the attendees will discuss means to execute the roadmap.

More details:

http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=39755

- **Japan provides \$17m in aid for displaced people in Iraq**

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has welcomed the announcement of nearly \$17 million in extra funding for its work by the Government of Japan. The funding will allow UNHCR to expand the provision of emergency items, shelter and cash assistance to Iraqi families displaced from Mosul conflict and to Syrian refugees. The bulk of the funding - \$14.3m – will be allocated to programmes for Iraqis recently displaced due to the Mosul offensive, with \$ 2.6m allocated to the agency's work for Syrian refugees, mainly in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I).

More details:

<http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302598046>

- **Iraqi forces have it all to do in western Mosul**

Iraqi Special Forces claim that eastern Mosul is safe for residents to return. However, suicide attacks tell a different story. Now, those forces are preparing to "liberate" western Mosul, as Anna Lekas Miller reports.

More details:

<http://www.dw.com/en/iraqi-forces-have-it-all-to-do-in-western-mosul/a-37575476>

- **Over 2,500 Kurds Have Fled Tuz Khurmatu Due to Militia Atrocities**

A number of Kurdish families in the Tuz Khurmatu region in the Salahuddin province of Iraq are accusing the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), also known as Hashd al-Shaabi, of forced evacuations and persecution of Kurds. Reportedly there have been a number of killings, kidnappings and vandalism directed at the Kurdish community, according to Iraqi News with reference to the London-based al-Quds al-Arabi newspaper.

More details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/kurdistan/330610>

- **25 children die of hunger in western Mosul, 140.000 threatened: observatory**

Hunger caused by foodstuff shortage claimed the lives of 25 children in Islamic-State held western Mosul in January, with 140.000 others threatened, according to an Iraqi human rights monitor. The Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights said baby milk, supplementary nutrition and potable water have become scarce in western Mosul, making an increase in deaths caused by starvation more likely.

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/features/25-children-die-hunger-western-mosul-140-000-threatened-observatory/>

2. SYRIA

- **Kazakhstan says direct talks between Syrian government, opposition under consideration**

The possibility of arranging direct talks between Damascus and the Syrian opposition is under consideration, Director of the Kazakh Foreign Ministry's Department of Asian and African Affairs Aidarbek Tumatov said on Thursday. "All the possible options are under consideration," he said. "No decision on direct talks has been made yet, we are still waiting for the results."

More Details

<http://tass.com/world/931142>

- **U.N. Syria envoy says plans to meet Russia's Lavrov in Munich: agency**

The United Nations special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, said on Thursday he plans to meet Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov for further talks in Munich, RIA news agency reported.

More Details

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-russia-un-meetin-idUSKBN15V0IV>

- **Joint session on Syria to go ahead: Kazakhstan**

Kazakhstan said a new round of talks on the Syria conflict backed by Russia, Turkey and Iran and endorsed by the United Nations were going ahead Thursday after a day's delay. A plenary session involving all three power-brokers and delegations from the Syrian government and opposition is scheduled to begin at 1600 local time (0900 GMT), a Kazakh foreign ministry official said at a press briefing in Astana on Thursday.

More Details

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1328780/joint-session-syria-go-ahead-kazakhstan/>

- **12 Syrian refugee families now resettled in Bristol under new scheme**

More than 50 people from Syria have now been resettled in Bristol under a Government scheme. A family of four from war-torn Syria was relocated to Bristol last week, the latest of the 12 families to come here under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

More Details

<http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/12-syrian-refugee-families-now-resettled-in-bristol-under-new-scheme/story-30139718-detail/story.html>

- **Syrian Geneva IV peace talks won't work without Kurds present: PYD**

Syria peace talks set for next week in Geneva will be a failure unless the Kurds are at the table, a representative of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) told AFP on Wednesday.

More Details

<http://ekurd.net/syrian-geneva-talks-kurds-2017-02-16>

- **Syria denies using chemical weapons**

Syria's government on Wednesday denied claims by Human Rights Watch (HRW) that it used chemical weapons during the recent battle for Aleppo, AFP reported. In a major report released Monday, HRW said Syrian government forces had carried out at least eight chemical attacks in late 2016 as they were fighting to capture second city Aleppo.

More Details

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/225089>

- **Damascus denies using chlorine gas during Aleppo battle**

Syria's government on Wednesday fiercely denied accusations by Human Rights Watch that it used chemical weapons in its battle for Aleppo, shrugging off the group's report as "unprofessional and unscientific.

More Details

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/02/16/world/damascus-denies-using-chlorine-gas-aleppo-battle/#.WKVb5PmLTtQ>

- **Is America No Longer the Middle East's Greatest Power?**

When Russia launched a dramatic military intervention in Syria in fall 2015, it stunned the world and announced its return to the Middle East. Its move also surprised American policymakers, who had not long before worked with Russia in an effort to rid Syria of its chemical weapons and expressed hope that such cooperation might lead to a broader push for peace.

More Details

<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/america-no-longer-the-middle-east-s-greatest-power-19461>

- **Syria denies HRW report on using chemical weapons**

Syria's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday denied a recent report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) about the Syrian military use of chemical weapons during the battles in Aleppo city, according to state news agency SANA. The Syrian government completely denied the "allegations" made in a report by the HRW, which claimed that the Syrian government used chemical weapons at least eight times during the siege of rebel-held areas east of Aleppo city in northern Syria.

More Details

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/16/c_136059850.htm

3. IRAN

- **Iran slams US for 'biased' meddling in its internal affairs**

Tehran has strongly condemned as "spiteful" a recent statement by Washington on the 2009 post-election unrest in Iran. The Iranian government and nation have "very bitter memories" of the American officials' "occasional and uncalled-for" interference in Iran's domestic affairs, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Wednesday.

More Details

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/02/15/510724/Iran-US-Qassemi-postelection-riot>

- **Iran: Trump Stance Won't Derail Foreign Investment in Oil, Gas**

Iran's deputy minister for petroleum says the hawkish stance taken by U.S. President Donald Trump on the Iranian nuclear deal is a "passing hiccup" that should not affect foreign investment in the country's energy sector.

More Details

<http://www.voanews.com/a/iran-says-trump-stance-foreign-investment-energy-sector/3726218.html>

- **Herbal Healthcare and Great Potentials for Growth in Iran**

"There has been emphasis on tapping into the potential of Iranian traditional medicine," he said addressing the Fifth Conference of Green Gold on medicinal herbs at Tehran's Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences. High-ranking officials from the Health Ministry as well as experts in the field, attended the meet, Mehr News Agency reported.

More Details

<http://ifpnews.com/news/society/healthcare/2017/02/herbal-healthcare-and-great-potentials-for-growth-in-iran/>

- **Netanyahu talks Iran, Palestinians with Congressional leaders**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held talks with senior congressional figures on a range of Middle East security issues Wednesday, hours after meeting with US President Donald Trump. Netanyahu met with Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer, House Speaker Paul Ryan, House majority leader Kevin McCarthy, House minority leader Nancy Pelosi and House minority whip Steny Hoyer in a series of sit-downs.

More Details

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-talks-iran-palestinians-with-congressional-leaders/>

- **Iranian FM to Take Part in Munich Security Conference**

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi announced on Wednesday that Zarif will leave Tehran for Germany in coming days to attend Munich Security Conference (MSN). “Based on schedules, the foreign minister will address the conference and hold talks with a number of foreign officials, including presidents, foreign ministers, owners of economic companies, heads of international organizations and political figures, on the sidelines of the conference,” Qassemi added.

More Details

<http://ifpnews.com/news/politics/foreign-policies/2017/02/iranian-fm-to-take-part-in-munich-security-conference/>

- **'Iran will never get bomb', Trump assures Netanyahu**

Iran would never be allowed to build a nuclear weapon, President Donald Trump vowed, as he hailed the US' "unbreakable" bond with Israel in a meeting with Binyamin Netanyahu on Wednesday. Trump's vow was designed to address Israeli concerns over the nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers - a pact that the new US president has repeatedly criticised on multiple occasions.

More Details

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/2/16/iran-will-never-get-bomb-trump-assures-netanyahu>

- **Iran Looks to Improve Ties with Gulf Neighbours**

President Hassan Rouhani has called for greater unity between Shiite and Sunni Muslims during his first official visit to the Arab Gulf since being elected in 2013. On a visit to Kuwait he was welcomed by Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

More Details

http://www.euronews.com/2017/02/15/iran-looks-to-improve-ties-with-gulf-neighbours?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+euronews%2Fen%2Fnews+%28euronews+-+news+-+en%29

- **Rouhani in Oman, Kuwait to Ease Tension**

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said the short trip that brought him to each of Muscat and Kuwait on Wednesday came in the framework of Tehran's attempt to resolve “misunderstanding” with Gulf states after tension lately escalated between the two sides regarding regional issues.

More Details

<http://english.aawsat.com/2017/02/article55367534/rouhani-oman-kuwait-ease-tension>

- **Nuclear Deal Prevents Trump from Increasing Pressure on Iran**

“One of the challenges facing the JCPOA is Trump,” Abbas Araqchi was cited by lawmaker Hossein Naqavi Hosseini as telling a parliamentary meeting on Wednesday, IRNA reported. JCPOA stands for the official name of the pact, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

More Details

<http://ifpnews.com/news/politics/foreign-policies/2017/02/nuclear-deal-prevents-trump-from-increasing-pressure-on-iran/>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **The carrot, the stick and the narrative**

A new Hamas leader was elected Monday—Yahya Sanwar, a murderer with blood on his hands. The man, who takes pride in the fact that he murdered 12 collaborators with Israel, plans to lead a tough line and to make soldier abductions a top priority, as he sees that as the essential tactic for releasing his friends who remained in prison after he himself was released in the Shalit deal.

More Details:

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4922821,00.html>

- **Iran Continues to Call for Israel’s Destruction despite Nuclear Deal**

Iranian leaders’ calls for Israel’s destruction have not abated at all in the 20 months since the Iranian nuclear deal was signed, meaning that those who claimed the deal would moderate Iranian attitudes were completely wrong, former Foreign Ministry director-general Dore Gold said on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Iran-News/Iran-continues-to-call-for-Israelis-destruction-despite-nuclear-deal-481659>

- **Palestinians denounce US comments on 2-state solution, say alternative is apartheid**

A United States official said on Tuesday that the US was not necessarily committed to the two-state solution as the sole way out of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sparking criticism from Palestinian

officials who upheld that the two-state solution remained the only alternative to an apartheid system in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

More Details:

<http://www.maannnews.com/Content.aspx?id=775484>

- **Jerusalem affairs minister denounces claims Al Aqsa belongs to Jews only**

Minister of Jerusalem Affairs Governor Adnan Husseini said the public statement of the Israeli Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan that Al Aqsa Mosque is for Jews only is an extremely dangerous one.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=eJuCmYa52407327192aeJuCmY>

- **Sweden to appoint full-time diplomat to Israel-Palestine peace process**

Sweden will appoint a full-time diplomat to the Israel-Palestine peace process, foreign minister Margot Wallstrom announced on Wednesday. The special envoy is to establish contacts and represent Sweden in international talks about the conflict.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/sweden-appoint-full-time-diplomat-israel-palestine-peace-process-938376>

- **Trump backs away from commitment to Palestinian state**

President Donald Trump on Wednesday dropped a U.S. commitment to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the longstanding bedrock of Washington's Middle East policy, even as he urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to curb settlement construction.

More Details:

<http://www.businesslive.co.za/rdm/world/2017-02-16-trump-backs-away-from-commitment-to-palestinian-state/>

- **There are few workable alternatives to a Palestinian state**

The Trump administration appears to be easing away from long-standing U.S. support for Palestinian statehood as the preferred outcome of Middle East peace efforts, which may please some allies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel. But the alternatives are few, and each comes with daunting and combustible complications, including for Israel itself.

More Details:

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/02/16/world/analysis-workable-alternatives-palestinian-state/#.WKVOD9SLSmU>

- **6 million Palestinians living under apartheid rule, PLO tells Arab News**

Palestinians have expressed shock and anger over an apparent shift in US policy, after a White House official said peace with Israel did not necessarily have to entail a two-state solution.

More Details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1055086/middle-east>

- **Congresswoman tells Netanyahu to end abuse of Palestinian children**

A member of Congress said she had “a clear message” for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was in Washington on Wednesday: he must respect the rights of Palestinian children. As US President Donald Trump and the Israeli leader held a joint press conference at the White House, Representative Betty McCollum of Minnesota challenged Israel’s systematic abuses of Palestinian children in a post on Facebook.

More Details:

<https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/congresswoman-tells-netanyahu-end-abuse-palestinian-children>

- **Palestinian president meets CIA chief in Ramallah**

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Tuesday met with CIA Director Mike Pompeo one day before a planned visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the White House, a senior Palestinian official said Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/palestinian-president-meets-cia-chief-in-ramallah/751255>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Visa and Central Bank of Jordan co-host Risk Management Forum in Amman**

Global payments technology company, Visa (NYSE:V), and the Central Bank of Jordan have jointly organized a Risk Management Forum in Amman. The event was attended by more than 95 representatives from both the public and private sectors, and focused on the importance of collaboration between Visa and the Central Bank on enhancing the security of Jordan’s rapidly evolving digital payments ecosystem.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/business/pr/visa-and-central-bank-jordan-co-host-risk-management-forum-amman-938262>

- **Common causes and visions**

The official visit to the Kingdom of Lebanese President Michel Aoun for talks with His Majesty King Abdullah and Jordanian officials was the third foreign trip the Lebanese president made since his election on October 31 last year. He had visited Riyadh for talks with the Saudi king and Cairo where he held talks with the Egyptian president.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/opinion/editorial/common-causes-and-visions>

- **Jordan's worst nightmare could be yet to come if US embassy moves to Jerusalem**

For decades, the Jordanian role in the occupied city of Jerusalem has been exceptional and rather sensitive case. For this reason, Trump's repeated vows to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem has disproportionately upset the Jordanian government which, at the moment, has no shortage of crises.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/jordan-anxiety-high-alert-move-embassy-lose-it-forever-549298505>

- **FM affirms Jordan's support to Iraq's stability**

Minister of Foreign and Expatriate Affairs Ayman Safadi discussed with the United Nations secretary general's representative in Iraq, Jan Kubis, the importance of launching a political process in Iraq that leads to national reconciliation with the participation of all components of the Iraqi society.

More Details:

http://www.petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site_id=1&NewsID=289462&CatID=13

- **Lebanon: Proposal to raise taxes met with opposition**

Taxes proposed by Lebanon's Finance Ministry are coming under mounting criticism from economists, bankers and businesses who are warning that these measures would add more burden on citizens and the struggling economy. One of the vocal opponents of the taxes, which are aimed at

financing a public salary increase, was the Association of Banks in Lebanon, which issued a statement urging the government to look for other ways to increase state revenues.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/business/lebanon-proposal-raise-taxes-met-opposition-938534>

- **France's Le Pen to visit Lebanon next week**

Beirut: French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen will visit Lebanon next week for talks with leaders of Paris's former mandate territory, a Lebanese government source said on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/90b9d9c4-7cd8-473d-984b-6fcfa2580368.aspx>

- **Mustaqbal Says Only State Arms Have Legitimacy to Protect Lebanon**

Al-Mustaqbal parliamentary bloc on Wednesday stressed that only the army and the other security forces have the "legitimacy" to "protect Lebanon and its land and people," several days after President Michel Aoun announced that Hizbullah's arms "do not contradict with the State."

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/225512-mustaqbal-says-only-state-arms-have-legitimacy-to-protect-lebanon>

- **Hezbollah bloc appreciates president Aoun stance towards resistance**

The bloc on Wednesday convened under the chairmanship of MP Mohammad Raad. The bloc reiterated its support for an electoral law based on proportionality with single district or expanding ones, showing readiness at the same time to discuss any other law draft resembling the one it mostly preferred to certain extent.

More Details:

<http://en.abna24.com/news/middle-east/hezbollah-bloc-appreciates-president-aoun-stance-towards-resistance.html>

- **Lebanon builds wall around Palestinian camp in south**

Lebanese authorities have started building a wall around the most crowded Palestinian camp south of Beirut, Ain Al-Hilweh.

More Details:

http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/generalnews/2017/02/15/lebanon-builds-wall-around-palestinian-camp-in-south_8ab9325b-9e5c-4929-8d4a-253faacbccdd1.html

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Bahrain mourners clash with police following jailbreak funerals**

Protesters clashed with police in Bahrain's capital Manama on Wednesday after a mourning ceremony for three people killed while allegedly attempting to flee to Iran last week.

More details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/2/16/bahrain-mourners-clash-with-police-following-jailbreak-funerals>

- **Bahrain Terrorist Blast Wounds Two Civilians**

An explosion wounded two civilian passers-by in Bahrain, the interior ministry said early Wednesday.

More details:

<http://english.aawsat.com/2017/02/article55367504/bahrain-terrorist-blast-wounds-two-civilians>

- **UN chief backs sultanate for its efforts to resolve regional conflicts**

Addressing a media gathering following his maiden visit to the sultanate on Tuesday, Guterres said, "This is my first visit to the region and the objective is to be able to consult the Government of Oman to see how I can be useful, recognising [its role] in bringing peace to the region."

More details:

<http://www.muscatdaily.com/Archive/Oman/UN-chief-backs-sultanate-for-its-efforts-to-resolve-regional-conflicts-4y8h#ixzz4YpfGetHR>

- **Qatar's ties with Turkey at new heights**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who concluded his two-day visit to Qatar yesterday has stressed the importance of Qatari-Turkish relations, which he said has witnessed a rapid development in all fields, especially in recent years.

More details:

<http://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/16/02/2017/Qatar-s-ties-with-Turkey-at-new-heights>

- **Algeria-Saudi Arabia shipping line under consideration**

Minister of Public Works and Transport Boudjemaa Talai and Saudi Minister of Commerce and Investment Majid bin Abdullah Al-Gassabi agreed Wednesday in Algiers on considering the opening of a shipping line for the transport of goods between Algeria and Saudi Arabia, said the ministry in a communiqué.

More details:

<http://en.aps.dz/economy/16736-algeria-saudi-arabia-shipping-line-under-consideration>

- **Attack Hits mourners in Yemen, Killing 8 Women, 1 Child**

Warplanes of the Saudi-led coalition struck a house north of Yemen's capital on Wednesday where mourners had gathered to offer condolences after a woman died, residents said, killing eight women and one child and injuring ten others.

More details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Attack-hits-mourners-in-Yemen-killing-8-women-1-child-481705>

- **UAE telecom du targets \$272 million in savings by 2019**

Feb 16 The United Arab Emirates' second largest telecom company du expects to save 1 billion dirhams (\$272.3 million) by 2019 as higher government taxes continue to weigh on its net profit, its chief executive said Thursday.

More details:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/du-restructuring-idUSD5N1FJ00H?rpc=401&>

- **UAE ambassador dies of wounds sustained in Kandahar bombing**

The United Arab Emirates' ambassador to Afghanistan, injured last month in a bombing while on a humanitarian mission, has died from his wounds, the UAE Ministry of Presidential Affairs said Wednesday, according to the official Emirati news agency WAM.

More details:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/15/asia/uae-ambassador-to-afghanistan-killed/index.html>

7. EGYPT

- **Egypt aims for end of government gas imports by 2018**

Egypt hopes its gas market will be balanced in 2018 and expects to begin exporting by 2020, EGAS chief Mohamed Al-Masry said on Wednesday at an oil conference in Cairo.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/business/egypt-aims-end-government-gas-imports-2018-938548>

- **Egypt's parliament approves cabinet changes**

The Egyptian parliament approved the second cabinet reshuffle involving nine ministers. The cabinet reshuffle include the ministries of agriculture, legal and parliamentary affairs, supply and trade, local development, planning and administrative reform, higher education and scientific research, and transport.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/egypt%E2%80%99s-parliament-approves-cabinet-changes-938370>

- **Algerian, Egyptian and Tunisian foreign ministers to meet in Tunis**

The diplomatic drive to find a way out of the Libyan crisis is not letting up despite the failed Cairo meeting between Presidency Council leader Faiez Serraj and Khalifa Hafter.

More details:

<https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/02/15/algerian-egyptian-and-tunisian-foreign-ministers-to-meet-in-tunis/>

- **Egypt brokers Libya peace roadmap, but key figures fail to meet**

Libyan factions have tentatively agreed on an Egyptian-brokered roadmap to heal divisions, Egypt said, though the failure to engineer a meeting between two key figures has cast a shadow on the diplomatic push.

More details:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-libya-talks-idUSKBN15V01B?rpc=401&>

- **No "plan B" for Mideast two-state solution: UN chief**

There is no plan B for the two-state solution between the Israelis and the Palestinians to resolve the Middle East conflict and achieve regional peace, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a press conference in Cairo on Wednesday following his meeting with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi.

More details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/16/c_136059757.htm

- **Cairo meeting fails to find solution for Libyan crisis**

Egyptian government attempts to mediate a peace deal between Presidency Council (PC) leader of the UN-brokered Government of National Accord (GNA) Faiez Serraj and Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, commander of the Libyan National Army (LNA) failed.

More details:

<http://www.digitaljournal.com/news/world/op-ed-cairo-meeting-fails-to-find-solution-for-libyan-crisis/article/485934#ixzz4YpuMaiGX>

- **Initial reconciliation between Flash Tour and the Ukranian Company Join Up, sources**

Sources at the Egyptian Travel Agents Association and the Ministry of Tourism revealed that the amount of money disputed between the Ukrainian company Join Up and the Egyptian company Flash Tour is roughly \$2.7m.

More details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/02/16/615564/>

- **Egypt self-sufficiency in gas production seen in the next two years**

Egypt expects to attain self-sufficiency in gas production within the next two years under the programs recently adopted by the government as part of its efforts to pursue reforms and continue development, Egyptian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Tarek El Molla said at the Egypt Petroleum Show 2017.

More details:

<http://saudigazette.com.sa/business/egypt-self-sufficiency-gas-production-seen-next-two-years/>

- **New ministers to face challenges of country's top issues from 2016**

Among the cabinet reshuffle that took place on Tuesday, five ministers will run ministries related to social welfare and services.

More details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/02/15/615581/>

- **Some Aspects of Egypt Flights Security Remain Problematic - Upper House Speaker**

Russian upper house of parliament speaker said that Cairo has improved most security aspects providing for safe Egypt-Russia flights, but Moscow believes that a few details remain problematic.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/world/201702151050706079-russia-egypt-security/>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Egypt brokers Libya peace roadmap, but key figures fail to meet**

Libyan factions have tentatively agreed on an Egyptian-brokered roadmap to heal divisions, Egypt said, though the failure to engineer a meeting between two key figures has cast a shadow on the diplomatic push. The deal comes after months of diplomatic efforts by Egypt, culminating this week with visits by Prime Minister Fayez Seraj of the U.N.-backed government in Tripoli, and Khalifa Haftar, a military commander supported by eastern factions.

More Details:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-libya-talks-idUSKBN15V01B?rpc=401&>

- **Libya's Oil Ambitions in Limbo**

While members of OPEC are committed to the oil cartel's decision to cut output by 1.2 million barrels per day (MMbbl/d) for six months to slash market supply glut, the contribution of OPEC's members in North Africa is minimal. Libya was exempt from the agreement, while Algeria's contribution is to cut production by 50 Mbbl/d. The country is going from October levels of 1.089 MMbbl/d to 1.039 MMbbl/d as of January, for at least six months.

More Details:

<http://www.epmag.com/libyas-oil-ambitions-limbo-1466656>

- **India welcomes Morocco's return to African Union**

Morocco's re-admission into the African Union in January is after more than three decades India on Wednesday congratulated Morocco on its return to the African Union (AU). "India and Africa have a historic relationship and this has grown into a sustainable partnership. India wholeheartedly welcomes Morocco's return to AU, which has strengthened Africa's Unity," a statement from the Indian ministry of external affairs said.

More Details:

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/nf899bUydKffpFoKbG13gl/India-welcomes-Moroccos-return-to-African-Union.html>

- **Tunisia: North Africa's new jihadi hotbed**

There were great hopes for Tunisia when it became the only country in the Arab Spring of 2010-12 to make the transition to democracy. Now the country, a top source of foreign fighters, is facing a crisis with many soldiers heading home and others seeping into Europe. Ali was a normal Tunisian teenager, or seemed to be. He went to school in his middle-class Tunis suburb, hung out with friends and loved watching soccer, especially Espérance, the feted Tunis team that won the Africa Cup in 2011. But in 2012, his family noticed that his behaviour was changing, and they started to worry.

More details:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/tunisia-north-africas-new-jihadihotbed/article34041469/>

- **Libya crisis: Messahel receives large delegation representing Al-Bunyan al-Marsous**

Minister of Maghreb Affairs, African Union and Arab League Abdelkader Messahel has received, Wednesday in Algiers, a large Libyan delegation representing the Al-Bunyan al-Marsous, and led by Major General Salem Mhamed Djeha, said the Foreign Minister in a statement. The discussions, which follow the different visits paid to Algeria by Libyan politicians, senior officials, personalities and MPs, are in line with Algeria's efforts to further bridging the positions of Libyan parties, said the Ministry's statement.

More Details:

<http://en.aps.dz/algeria/16714-libya-crisis-messahel-receives-large-delegation-representing-al-bunyan-al-marsous>

- **Budget deficit widens in 2016 compared to 2015 (BCT)**

The budget deficit has increased, according to the review of the provisional results of the implementation of the state budget until the end of November 2016, reaching 4,058 MD compared

to 1,865 MD during the same period in 2015, due to the acceleration of expenditure apart debt principal debt at a higher rate than that of own revenues, the Central Bank of Tunisia (BCT) said in its note on " Economic and Monetary Developments and Medium-Term Outlook", published this week. Operating expenses increased by 9.7% during this period (down from -0.1% a year earlier), reflecting the acceleration in compensation expenses (+ 16.8% versus + 12.7%).

More Details:

<http://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Economy/8717619-budget-deficit>

- **Libya Crude Output Rises as Work Conditions for Big Oil Improve**

Libya's crude production exceeded 700,000 barrels a day and is due to keep rising as working conditions in the conflict-ridden country improve for international companies like Eni SpA and Total SA, an official from the state oil company said. The North African country's crude production is due to reach 1.2 million barrels a day by August and 1.7 million by March 2018 when the nation's ports and export terminals will be operating at full capacity, Jadalla Alaokali, board member of Libya's National Oil Corp., said in an interview in Cairo. Output at the El-Feel, or Elephant, oil field is due to resume within one month, pumping 75,000 barrels a day, he said.

More Details:

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-02-15/libya-sees-crude-output-rising-on-better-big-oil-work-conditions>

- **Meslem receives UNHCR representative in Algeria**

Minister of National Solidarity, Family and Women's Condition, Mounia Meslem Si Amer, on Wednesday in Algiers received the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Algeria, Hamid Anwar Ahmed Bukhari, said a communiqué of the ministry. During the audience, the two parties "broached the situation of the refugees and the immigrants from the Sahel region to Algeria."

More Details:

<http://en.aps.dz/society/16735-meslem-receives-unhcr-representative-in-algeria>

- **5 terrorists killed in northern Algeria**

Algerian counter-terrorism troops on Wednesday killed five armed militants and retrieved weapons in a wide-scale operation in the province of Bouira, 110 km east of Algiers, said a statement of the defense ministry. The operation has been launched in the dense woods of Laadjiba in Bouira with accurate information of a terrorist group there, said the statement.

More Details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/16/c_136059601.htm

- **Boosting Tunisia-UN co-operation in justice field**

Justice Minister Ghazi Jribi received Wednesday in Tunis UN resident co-ordinator and UNDP representative to Tunisia Diego Zorrilla. The meeting turned on the follow-up of the co-operation programme between the Department of Justice and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

More Details:

<http://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/8716612-boosting-tunisia-un>

- **Morocco Will not Recognize Self-Proclaimed SADR despite Return to AU**

Notwithstanding Morocco's reinstated membership in the African Union (AU), Morocco will not recognize the self-proclaimed Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), stated Abdelkader Lecheheb, Morocco's ambassador to Russia. In an interview with Sputnik, Lecheheb explained that following Morocco's return to the AU after a 33-year-long absence, Morocco will seek to tackle other issues from inside the pan-African organization. The ambassador made clear that Morocco's return to the AU does not mean that it gives legitimacy to the Polisario's self-proclaimed entity. "We will defend ourselves from inside the African Union, but this does not mean that we recognize the so-called SADR. We have returned to the AU after the tremendous job Morocco has done in Africa," he said.

More Details:

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/02/208366/morocco-will-not-recognize-self-proclaimed-sadr-despite-return-to-au/>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Senior Afghan diplomat summoned to FO**

A senior Afghan diplomat was summoned to the Foreign Office on Wednesday to receive protest over the use of territory of his country for launching terrorist attacks in Pakistan as civilian and military leaders of the country pledged a forceful response to the recent terror attacks. Afghan Deputy Head of Mission (DHM) Syed Abdul Nasir Yousafi was summoned to the Foreign Office for receiving protest over continuing terrorist attacks on Pakistani soil by the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar from its sanctuaries inside Afghanistan.

More Details:

<http://paktribune.com/news/Senior-Afghan-diplomat-summoned-to-FO-278250.html>

- **UAE ambassador dies of wounds from Afghanistan bombing**

The UAE's ambassador to Afghanistan died on Wednesday of wounds sustained in a 10 January bombing in Kandahar, according to state media. Juma Mohammed Abdullah al-Kaabi's death was confirmed by the UAE's official WAM news agency who described the ambassador as a "martyr" in a blast which killed five other Emirati officials.

More Details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/2/16/uae-ambassador-dies-of-wounds-from-afghanistan-bombing>

- **Honor Killing in Afghanistan: Armed Mob of 300 Brutally Kill Young Couple for Eloping**

A mob of up to 300 armed men in eastern Afghanistan's Nuristan province reportedly "lynched" a young couple. The mob allegedly forced police officers, who had arrested the married woman and her lover for eloping, to surrender the accused adulterers over to the angry horde.

More Details:

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/02/15/honor-killing-afghanistan-mob-kills-couple-eloping/>

- **Afghanistan placed among repressed economies**

Afghanistan, after becoming a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2016, has been placed among the repressed economies of the world. Making its maiden entry in to the annual Index of Economic Freedom of The Heritage Foundation on Wednesday, Afghanistan has been ranked at the 163th place out of 180 countries. It has scored 48.9 points.

More Details:

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2017/02/16/afghanistan-placed-among-repressed-economies>

- **Pak National Assembly committee says teach kids Arabic to end terrorism**

Arabic not being actively included as a subject in the educational system of Pakistan is a primary cause for increasing acts of terrorism, members of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat have said. They made this observation while debating the Compulsory Education of Arabic Bill 2015, which was moved by MNA Naeema Kishwar Khan, reports the Dawn.

More Details:

<http://www.aninews.in/newsdetail-NA/MzAwMTEz/pak-national-assembly-committee-says-teach-kids-arabic-to-end-terrorism.html>

- **Pakistan Police Raid Taliban-Linked Militant Hideout, Kill 6**

A Pakistani counter-terrorism official says security forces have raided a hideout of Taliban- linked suspected Islamic militants, killing 6 of them. Mohammad Saleem says the raid took place on Thursday in the central district of Khanewal and was based on intelligence that the militants were planning an attack.

More Details:

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/A/AS_PAKISTAN?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-02-16-01-56-41

- **Fear of Education**

There are two prevailing mindsets that could account for the staggered growth of female education in Pakistan: that which thinks of education as an asset, and the other which views it as a threat. The crux of the issue of slow-to-improve gender disparity in our education system is that Pakistanis appear to have both mindsets at the same time. Less than a decade ago, a child's gender significantly accounted for unequal opportunities in primary education, even more so in the case of secondary education in Pakistan. Today, surveys show more than eight out of 10 Pakistanis say that education is equally important for boys and girls; very few think that it is more important for boys than girls or the other way round.

More Details:

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/02/fear-of-education/>

- **Police arrest two facilitators of Lahore blast suspect**

Police on Thursday have apprehended one accomplice of Lahore blast suspect from Sukkur and the other one from Lahore. The officers have also detained as many as 43 suspicious people including eight Afghanis in a combing operation. Earlier, a sketch of the suicide bomber who blew himself at Charing Cross of Mall Road claiming lives of 14 people was prepared taking help from CCTV footage, eye witnesses and statements by those injured.

More Details:

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/02/16/police-arrest-two-facilitators-of-lahore-blast-suspect/>

- **Will we be the 16th largest economy in 2050?**

A report by PwC has everyone talking due to a claim reportedly made in it that Pakistan will be the world's 16th largest economy by the year 2050. The finance minister has gone the extra mile by publicly congratulating the country on the "economic turnaround" effected by his government, citing

the Pwc report and an opinion piece in Bloomberg by George Mason University's Professor Tyler Cowen, in which he says that "most of Pakistan's developments are fairly positive".

More Details:

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1315016/will-we-be-the-16th-largest-economy-in-2050>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkey releases latest refugee data**

Turkey's interior minister on Wednesday said more than 3.5 million refugees were residing in Turkey, with the country spending \$25 billion on supporting them. Speaking at the newly established Migration Policy Board in Ankara, Suleyman Soylu said 3,551,078 refugees were currently being sheltered. Around 10 percent of this total was being supported in refugee camps, according to latest figures. Turkey's "open door" policy for Syrian refugees has been in place since 2011, Soylu said.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/184842/turkey-warns-us-defense-secretary-over-pkk-pyd-in-syria>

- **Turkey-Saudi cooperation 'essential' to fight Daesh**

Cooperation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia is "essential" to resolve the Syrian conflict, an international relations professor said Wednesday. Muhittin Ataman, of Ankara's Yildirim Beyazit University, said: "Turkey-Saudi Arabia sustainable cooperation is essential on Syria. Saudi Arabia left Turkey alone in 2013 and in 2014 on Syria. However, it was revealed that the regional issues became more threatening for Saudi Arabia than it was for Turkey."

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkey-saudi-cooperation-essential-to-fight-daesh/751397>

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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