



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

MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

17 FEBRUARY 2017

NO: 2320

1. IRAQ.....	4
• Al-Sadr urges fresh protests Friday against elections commission	4
• War on Isis: James Mattis to discuss sending US ground troops to Iraq and Syria with Nato	4
• Kurdish factions still hopeful to break stalemate in parliament	4
• Official: Islamic State eastern Mosul cells spread panic through rumors	4
• British forces OBLITERATE ISIS Headquarters in Mosul with MIGHTY RAF airstrike	5
• Security concerns force UN to pause aid operation in east Mosul	5
• High numbers of Syrians and Iraqis refused family visas	5
• UK will continue support for anti-Daesh alliance	5
• California joins brief challenging travel ban to support Iraqi pair who worked for the U.S. government	6
• 55 killed in Islamic State car bombing at Baghdad auto dealer	6
• UN to resume humanitarian missions to Eastern Mosul on Sunday	6
• British general issues warning over jihadis' death threat from drones after ISIS use them to drop grenades on civilians	6
• Dutch intelligence warns: ISIS returnees could carry out attacks in Europe	7
• Kurdistan Region President meets world leaders in Munich	7
• Dozens perish in Iraq	7
• Islamic State forces western Mosul's residents to feed its combat detachments	8
• Mayhem in Baghdad as ISIS Strikes Again; 87 Killed in Iraq	8
• Iraq signs UN transparency convention	8
• Islamic State textbooks featuring guns and tanks 'used to teach children maths' in school	8
2. SYRIA.....	9
• US Declines to Confirm Safe Zones Creation in Northern Syria amid Policy Review	9
• Rebels call for prisoner swap at talks	9
• Assad wants 'every inch' of Syria, not just Raqqa	9
• The UN's step for justice in Syria	9
• Work with Putin on Islamic State: Opposing view	10
• Assad: Trump Refugee Executive Order Is 'Against the Terrorists,' Not Syria	10
• Syrian facts meet in Astana amid build up to Syrian peace negotiations	10
• Munich Security Conference will open on Friday to discuss EU, NATO future, situation in Ukraine and Syria	10
• US under pressure on Syria ahead of Geneva talks	11
• SA journalist captured in Syria alive, says NGO	11
3. IRAN.....	11
• Iran's Rohani Seeks To Mend Frayed Ties with Persian Gulf Arab Neighbors	11
• Iran's president to launch new gas pipeline project	12
• Iranian Quds Force Terror Chief Defies U.N. Resolutions to Visit Moscow	12
• Resumption of Iranian oil exports off to slow start	12
• Iran, Russia and Turkey to create monitoring group on Syria	12
• Russia Reaffirms Cooperation with Iran, Despite US Position	13

• Tillerson: I didn't suggest scrapping Iran nuclear deal	13
• Tehran, Riyadh to discuss Hajj in late February	13
• Azerbaijani business delegation to visit Iran	13
• Isn't Persian expansionism a reality?	14
4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE.....	14
• B'Tselem: 2016 a record year in Israeli demolitions of Palestinian homes.....	14
• Nasrallah Warns: Hezbollah's Missiles can hit Israel's Nuclear Reactor	14
• Israeli forces raid Nablus-area village, set up checkpoints, deploy snipers	14
• Too early to speak of corresponding US-Israeli position, says foreign minister	15
• France says US stand on Israel-Palestine conflict is 'confused and worrying'	15
• Germany says building more Israeli settlements may end two-state solution.....	15
• Netanyahu: We must maintain our security interests	15
• Israel's Miami consulate evacuated after bomb threat	16
• A 'warm and positive' meeting between Palestinian president and CIA chief	16
• Cuba Rejects Israeli Threats over Two-State Solution.....	16
5. JORDAN and LEBANON.....	16
• Bomb Scare in North Lebanon	16
• Lebanon's Hezbollah warns Israel of Dimona nuclear reactor.....	17
• Aoun: I Won't Allow Any Foreign Party to Interfere in Domestic Affairs	17
• Basbous, Serbian Ambassador tackle cooperation prospects	17
• Ten charged with Daesh links in Lebanon	17
• Ambassador Wehbe receives Kaag	17
• Jordan condemns Baghdad's terrorist bombing	18
• Jordan labor director, other officials arrested on corruption charges.....	18
• Attracting investments turns refugee crisis into opportunity.....	18
6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA.....	18
• Bahrain embassy in UAE wins award	18
• Erdogan concludes successful trip to Gulf States.....	19
• UN Secretary General heaps praise on Oman.....	19
• Taliban Envoys Barred From Entering UAE	19
• Qatar-US ties strong: Foreign Minister	19
• Saudi Arabia Breaks Up Four ISIS Cells	19
• UAE says Emirati Soldier Killed in Saudi-led War in Yemen	20
• US raid in Yemen killed backer of central government.....	20
• Yemen: Art, love, bombs and bans.....	20
• Saudi King Salman Receives Bahrain Crown Prince, Malaysian Defense Minister.....	20
7. EGYPT.....	21
• Al-Sisi swears in nine ministers, four deputies, and five governors.....	21
• Egyptian envoy meets minister	21
• Egypt Remains Committed to Two-State Solution of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict	21
• A visit by UNESCO's chief	21
• Court reject's hijacker's appeal for extradition to Egypt	22
• Nadia Abdo, first female governor in Egypt's history.....	22
• CBE maintains same interest rate	22

• Libyan High Council of State agrees to meet with Libyan House of Representatives delegation in Cairo.....	22
• Setting a new Islamic Tone.....	23
• .No new scholarships until Egypt stabilises.....	23
8. NORTH AFRICA.....	23
• French presidential frontrunner Macron under fire over Algeria comments.....	23
• It is important to remove barriers preventing implementation of Algerian-Saudi projects.....	23
• Tunisia-Algeria-Egypt summit on Libya in Tunis 1/3	24
• Tunisia extends 2015 state of emergency.....	24
• Bad habits die hard in Tunisia's security services.....	24
• “We are the LNA, we are everywhere in Libya” says LNA spokesman	24
• Libya requests NATO assistance for military training, supports	25
• Prospects for unity in Libya fade as rival leaders refuse to meet in Cairo	25
• Delegation of Saudi Businessmen to Visit Morocco on Feb. 19-25.....	25
9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN	26
• There Is No Solution in Afghanistan	26
• “Afghan government hopes that other countries must prove their honesty in fight against terrorism,” ARG said in the statement.....	26
• 2 Afghan civilians killed in Pakistani artillery shelling in Kunar	26
• Afghanistan says won't let militants move to territory of Tajikistan	27
• International Chamber of Commerce opens office in Kabul	27
• At least 60 killed, 250 injured in Sehwan bomb blast in Pakistan.....	27
• ISIS suicide bombing at Pakistan shrine kills 75	27
• Nawaz Sharif strongly condemned attack on Lal Shahbaz Qalandar shrine	28
• Pakistan closes Torkham crossing due to security reasons.....	28
• Pakistan Forces Launch Raids after Dozens Killed at Sufi Shrine	28
10. TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST.....	29
• Turkey: ISIL-held Al-Bab 'completely surrounded'	29
• 13 Daesh terrorists 'neutralized' in northern Syria	29

1. IRAQ

- **Al-Sadr urges fresh protests Friday against elections commission**

Influential Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr has called for a second round of protests condemning what he believes to be an impartial national elections commission after a first round of demonstrations turned deadly. Al-Sar, in a statement on Thursday, ordered his supporters to stage a “silent demonstration” in Baghdad’s central Tahrir arena, calling upon security forces to “protect the demonstrators”.

More details

<http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/al-sadr-urges-fresh-protests-friday-electoral-commission/>

- **War on Isis: James Mattis to discuss sending US ground troops to Iraq and Syria with Nato**

Defense Secretary James Mattis has said that the US would step up its efforts to defeat Islamic State (Isis) militants in Syria and Iraq, and would discuss sending ground troops to the war-torn countries if the need arises.

More details

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/war-isis-james-mattis-discuss-sending-us-ground-troops-iraq-syria-nato-1607048>

- **Kurdish factions still hopeful to break stalemate in parliament**

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) have stepped up efforts to bring an end to a political deadlock that has virtually shut down the regional parliament since late 2015.

More details

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/17022017>

- **Official: Islamic State eastern Mosul cells spread panic through rumors**

Islamic State militants are spreading panic among residents of the liberated eastern Mosul through rumors about suicide bombers, according to a local government official. Hossam al-Abbar, a member of the Nineveh province council, said in statements on Thursday, quoted by Alsumaria News, that IS sleeper cells were diffusing rumors of suicide bombers lurking in the region so as to frighten civilians.

More details

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/official-islamic-state-eastern-mosul-cells-spread-panic-rumors/>

- **British forces OBLITERATE ISIS Headquarters in Mosul with MIGHTY RAF airstrike**

The Ministry of Defence posted a 30-second clip which shows a flight of RAF Typhoons soaring over the conflict ridden city of Mosul. The jets, using pinpoint accuracy, then target the building believed to be in North West Mosul, dropping a pair of smart bombs onto it.

More details

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/768501/British-forces-RAF-air-jet-obliterate-ISIS-Iraq-Mosul-HQ-mighty-air-strike-Fallon-Mattis>

- **Security concerns force UN to pause aid operation in east Mosul**

Security concerns have forced the United Nations to temporarily pause aid operations in eastern Mosul, which Iraqi forces largely recaptured from Daesh last month. “Based on reports of insecurity, the UN decided that we would not send missions into eastern parts of Mosul until we reassess security conditions,” said Lise Grande, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq.

More details

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170216-security-concerns-force-un-to-pause-aid-operation-in-east-mosul/>

- **High numbers of Syrians and Iraqis refused family visas**

Significant numbers of families from Syria and Iraq living in Ireland who have applied for family reunification visas are being refused by the State, according to official figures. In a parliamentary reply, Minister for Justice Frances Fitzgerald said 27 requests from Syrians for family members to join them in Ireland have been refused since the beginning of last year.

More details

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/high-numbers-of-syrians-and-iraqis-refused-family-visas-1.2978547>

- **UK will continue support for anti-Daesh alliance**

The UK will continue its support for the international coalition and the training of Iraqi forces as part of the fight against Daesh, British Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said today. Fallon made his remarks during a press conference held in the Belgian capital Brussels, on the sidelines of the NATO defence ministers’ meeting. The minister said that Daesh is losing ground, fighters and financial support.

More details

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170216-uk-will-continue-support-for-anti-daesh-alliance/>

- **California joins brief challenging travel ban to support Iraqi pair who worked for the U.S. government**

California has joined a third amicus brief in support of a lawsuit challenging President Trump's travel ban, this time backing two Iraqi visa holders who were detained by officers at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport despite having done work for the U.S. government.

More details

<http://www.latimes.com/politics/essential/la-pol-ca-essential-politics-updates-california-files-brief-supporting-iraqi-1487293325-htmlstory.html>

- **55 killed in Islamic State car bombing at Baghdad auto dealer**

A car bomb at a Baghdad auto dealership killed at least 55 people and wounded more than 60 on Thursday, Iraqi officials said. Interior Ministry spokesman Brig. Gen. Saad Maan confirmed the toll from the attack, which took place in the mainly Shiite al-Bayaa neighborhood.

More details

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/02/17/world/55-killed-islamic-state-car-bombing-baghdad-auto-dealer/#.WKahm9SLRto>

- **UN to resume humanitarian missions to Eastern Mosul on Sunday**

On Tuesday, the United Nations announced it was suspending humanitarian aid operations in the newly liberated parts of eastern Mosul as a result of the worsening security conditions on the ground. "Following the temporary suspension of UN missions into eastern Mosul earlier this week for security reasons, a new security risk assessment was undertaken and the suspension has now been lifted," Haq said on Thursday.

More details

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201702171050769619-un-humanitarian-missions-mosul-resumption/>

- **British general issues warning over jihadis' death threat from drones after ISIS use them to drop grenades on civilians**

Commercial drones are becoming an 'increasingly insidious threat' in Iraq as Islamic State uses them to kill and maim civilians, Britain's top commander in the region said. Major General Rupert Jones

said the militant group was using off-the-shelf drones to drop grenades on civilians in Mosul in 'inhuman and indiscriminate' attacks.

More details

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4233408/British-general-warning-ISIS-threat-drones.html>

- **Dutch intelligence warns: ISIS returnees could carry out attacks in Europe**

The Dutch intelligence service AVID has warned for an increase in the number of ISIS returnees that could carry out attacks in Europe due to increasing ISIS territorial losses in both Iraq and Syria. The Dutch intelligence says the small number of ISIS returnees from Syria and Iraq could carry out attacks in the Netherlands, or recruit new ISIS supporters.

More details

<http://aranews.net/2017/02/dutch-intelligence-warns-isis-returnees-could-carry-out-attacks-in-europe/>

- **Kurdistan Region President meets world leaders in Munich**

A Kurdistan Region delegation headed by the Region's President traveled to Munich on Thursday to participate in 2017 Munich Security Conference. The Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani and an accompanied delegation of the Region's Peshmerga officials are to be part of the Munich Security Conference on 17-19 of February where more than 450 senior decision-makers from around the world will get together.

More details

<http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/2daa0c94-c5cf-4590-8e55-5a8b3c0af0f3/Kurdistan-Region-President-meets-world-leaders-in-Munich->

- **Dozens perish in Iraq**

A massive car bomb ripped through a used car market in southern Baghdad on Thursday, killing at least 45 people in the deadliest such attack this year, security officials said. Security sources said the vehicle which blew up on Thursday was parked in a crowded street full of garages and used car dealers, in Hayy Al Shurta in the southwest of the city.

More details

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/c554127d-e576-4209-82a6-90093d9de117.aspx>

- **Islamic State forces western Mosul's residents to feed its combat detachments**

A local source in Nineveh Province that the Islamic State group forced some residents of western Mosul to provide food to its combat detachments, Alsumaria News reported on Thursday.

More details

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/islamic-state-forces-western-mosuls-residents-feed-combat-detachments/>

- **Mayhem in Baghdad as ISIS Strikes Again; 87 Killed in Iraq**

In Baghdad, a powerful car bomb at a Bayaa auto dealership left 55 dead and at least 62 wounded. At least four other attacks were reported in the capital; those left eight dead and 30 wounded combined. Gunmen attacked the home of the head of the investment commission, where they wounded his son before fleeing.

More details

<http://original.antiwar.com/updates/2017/02/16/mayhem-in-baghdad-as-isis-strikes-again-87-killed-in-iraq/>

- **Iraq signs UN transparency convention**

The Convention will enter into force six months after the date of the third instrument of ratification or accession. The Convention is open for signature, ratification, and accession by States and regional economic integration organizations. For up-to-date information about the parties to the Convention as well as its signatories, please see the UNCITRAL website.

More details

<http://www.iraq-businessnews.com/2017/02/17/iraq-signs-un-transparency-convention/>

- **Islamic State textbooks featuring guns and tanks 'used to teach children maths' in school**

Photos purporting to show an Isis maths textbook for children featuring guns and tanks found in the battle-scarred Iraqi city of Mosul have emerged. The book for first grade students was reportedly found in an elementary school in the Al Muthana district of eastern Mosul.

More details <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/16/isis-textbooks-featuring-guns-tanks-used-teach-children-maths/>

2. SYRIA

- **US Declines to Confirm Safe Zones Creation in Northern Syria amid Policy Review**

Earlier on Thursday, the Syrian National Council Co-chair Ilham Ehmed said in an interview with Fırat News Agency that the safe zones proposed by the Trump administration would be created in areas under control of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG).

More Details

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201702171050768148-us-syria-safe-zones-not-confirmed/>

- **Rebels call for prisoner swap at talks**

Syrian rebels said on Thursday they had raised the issue of conducting a prisoner swap with the Syrian government and that the issue would be the subject of separate talks in Ankara. The Syrian government has said it is prepared to swap prisoners in its jails for people "kidnapped by terrorist groups."

More Details

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/177db1b1-292d-4cda-91ac-6a553ef76bd3.aspx>

- **Assad wants 'every inch' of Syria, not just Raqqa**

President Bashar al-Assad on Thursday said his goal is to take back not only Raqqa but "every inch" of Syrian territory. "Raqqa is a symbol," Mr Assad said. It was "the duty of any government" to retake all of Syria, he added.

More Details

<http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/assad-wants-every-inch-of-syria-not-just-raqqa>

- **The UN's step for justice in Syria**

After six years of a brutal war in Syria, the United Nations took a concrete step this month to help heal Syrian society once the war ends. It set up an office for the formal investigation of war crimes in Syria to collect hard evidence for the future prosecution of perpetrators on all sides in the conflict.

More Details

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/the-monitors-view/2017/0216/The-UN-s-step-for-justice-in-Syria>

- **Work with Putin on Islamic State: Opposing view**

There is perhaps no leader in the world today as cold-hearted and Machiavellian as Russian President Vladimir Putin. But even the world's only superpower, the United States, must sometimes work with people it doesn't particularly like — especially when we have common interests as important as defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

More Details

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/02/16/russia-putin-isis-syria-assad-editorials-debates/98020062/>

- **Assad: Trump Refugee Executive Order Is 'Against the Terrorists,' Not Syria**

Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad refused to criticize President Donald Trump's executive order limiting refugee flows from Syria during an interview this week, stating that it was "not against the Syrian people," but only "terrorists." Assad has historically used the word "terrorist" to refer to anyone who opposes his rule over Syria and has accused the United States of supporting terrorism. Syria is a U.S.-designated State Sponsor of Terrorism.

More Details

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/02/16/assad-trump-refugee-executive-order-ok-targets-terrorists/>

- **Syrian facts meet in Astana amid build up to Syrian peace negotiations**

Syrian government officials sat face-to-face with rebels for the second time in three weeks in Kazakhstan on Thursday, as diplomats stepped up efforts to lay the groundwork for UN-brokered peace talks next week. In Geneva, UN humanitarian adviser Jan Egeland called on parties to allow aid convoys to reach besieged and hard-to-reach areas of Syria to demonstrate "goodwill" before envoys gather for talks on 23 February.

More Details

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/syrian-facts-meet-astana-amid-build-syrian-peace-negotiations-938950>

- **Munich Security Conference will open on Friday to discuss EU, NATO future, situation in Ukraine and Syria**

On Friday, February 17, the Munich Security Conference begins its work, which will discuss a number of key challenges in the field of security, including the situation in Ukraine. According to a press release of the 53rd Munich Security Conference (MSC), which will be held under the chairmanship of Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, more than 500 participants are expected to attend it.

More Details:

<http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/403807.html>

- **US under pressure on Syria ahead of Geneva talks**

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Friday faced a grilling by global peers seeking clarity on Washington's position on the Syria conflict ahead of UN peace talks in Geneva. On the sidelines of a G20 gathering in Germany, Tillerson joined a group of countries supporting the Syrian opposition for talks pushing a political solution to the nearly six-year war.

More Details:

<http://www.digitaljournal.com/news/world/us-under-pressure-on-syria-stance-ahead-of-geneva-talks/article/486030>

- **SA journalist captured in Syria alive, says NGO**

The Truth Collective South Africa non-government organisation announced the news in an interview with Eyewitness News. The organisation had just come back from a 12-day trip to Syria, where Mohamed was captured in January while making his way to the Turkish border before returning home.

More Details:

<http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2017/02/17/SA-journalist-captured-in-Syria-alive%E2%80%9A-says-NGO>

3. IRAN

- **Iran's Rohani Seeks To Mend Frayed Ties with Persian Gulf Arab Neighbors**

Iranian President Hassan Rohani has sought to mend ties with his Gulf Arab neighbors on a one-day trip to Oman and Kuwait, his first since taking power in 2013. Relations between predominantly Shi'ite Iran and the mainly Sunni Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia, remain strained over their support for opposing sides in the conflicts in Syria and Yemen.

More Details

<http://www.payvand.com/news/17/feb/1088.html>

- **Iran's president to launch new gas pipeline project**

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is expected to inaugurate a project for construction of a gas pipeline between the two southeastern cities of Iranshahr and Chabahar in coming weeks. The governor-general of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Mohammad-Ali Afshani, has said that President Rouhani is expected to visit the province late February, Shana news agency reported.

More Details

<http://en.trend.az/iran/business/2722065.html>

- **Iranian Quds Force Terror Chief Defies U.N. Resolutions to Visit Moscow**

Major General Qassem Soleimani, head of Iran's notorious Quds Force — the terrorism department of Iran's complex military structure — violated multiple United Nations resolutions with a visit to Moscow on Wednesday.

More Details

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/02/16/iranian-quds-force-commander-defies-u-n-resolutions-visit-moscow/>

- **Resumption of Iranian oil exports off to slow start**

In mid-January, an Iranian oil tanker leased to a Spanish oil company reached Europe. It called at the Port of Algeciras in Spain two days after the one-year anniversary of the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and shortly before US President Donald Trump took office on Jan. 20. The managing director of the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC), Sirus Kianersi, hailed the development: "Today, after resolution of insurance, classing, flagging and international certification issues for Iranian vessels, we have witnessed another JCPOA achievement for the country's marine transportation."

More Details

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/iran-oil-tanker-shipping-nitc-sanctions-nuclear-deal-spain.html>

- **Iran, Russia and Turkey to create monitoring group on Syria**

Russia, Iran and Turkey agreed on Thursday at a peace talk held here in Astana to create a tripartite operational group to monitor Syria's ceasefire, a Russian foreign ministry official said.

More Details

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/17/c_136062440.htm

- **Russia Reaffirms Cooperation with Iran, Despite US Position**

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Riabkov has reaffirmed today his country's decision to maintain the cooperation with Iran, including the fight against terrorism and the search for a solution to the Syrian conflict. Commenting on the position of the United States President, Donald Trump, when he accused Tehran of sponsoring terrorism, Riabkov considered that Washington's foreign policy is not fully aware of many international issues.

More Details

<http://www.plenglish.com/index.php?o=rn&id=9399&SEO=russia-reaffirms-cooperation-with-iran-despite-us-position>

- **Tillerson: I didn't suggest scrapping Iran nuclear deal**

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on Thursday he did not suggest to French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault that Washington planned to scrap the Iranian nuclear agreement. "I didn't leave any such impression," Tillerson told reporters before a meeting with the Argentinian foreign minister, when asked about a report which cited Ayrault as saying the French had the impression that Washington wanted to get rid of the deal.

More Details

<http://uk.businessinsider.com/r-tillerson-denies-suggesting-he-wants-to-scrap-iran-nuclear-deal-2017-2>

- **Tehran, Riyadh to discuss Hajj in late February**

The minister made the announcement while addressing a press conference in this southwestern provincial capital city on Thursday evening. Salehi-Amiri said that the visit will be made following the demand and correspondences made by the Saudi officials.

More Details

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82433542/>

- **Azerbaijani business delegation to visit Iran**

An Azerbaijani business delegation led by Economy Minister Shahin Mustafayev will visit Iran on Feb. 22-24, the Azerbaijan Export and Investments Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO) said in a message posted on its website.

More Details

<http://en.trend.az/business/economy/2722004.html>

- **Isn't Persian expansionism a reality?**

Iran's expansionist discourse unfortunately hurts not only the region but also Islam, creating the perception that there is a war between Sunnis and Shiites. That's why Turkey and its leader have raised their voices against Iran's sectarian politics.

More Details

<https://www.dailysabah.com/columns/ilnur-cevik/2017/02/17/isnt-persian-expansionism-a-reality>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **B'Tselem: 2016 a record year in Israeli demolitions of Palestinian homes**

A new report reveals that Israel destroyed 274 structures in the West Bank last year, leaving 1,134 people homeless. 'This reflects Israel's increased efforts to reduce the Palestinian presence in the areas it is attempting to take over through planning and administrative measures,' the NGO says.

More Details:

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4923494,00.html>

- **Nasrallah Warns: Hezbollah's Missiles can hit Israel's Nuclear Reactor**

Hezbollah Leader Hassan Nasrallah called on Israel to dismantle its nuclear reactor in Dimona on Thursday, warning that it poses a threat to Israel's existence should it be hit by one of Hezbollah's missiles. Nasrallah made a similar threat against Haifa's ammonia tank last year, saying that a missile hitting the facility could have the affect of a nuclear bomb. Last week, a Haifa court ordered the tank closed, citing the security threat.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Nasrallah-warns-Hezbollahs-missiles-can-hit-Israelis-nuclear-reactor-481789>

- **Israeli forces raid Nablus-area village, set up checkpoints, deploy snipers**

Israeli forces raided Huwwara village Thursday evening, deploying heavily in the area and searching several houses after claims that a Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli settler's car from the main road near the village, which is located just south of Nablus city in the northern occupied West Bank.

More Details:

<http://www.maannnews.com/Content.aspx?id=775511>

- **Too early to speak of corresponding US-Israeli position, says foreign minister**

The ministry of foreign affairs Thursday said it is too early to speak of a corresponding US-Israel position, as the new US administration is still in a state of evaluating the different aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=RQbimwa52418748228aRQbimw>

- **France says US stand on Israel-Palestine conflict is 'confused and worrying'**

French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault has said that the US' stand on the Israel-Palestinian conflict was "confused and worrying". The comments come after US President Donald Trump dropped the decades old commitment of establishing a separate Palestinian state as part of a Middle East peace agreement.

More Details:

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/france-says-us-stand-israel-palestine-conflict-confused-worrying-1607043>

- **Germany says building more Israeli settlements may end two-state solution**

Germany's foreign minister on Thursday warned that building more Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories could end the prospect of a two-state solution and fuel conflict in the region, APAreports quoting Reuters.

More Details:

<http://en.apa.az/world-news/europe/germany-says-building-more-israeli-settlements-may-end-two-state-solution.html>

- **Netanyahu: We must maintain our security interests**

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu on Thursday told MSNBC's Greta Van Susteren that peace with the Palestinian Authority (PA) could only be achieved when the Palestinian Arabs accept the Jewish state.

More Details:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/225163>

- **Israel's Miami consulate evacuated after bomb threat**

The Israeli consulate in Miami was briefly evacuated on Thursday after a hoax bomb threat, the Foreign Ministry said. Miami police gave the all-clear an hour after the building was emptied, saying that they had found no evidence of any explosives in the building.

More Details:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/israels-miami-consulate-evacuated-after-bomb-threat/>

- **A 'warm and positive' meeting between Palestinian president and CIA chief**

A Palestinian official revealed that the President of the Palestinian Authority (PA) Mahmoud Abbas met with CIA chief Mike Pompeo on Tuesday in Ramallah. The meeting was held without media coverage.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170216-a-warm-and-positive-meeting-between-palestinian-president-and-cia-chief/>

- **Cuba Rejects Israeli Threats over Two-State Solution**

United Nations, Feb 16 (Prensa Latina) Cuba has voiced today its concern at the United Nations over the negative impact of Israel's aggressiveness on the two-state solution to the conflict with Palestine.

More Details:

<http://www.plenglish.com/index.php?o=rn&id=9405&SEO=cuba-rejects-israeli-threats-over-two-state-solution>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Bomb Scare in North Lebanon**

Suspensions arose early on Friday after an improvised explosive device placed inside an old car tire was found in the northern al-Beddawi area in Tripoli, the state-run National News Agency reported.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/225574-bomb-scare-in-north-lebanon>

- **Lebanon's Hezbollah warns Israel of Dimona nuclear reactor**

Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah called on Israel Thursday to "dismantle the Dimona nuclear reactor," warning that it poses a threat to Israel's existence if hit by Hezbollah's missiles in any confrontation.

More Details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/17/c_136062565.htm

- **Aoun: I Won't Allow Any Foreign Party to Interfere in Domestic Affairs**

President Michel Aoun pledged Thursday that he "will not allow any foreign party to interfere in the Lebanese domestic affairs."

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/225569-aoun-i-won-t-allow-any-foreign-party-to-interfere-in-domestic-affairs>

- **Basbous, Serbian Ambassador tackle cooperation prospects**

Internal Security Forces (ISF) chief, Ibrahim Basbous, met on Thursday at his Barracks office with the Serbian Ambassador to Lebanon, Amir Alvic, accompanied by the Serbian Honorary Consul Joseph Martinos, on a visit during which talks touched on means of enhancing cooperation and coordination between the two countries in the fight against terrorism.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/75406/Basbous-Serbian-Ambassador-tackle-cooperation-prospects>

- **Ten charged with Daesh links in Lebanon**

Lebanon's military prosecutor charged 10 Lebanese and Palestinians Thursday with belonging to Daesh and planning attacks and assassinations in the country, the National News Agency said.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/ten-charged-daesh-links-lebanon-938772>

- **Ambassador Wehbe receives Kaag**

Director of Political and Consular Affairs at the Foreign and Expatriates Ministry, Ambassador Charbel Wehbe, received on Thursday U.N. Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Sigrid Kaag.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/75401/Ambassador-Wehbe-receives-Kaag>

- **Jordan condemns Baghdad's terrorist bombing**

Jordan, on Thursday, strongly denounced a major terrorist attack that struck a Baghdad's neighborhood and left scores of innocent people dead and injured.

More Details:

http://www.petra.gov.jo/public_news/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?Menu_ID=&Site_Id=2&lang=2&NewsID=289692&CatID=13

- **Jordan labor director, other officials arrested on corruption charges**

The operation unit of the Jordan Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission (JIACC) on Wednesday arrested the former director of Ruseifa labor directorate and three other employees. The arrest came as part of field visits conducted by the JIACC's personnel who are tasked with pursuing corruption at government agencies, an official source told the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/jordan-labor-director-other-officials-arrested-corruption-charges-938716>

- **Attracting investments turns refugee crisis into opportunity**

The social and economic repercussions of hosting refugees in Jordan requires all stakeholders to enhance cooperation in addressing challenges and tensions, economists said on Tuesday.

More Details:

https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/story/Attracting_investments_turns_refugee_crisis_into_opportunity-ZAWYA20170216062313/

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Bahrain embassy in UAE wins award**

Bahrain's embassy in the Kingdom to United Arab Emirates was granted the Foreign Minister Excellence Award for its distinguished collaboration with the UAE ministry in achieving its goals.

More details:

<http://www.newsofbahrain.com/viewNews.php?ppId=30523&TYPE=Posts&pid=21&MNU=2&SUB=>

- **Erdogan concludes successful trip to Gulf States**

Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan described his trip to the Gulf States as successful as he concluded a tour which included Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Anadolu reported on Wednesday.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170216-erdogan-concludes-successful-trip-to-gulf-states/>

- **UN Secretary General heaps praise on Oman**

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today expressed his support for the countries like Oman that are in the forefront of mediation efforts to resolve conflict.

More details:

<http://timesofoman.com/article/103028/Oman/Government/Praise-from-UN-Secretary-General-for-Oman>

- **Taliban Envoys Barred From Entering UAE**

Mullah Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai and Mawlawi Madani were assigned by Taliban's Qatar office to attend the prayer ceremony of the ambassador.

More details:

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/taliban-envoys-barred-entering-uae>

- **Qatar-US ties strong: Foreign Minister**

Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said that he has discussed during his meeting with his US counterpart Rex Tillerson in Washington the current situation in the Middle East, besides cooperation in the fight against terrorism in light of the threats currently facing the world and ways to reduce them.

More details:

<http://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/17/02/2017/Qatar-US-ties-strong-Foreign-Minister>

- **Saudi Arabia Breaks Up Four ISIS Cells**

Saudi Arabia has broken up four ISIS cells suspected of providing shelter and financial support to wanted militants and recruiting fighters, spokesman of the Saudi Interior Ministry Maj. Gen. Mansour al-Turki said on Thursday.

More details:

<http://english.aawsat.com/2017/02/article55367570/saudi-arabia-breaks-four-isis-cells>

- **UAE says Emirati Soldier Killed in Saudi-led War in Yemen**

The United Arab Emirates says an Emirati soldier has been killed while taking part in the Saudi-led war in Yemen.

More details:

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_YEMEN?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-02-17-01-10-03

- **US raid in Yemen killed backer of central government**

One of the targets in January's botched raid in Yakla, Yemen, had supported the US and Saudi-backed president and fought against the Houthi rebels, according to an AP report on Thursday. Sheikh Abdel-Raouf al-Dhahab, a Yemeni tribal chief, was killed in late January when US forces conducted a raid that saw a Navy Seal killed and six American soldiers wounded. Twenty-five civilians, including an eight-year-old girl, were also killed amid a fire-fight between suspected al-Qaeda militants and US forces.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/target-botched-yemen-raid-backed-us-led-government-report-764262717>

- **Yemen: Art, love, bombs and bans**

They call him the Banksy of Yemen. But Murad Subay, a 29-year-old street artist based in the capital Sanaa, shrugs off such comparisons. Subay has transformed the streets of an active war zone into his own vibrant gallery. His canvases are often the ruins of war - crumbling, abandoned houses with gaping holes caused by mortar explosions.

More details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/02/yemen-art-love-bombs-bans-170213090154650.html>

- **Saudi King Salman Receives Bahrain Crown Prince, Malaysian Defense Minister**

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud received on Thursday Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister as well as Malaysian Defense Minister Hishammuddin Hussein and the accompanying delegation, at Al Auja Palace in the Diriyah area in Riyadh.

More details:

<http://english.aawsat.com/2017/02/article55367597/saudi-king-salman-receives-bahrain-crown-prince-malaysian-defense-minister>

7. EGYPT

- **Al-Sisi swears in nine ministers, four deputies, and five governors**

President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi swore in nine ministers, four deputy ministers, and five governors on Thursday. Nadia Ahmed Abdo is the first woman in Egypt to be appointed as governor, for the governorate of Beheira. New governors also include Mohamed Soltan for the governorate of Alexandria, Mahmoud Afifi for Qaliubiya, Mohamed Salman for New Valley, and Ahmed El-Shaarawy for Daqahleya.

More details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/02/16/al-sisi-swears-9-ministers-4-deputies-5-governors/>

- **Egyptian envoy meets minister**

Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Sardar Muhammad Yusuf has been invited to attend the upcoming conference of Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs titled ‘Spreading Islamic Culture and Confrontation terrorism and Challenges.’

More details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/186856-Egyptian-envoy-meets-minister>

- **Egypt Remains Committed to Two-State Solution of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

Egypt reaffirms its commitment to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry's spokesman said Thursday amid the uncertainty of the new US administration over the approach to issue.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201702171050769532-egypt-committed-two-state-solution/>

- **A visit by UNESCO's chief**

From 14 to 18 February UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova is visiting Egypt where she is expected to tour archaeological sites and museums.

More details:

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/19667.aspx>

- **Court reject's hijacker's appeal for extradition to Egypt**

Egyptian hijacker Saif Eldin Mustafa's habeas corpus appeal, by which he claimed being unlawfully detained after applying for political asylum, was rejected by the Supreme Court on Thursday.

More details:

<http://cyprus-mail.com/2017/02/16/court-rejects-hijackers-appeal-extradition-egypt/>

- **Nadia Abdo, first female governor in Egypt's history**

Nadia Ahmed Abdo, who was sworn in on Thursday before President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as Beheira governor, has become Egypt's first-ever female governor, the first woman in Egyptian history to ever hold this post.

More details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com//news/nadia-abdo-first-female-governor-egypt-s-history>

- **CBE maintains same interest rate**

The Central Bank of Egypt's (CBE) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) did not change the interest rate during its meeting on Thursday despite the hike in inflation rate at the end of January—the highest in decades.

More details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/02/17/cbe-maintains-interest-rate/>

- **Libyan High Council of State agrees to meet with Libyan House of Representatives delegation in Cairo**

Members of Libya's High Council of State have agreed to meet a delegation from the Libyan House of Representatives in Cairo as part of talks hosted by Egypt to reach a political settlement to the Libyan civil conflict, according to Egypt's army spokesman.

More details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/258313/Egypt/Politics-/Libyan-High-Council-of-State-agrees-to-meet-with-L.aspx>

- **Setting a new Islamic Tone**

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi raised eyebrows around the world when he gave a speech demanding a "religious revolution" and asserting that Egyptian imams should lead the way.

More details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Setting-a-new-Islamic-tone-481834>

- **.No new scholarships until Egypt stabilises**

The Higher Education Ministry is not giving new scholarships for local students intending to further their studies in Egypt as the situation in that country is still not completely stable, said Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh.

More details:

<http://www.nst.com.my/news/2017/02/213165/no-new-scholarships-until-egypt-stabilises-idris-jusoh>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **French presidential frontrunner Macron under fire over Algeria comments**

French presidential frontrunner Emmanuel Macron faced a storm of criticism from his right-wing opponents over his comments condemning France's colonial past in Algeria, and on Thursday he refused to back down. On a visit to Algiers on Tuesday Macron said France's history in Algeria was a "crime against humanity", he went on: "It's really barbaric and is part of that past that we must face up to also by apologising to those who were hurt."

More details:

http://af.reuters.com/article/algeriaNews/idAFL8N1G15W7?feedType=RSS&feedName=algeriaNews&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FAfricaAlgeriaNews+%28News+%2F+Africa+%2F+Algeria+News%29&rpc=401

- **It is important to remove barriers preventing implementation of Algerian-Saudi projects**

The minister of Industry and Mining Abdesslam Bouchouareb said Thursday, in Algiers that it is important to remove the barriers that might arise in front of the implementation of the projects selected between Algerian and Saudi economic operators. The memorandums of understanding signed Wednesday between Algerian and Saudi companies must have a positive impact on bilateral economic cooperation said Bouchouareb at the 12th session of the Algerian-Saudi Joint Commission before hailing "the seriousness of the experts in charge of the preparation of this session."

More details:

<http://en.aps.dz/economy/16764-it-is-important-to-remove-barriers-preventing-implementation-of-algerian-saudi-projects>

- **Tunisia-Algeria-Egypt summit on Libya in Tunis 1/3**

Tunisian Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui said his country will host a foreign minister summit with Algeria and Egypt on March 1 in Tunis to evaluate the three countries' results and contacts established with Libya as part of efforts to find a global political solution to the crisis there. Jhinaoui said the meeting will allow the countries to prepare for a subsequent meeting between their presidents - Essebsi, Bouteflika and al-Sisi - prior to convening the various Libyan parties in talks.

More details:

http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/politics/2017/02/16/tunisia-algeria-egypt-summit-on-libya-in-tunis-13_fce687f8-8b85-4a79-a76a-10b70cfb42d9.html

- **Tunisia extends 2015 state of emergency**

Tunisia has extended for another three months a state of emergency in place since a 2015 terror attack, the president's office announced Thursday. President Beji Caid Essebsi has decided "to extend the state of emergency for three months from Feb. 16," his office told AFP.

More details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1055571/middle-east>

- **Bad habits die hard in Tunisia's security services**

Tunisia's security forces are still relying on the brutal tactics of the past, including torture, arbitrary arrests, detentions and restrictions on travel of suspects - as well as harassment of their family members - and it is threatening the country's road to reform, Amnesty International has warned. Six years after the country's revolution, such abuses pose a real risk of jeopardising gains made in the North African country.

More details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2017/2/16/bad-habits-die-hard-in-tunisia's-security-services>

- **"We are the LNA, we are everywhere in Libya" says LNA spokesman**

The war in Benghazi is almost over after 33 months of fighting. It has reportedly cost the Libyan National Army at least 4,000 dead. It is unclear how many militants and civilians have also died. "The

military operation is nearly done in Benghazi” said LNA spokesman Colonel Ahmed Al-Mismari, “Only 70 terrorists remain in a block of 12 buildings in Ganfouda and [others in] a dozen square-kilometre zone downtown in Sabri and Suq Al-Hout.”

More details:

<https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/02/16/we-are-the-lna-we-are-everywhere-in-libya-says-lna-spokesman/>

- **Libya requests NATO assistance for military training, supports**

Libya's UN-backed Government of National Accord has requested military training and development for its troops, NATO revealed on Thursday. "Any assistance has to be based on a request from the Libyan government. And this is the request we received yesterday," Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary-General, said in a press conference.

More details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/17/c_136062405.htm

- **Prospects for unity in Libya fade as rival leaders refuse to meet in Cairo**

Prospects for the latest attempt to end Libya’s civil war were uncertain on Thursday after the head of the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) criticised the failure of Libya’s most powerful military commander to meet him for talks in Cairo. The commander, Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, armed forces chief of Libya’s parliament, the House of Representatives (HOR), was invited to meet Prime Minister Fayez Al Sarraj by Egyptian officials in Cairo on Tuesday. Forces loyal to the GNA and HOR are locked in conflict in several parts of Libya.

More details:

<http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/prospects-for-unity-in-libya-fade-as-rival-leaders-refuse-to-meet-in-cairo>

- **Delegation of Saudi Businessmen to Visit Morocco on Feb. 19-25**

The Saudi delegation will have a series of meetings with Moroccan businessmen and examine aspects of economic cooperation between the two countries, Mohamed Fahd Al-Hamadi, chairman of the Moroccan-Saudi Business Council, told MAP. Al-Hamdi, head of the Saudi delegation to Morocco, added that this visit to the cities of Rabat, Casablanca and Agadir aims to strengthen cooperation relations in the commercial field between Saudi and Moroccan business sectors and explore new investment opportunities in many areas.

More details:

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/02/208445/delegation-saudi-businessmen-visit-morocco-feb-19-25/>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **There Is No Solution in Afghanistan**

The American predicament in Afghanistan is at once ridiculous and tragic. More than 8,000 American troops remain in the country, prosecuting the longest war in our nation's history. Overlapping networks of insurgent groups—most prominently the Taliban—had a good year in 2016, seizing terrain and conducting terror strikes to destabilize the U.S.-backed Kabul government. The American commander in the country wants a "few thousand" more troops. Despite the supporting role that the U.S. contingent is meant to play, casualties are still being sustained, sometimes in places with depressingly familiar names—as in Sangin, seized from the Taliban a few years ago at the expense of gallons of British and U.S. Marine blood. Two Americans were wounded there last week.

More details:

<http://freebeacon.com/national-security/no-solution-afghanistan/>

- **"Afghan government hopes that other countries must prove their honesty in fight against terrorism," ARG said in the statement.**

President Ashraf Ghani condemned the attack at a shrine in Pakistan and said terrorism is a common threat and it must be fought. In a press statement sent by the Presidential Palace on Friday, Ghani said the shrine attack in Pakistan was against Islam and humanity. He said he believes that "honesty and the will to fight against terrorism will prevent terrorists from carrying out their subversive activities in any country"

More details:

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/ghani-condemns-pakistan-attack-says-terrorism-must-be-tackled>

- **2 Afghan civilians killed in Pakistani artillery shelling in Kunar**

At least two civilians were killed in artillery shelling from the other side of Durand Line in eastern Kunar province of Afghanistan. According to the local security officials, the incident took place late on Thursday night after dozens of artillery shells were fired on Sarkano district.

More details:

<http://www.khaama.com/2-afghan-civilians-killed-in-pakistani-artillery-shelling-in-kunar-02908>

- **Afghanistan says won't let militants move to territory of Tajikistan**

Kabul will not let the terrorists move to the border and commit attacks on the territory of Tajikistan, said Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Salahuddin Rabbani at the meeting with his Tajik colleague Sirodjiddin Aslov. The Afghan Foreign Minister told reporters that he confirmed Kabul's commitment to its obligations on protection of the northern border of the country and prevention of terrorists movement to the Tajik territory.

More details:

<http://akipress.com/news:589065/>

- **International Chamber of Commerce opens office in Kabul**

The Office of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) was formally inaugurated in Kabul on Thursday in presence of senior government officials, including deputy foreign minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai. Addressing the ceremony, Karzai said the ICC office in the capital city would further help the country to gain international credibility for its exports.

More details:

<http://wadsam.com/afghan-business-news/international-chamber-of-commerce-opens-office-in-kabul-232/>

- **At least 60 killed, 250 injured in Sehwan bomb blast in Pakistan**

Deputy Inspector General of Police Hyderabad Range Khadim Hussain Rind Thursday night informed that 60 people were martyred and 250 injured in the suicide attack at the Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's shrine at Sehwan Town. Talking to media persons outside Taluka Hospital Sehwan, he said the condition of 50 injured persons was critical.

More details:

<http://eng.belta.by/society/view/at-least-60-killed-250-injured-in-sehwan-bomb-blast-in-pakistan-98817-2017/>

- **ISIS suicide bombing at Pakistan shrine kills 75**

An ISIS suicide bomber struck inside a famed shrine in southern Pakistan on Thursday, killing at least 75 people in the deadliest attack in the country in more than two years. The bomber entered the main hall of the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan and detonated his payload amid dozens of worshippers, according to three security officials, who said at least 20 women and nine children were among the dead.

More details:

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4923798,00.html>

- **Nawaz Sharif strongly condemned attack on Lal Shahbaz Qalandar shrine**

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Thursday strongly condemned the brutal terror attack on the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar and said it was an attack on the progressive and inclusive future of Pakistan. In a statement, the premier said he would do everything in his power to protect the country. "An attack on one of us is an attack on all. The attack on the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar represents an attack on the progressive, inclusive future of Pakistan; one where every man, woman and child is entitled to life, liberty and property in the pursuit of happiness no matter their religion."

More details:

<http://paktribune.com/news/Nawaz-Sharif-strongly-condemned-attack-on-Lal-Shahbaz-Qalandar-shrine-278263.html>

- **Pakistan closes Torkham crossing due to security reasons**

Pakistan on Friday closed Torkham crossing in the aftermath of recent blast at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sindh province in which 70 people were killed and over hundred wounded, a media report said on Friday. The government has decided to seal Torkham border crossing with Afghanistan for an indefinite period, Dawn News reported.

More details:

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2017/02/17/pakistan-closes-torkham-crossing-due-security-reasons>

- **Pakistan Forces Launch Raids after Dozens Killed at Sufi Shrine**

Pakistani forces killed and arrested dozens of suspects in raids overnight into Friday, a day after a suicide bombing killed 80 worshipers at a Sufi shrine. The terrorist attack — Pakistan's deadliest in years — raised questions about the authorities' ability to rein in militant groups despite military offensives against them.

More details:

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/pakistan-forces-launch-raids-after-dozens-killed-sufi-shrine-n722281>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkey: ISIL-held Al-Bab 'completely surrounded'**

Turkish soldiers and Turkish-backed Syrian rebels have completely surrounded the ISIL-held town of Al-Bab, Ankara's defense minister said Thursday. Speaking in Brussels, Fikri Isik said Turkey would help civilians living in Al-Bab and also fix the city's infrastructure after the terror group is driven out. "Now Al-Bab is completely surrounded. A serious cleaning operation is being done inside [the city].

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/184911/turkey-isil-held-al-bab-completely-surrounded>

- **13 Daesh terrorists 'neutralized' in northern Syria**

At least 13 Daesh terrorists were killed in northern Syria in the last 24 hours as part of Operation Euphrates Shield, the military said Friday. The statement added that 70 Daesh targets, including shelters and weapon emplacements, were hit by Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters with Turkish army support. In addition, Turkish aircraft destroyed seven other targets, including a building used as a hideout, a crane and an arsenal. Separately, a weapon-mounted vehicle was destroyed in an airstrike by coalition jets.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/13-daesh-terrorists-neutralized-in-northern-syria/752440>

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.*

Bu bülten **ORSAM Ortadoğu Uzman Yardımcısı Firuze Yağmur Gökler tarafından hazırlanmaktadır. Bülten Ortadoğu ülkelerinin yerel haber kaynaklarından derlenmektedir. Belirtilen görüşler bölge ülkelerinin haber kaynaklarına ve ismi geçen yazarlara ait olup ORSAM'ın görüşünü yansıtmamaktadır.*