



# 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

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**24 MARCH 2017**

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## 1. IRAQ

- **237 Iraq civilians killed in possible US airstrike in Mosul**

A Kurdish news agency reporting directly from Mosul has reported that at least 237 people have been killed in airstrikes in the Mosul Al-Jadida neighbourhood of the war-ravaged city, most of them believed to be civilians. A correspondent working for the Iraqi Kurdish news site Rudaw in Mosul said that 130 of the people who were killed were huddled inside one residential building alone, while around 100 others were hit inside another. While the vast majority of those killed were civilians, some Daesh militants could be among the dead though it is currently unclear.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170323-237-iraq-civilians-killed-in-possible-us-airstrike-in-mosul/>

- **'We are coming, Nineveh' denies targeting civilians in Mosul**

Command of Operation we are coming, Nineveh has denied reports that spoke about targeting civilians in Mosul. In a statement released Thursday, the command said the terror group of ISIS is filming civilians it kills and post the images claiming that those civilians are victims of Iraqi bombardment. We are committed to protecting civilians during the military operations, it added.

More details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/8550/We-are-coming-Nineveh-denies-targeting-civilians-in-Mosul>

- **Iraqi forces recapture Yabessat, another district in Western Mosul**

Nineveh (IraqiNews.com) Iraqi government forces recaptured Thursday al-Yabessat district, another area in western Mosul as operations proceed to clear the region from Islamic State militants. The Joint Operations Command said Counter-Terrorism Forces took over the area and raised Iraqi flags above its buildings.

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-forces-recapture-yabessat-another-district-western-mosul/>

- **PKK Military Presence in Halabja not Allowed: PUK Official**

Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) won't be allowed to spread its armed forces across Halabja province, south of Kurdistan Region, said a Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) local official. Ahmed Qadafar also

rejected the reports on increasing PKK's military presence in the area, saying that there are some supporters of the PKK across Halabja province, but their number is not concerning.

More details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/kurdistan/338238>

- **Trump administration hosts first anti-ISIL Meeting**

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis are hosting Iraq's prime minister and diplomats from the coalition partners in a two-day meeting at the state department starting on Wednesday. Trump has vowed to make the fight against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) a priority and directed the Pentagon and other agencies in January to submit a plan for defeating the group. ISIL has been losing ground in both Iraq and Syria, and three separate forces, backed by the United States, Turkey and Russia, are advancing on the group's Syrian stronghold of Raqqa.

More details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/03/trump-administration-host-anti-isil-meeting-170322132031463.html>

- **Tillerson: Defeating ISIS is U.S. No.1 goal in the region**

Defeating the Islamic State is the top U.S. priority in the Middle East, but other countries will be expected to contribute more to stabilize Iraq and Syria once the militants are expelled, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Wednesday.

More details on:

[http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN\\_Direje.aspx?Jimare=40033](http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=40033)

- **James Mattis on Iraq: 'I Don't See Any Reason to Pull Out Again and Find the Same Lesson'**

Secretary of Defense James Mattis told the Senate Appropriations Committee that American troops should remain in Iraq even after the Islamic State is defeated. "I believe it's in our national interest that we keep the Iraqi Security Forces in a position to keep our enemies on their back foot, our mutual enemies on their back foot," he added, saying he expected the Iraqi military to need U.S. support for "some time to come."

More details:

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/03/23/mattis-on-iraq-i-dont-see-any-reason-to-pull-out-again-and-find-the-same-lesson/>

- **ISIS burns woman in western Mosul for not executing civilians**

ISIS have burned three women who refused to slaughter fellow residents who had tried to flee areas held by the group in Mosul, eyewitnesses said.

More details:

<https://www.almazdarnews.com/article/isis-burn-woman-in-western-mosul-for-not-killing-civilians/>

- **Iraq: U.S. Conventional Weapons Destruction Efforts Help Defeat ISIS**

The United States has invested more than \$333 million in Iraq since 2003 toward the clearance and safe disposal of landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO), and securing excess conventional weapons and munitions. This assistance, directed through several Iraqi and international nongovernmental organizations, has made significant progress toward countering the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

More details:

<https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/03/269065.htm>

- **‘Vicar Of Baghdad’ Predicts End Of Christianity In Iraq**

Anglican Church priest Andrew White says Christians are leaving Iraq at such a rate that the Mideast country could be bereft of believers in the near future. The “Vicar of Baghdad” told Fox News this week that the end is near for Christianity in Iraq.

More details:

<http://dailycaller.com/2017/03/23/vicar-of-baghdad-predicts-end-of-christianity-in-iraq/>

- **Iraq receives U.S. consent to buy arms supplies worth over \$22 billion**

The Iraqi government has received the consent of the U.S. Department of State to buy American weapons in the form of Foreign Military Sales (FMS) worth more than \$22 billion in a 12 year period.

More details:

<http://ekurd.net/iraq-us-consent-buy-arms-2017-03-24>

- **Foreign minister: Hungary to increase military presence in Iraq**

Hungary has offered to increase its military presence and extend its mission in Iraq to contribute to international efforts against the Islamic State (IS) terrorist organisation, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said. Addressing a conference organised by the US government for foreign ministers of the international coalition, Szijjártó said that, pending parliament’s approval, Hungary would increase the

number of Hungarian troops in the mission from 150 to 200 and of extending their stay in Iraq by two years, to end-2019.

More details:

<http://www.politics.hu/20170323/foreign-minister-hungary-increase-military-presence-iraq/>

- **Kuwait keen on to support Iraq – Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled**

Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah affirmed that his country was keen on supporting the Iraqi people on all possible levels.

More details:

<http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2597720&Language=en>

- **Czech Republic to give 25 million to Iraq's reconstruction**

The Czech Republic will donate 25 million crowns for the post-war reconstruction of Iraq, which the government approved on Wednesday, its spokesman Martin Ayer has tweeted.

More details:

<http://www.praguemonitor.com/2017/03/23/czech-republic-give-25-million-iraqs-reconstruction>

- **Malaysia Contributes US\$1 Million for Humanitarian Aid in Iraq, Syria**

Malaysia has contributed US\$1 million (US\$1=RM4.42) for humanitarian assistance in the newly liberated areas of Iraq and Syria.

More details:

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v8/ge/newsgeneral.php?id=1340590>

- **No decision on keeping New Zealand troops in Iraq**

The Prime Minister says no discussions have been held on a possible extension of a New Zealand Defence Force training mission in Iraq. Defence Minister Gerry Brownlee has just completed a secret visit to Kiwi forces currently stationed at Camp Taji, where they have been training the Iraqi army combatting the Islamic State in key cities like Mosul.

More details:

<http://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/news/politics/no-decision-on-keeping-nz-troops-in-iraq/>



- **Mosul: 'The worst is yet to come,' says UN as 400,000 trapped**

An estimated 400,000 Iraqis are trapped in the Islamic State-controlled Old City of west Mosul facing food shortages and growing panic under shelling that could provoke a mass exodus, the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR said on Thursday. Many civilians fear fleeing because of IS snipers and landmines, but 157,000 have reached a reception and transit centre since the Iraqi government offensive on west Mosul began a month ago, it said.

More details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/more-200-civilians-killed-mosul-air-strike-reports-532469276>

- **Child victims of Mosul battle fill emergency hospital**

The 9-year-old Iraqi boy was playing football on a patch of wasteground during a lull in the battle for Mosul when a mortar round fired by Islamic State militants landed nearby. It sprayed shrapnel into his lower legs and virtually severed them. Rushed by ambulance to this emergency field hospital 20 km (15 miles) east of the city, he was operated on overnight and both his feet were amputated. This mobile hospital has treated more than 1,000 patients, many of them women and children, since opening in early January.

More details:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-hospital-idUSKBN16U123>

- **More than 500 Iraqi and Syrian refugees barred from entering Australia after they were found on a security watchlist - with some also being monitored for terror by ASIO**

More than 500 Iraqi and Syrian refugees bound for Australia have been denied entry after their names appeared on an international security watchlist. Deemed 'security risks' the names of those barred from entering the country were picked up by the Five Eyes intelligence network. However the list has been described as 'unusual and disturbing', as it has found risks among priority family groups seeking refuge, rather than individual males of a fighting age.

More details on:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4338898/More-500-refugees-barred-entering-Australia.html#ixzz4cEIQYYmn>

- **Important Meeting between Iraqi & Saudi Foreign Ministers in Riyadh**

Saudi Arabia is aiming to cancel the previous Iraqi debts and looking to open the flight operation from Riyadh to Baghdad and Najaf very soon. The Iraqi Foreign Ministry has issued a statement that Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari met with the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Adel Al-Jubeir

in the Saudi capital Riyadh. Both sides discussed on the sidelines of international coalition meeting in the U.S capital Washington against Daesh and other terrorist groups.

More details:

<http://www.iraqidinar123.com/important-meeting-between-iraqi-saudi-foreign-ministers-in-riyadh/>

## 2. SYRIA

- **Will the United States Be a Victim of Its Own Success in Syria?**

The ministerial meeting of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS held in Washington, DC was an important milestone on the path to the Trump team's mission to fully defeat the would-be caliphate in Iraq and Syria. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson opened the proceedings by unequivocally stating that the ISIS threat would be the first priority of the new administration, and that in achieving that overarching objective, the United States would be invested in securing the stability of areas conquered from ISIS. Tillerson correctly identified Syria as a priority for stabilization after ISIS.

More details:

<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/will-the-united-states-be-victim-its-own-success-syria-19885>

- **Syria airlift seen signaling growing U.S. military role in battle to take Raqqa**

The deepening U.S. military involvement against Islamic State militants in northern Syria indicates the Pentagon will likely send even more troops in coming weeks. Their mission won't be to fight on the front lines but to bolster Syrian Arab and Kurdish forces in a coming battle for the key city of Raqqa.

More details:

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/03/24/world/syria-airlift-seen-signaling-growing-u-s-military-role-battle-take-raqqa/#.WNTKetSLRkg>

- **Al Qaeda quietly gaining territory in Syria amid ISIS fight**

Al Qaeda's affiliates in Syria have begun gaining ground in the central part of the country, taking advantage of the regime's increased focus on the ongoing fight against Islamic State in northern Syria.

More details:

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/mar/23/al-qaeda-quietly-gaining-territory-syria-amid-isis/>

- **How Regional Security Concerns Uniquely Constrain Governance in Northeastern Syria**

In 2012, when Bashar al-Assad’s regime withdrew most of its security forces from the Jazira in northeastern Syria, it ceded local power to the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its military wing. The PYD replicated past regime behavior, focusing on maintaining a secure hold of this strategic geographical area at the expense of effective governance. This approach has hindered the prospect of building a self-sustained administration. At the same time, outside actors such as Iraqi Kurdistan, Turkey, and the United States have inadvertently reinforced the PYD’s security-focused rule while pursuing their own security concerns. Exploring potential avenues to peace and stable governance in Syria requires carefully identifying the interrelated nature of these various actors’ security concerns in the Jazira.

More details:

<http://carnegie-mec.org/2017/03/23/how-regional-security-concerns-uniquely-constrain-governance-in-northeastern-syria-pub-68380>

- **Geneva set for further Syria talks**

Deputy UN Special Envoy for Syria Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy met on Thursday separately with regime and opposition delegations ahead of the formal start of a fifth round of peace talks in Geneva.

More details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/europe/geneva-set-for-further-syria-talks/778141>

- **Syria Demands UNSC to Assume Its Role in Fighting Terrorist, Criminal Acts Near Damascus and Other Areas**

Foreign and Expatriates Ministry demanded the UN Security Council to assume its role in fighting terrorism and the criminal acts perpetrated by the armed terrorist groups around Damascus and all over the Syrian Arab Republic territories.

More details:

<http://sana.sy/en/?p=102811>

- **Syria: 6 Years of an Orphaned Revolt**

Marine Le Pen, the French extreme right’s presidential candidate, clearly summed up how the West regards the Syrian Revolt, which erupted six years ago.

More details:

<http://english.aawsat.com/eyad-abushakra/opinion/syria-6-years-orphaned-revolt>

- **Statement attributable to Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director, deploring continued attacks on children in Syria**

"As another round of peace talks starts in Geneva today, we are appalled that children throughout Syria continue to come under attack.

More details:

<http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/statement-attributable-geert-cappelaere-unicef-regional-director-2>

- **For every 100 Russians in Syria, 50 are going back in caskets**

Russian involvement in Syria is tougher and more costly than what the Kremlin has disclosed, according to evidence gathered by Reuters. Since late January, Russian losses in the conflict are more than three times higher than the official toll.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170323-for-every-100-russians-in-syria-50-are-going-back-in-coffins/>

- **What's happening In Syria? Germany Pledges \$253 Million in Funds for Syria, Iraq**

Germany announced Thursday its pledge to provide \$253 million in funds for relief aid and rebuilding efforts in the war-torn countries of Syria and Iraq. The comments came soon after the U.S.-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group (also known as ISIS) held a meeting Wednesday, its first since the election of President Donald Trump.

More details:

<http://www.ibtimes.com/whats-happening-syria-germany-pledges-253-million-funds-syria-iraq-2514458>

### 3. IRAN

- **British MP: Iran is trying to threaten Israel by establishing a second front IN Syria**

Labor MP Joan Ryan used the stage she was provided with at a parliamentary debate on Iranian influence in the Middle East to warn of Iran's mounting threats against the Jewish state.

More details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Iran-News/British-MP-Iran-is-trying-to-threaten-Israel-by-establishing-a-second-front-in-Syria-484992>

- **Family of ex-federal agent reportedly files suit against Iran over his disappearance**

The lawsuit was filed in a Washington federal court on behalf of Robert Levinson, his wife and their children, The New York Times reported. The suit seeks unspecified damages from Iran for inflicting emotional trauma on the Levinson family.

More details:

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/03/24/family-ex-federal-agent-reportedly-files-suit-against-iran-over-his-disappearance.html>

- **Hollande visits Iran's stand at Paris Book Fair**

French President François Hollande visited Iran's stand at the invitation of the stand's director Ahmad Shakeri, on the sidelines of his tour of the 37th Paris International Book Fair on Friday. During his visit, he also held brief talks with a number of Iranian authors and cultural managers present at the stand.

More details:

<http://en.mehrnews.com/news/124385/Hollande-visits-Iran-s-stand-at-Paris-Book-Fair>

- **Oman: Anti-Iran speech may force us to pull out of Arab summit**

Oman sent Jordan a messaging saying that the Gulf state will reduce its presence at the Arab Summit scheduled for 29 March or will excuse itself if comments or recommendations made during the event put Muscat in an awkward situation, diplomatic sources have said.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170323-oman-anti-iran-speech-may-force-us-to-pull-out-of-arab-summit/>

- **Biggest ever tourist ocean liner reaches Iranian coast**

A tourist ocean liner, Sunny, reached Iranian Kish Island coast, state TV IRIB reported Mar.24. According to the report, this is the biggest tourist ocean liner that has ever reached Iranian coast. "The liner would transport tourists from Kish to Qeshm Island and Bandar Abbas Port, and then it would be used for short time tours, targeting foreign countries," CEO Kish Free Zone Organization Ali Asghar Mounesan said.

More details:

<http://en.trend.az/iran/business/2734632.html>



- **U.S. Senators from Both Parties Sponsor Bill Tightening Iran Sanctions**

U.S. senators from both major political parties introduced legislation on March 23 to tighten sanctions on Iran over its ballistic missile launches and other non-nuclear military activities

More details:

<http://www.rferl.org/a/us-senators-both-parties-sponsor-bill-tightening-iran-sanctions-non-nuclear/28387782.html>

- **Last Year Economy Promises Hope**

“Labeling this new year of 1396 as the year of ‘Resistance Economy, Production and Employment’, after heightening the importance of economy in the year labels of the last year depicts the significance and priority of economy and resolving economic problems according to a long-run road map which means principal policies of ‘Resistance Economy’,” reads the opening of the letter addressing Iran’s Leader composed by Iranian Economy Minister Ali Tayebnia.

More details:

<http://www.irannewsdaily.com/newsdetail.html?i=dWlzdjBmYk1sdjQ9>

- **US senators introduce bill to tighten sanctions on Iran**

A bipartisan group of US senators in Congress have introduced a bill that would impose tighter sanctions against Iran over its ballistic missile tests and other non-nuclear activities. According to Press TV, the bill was introduced on Thursday by 14 Democratic and Republican senators, including senior members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

More Details:

<http://parstoday.com/en/news/iran-i48556-us-senators-introduce-bill-to-tighten-sanctions-on-iran>

- **Iran Condemns Terrorist Attack in London**

In a statement released on Thursday, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi deplored such terrorist attacks as “inhumane” and offered his deep condolences to the British people as well as the bereaved families of victims.

More details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2017/03/23/1362802/iran-condemns-terrorist-attack-in-london>

- **Iran Working on Landmark Project to Transfer Water to Arid Areas**

Iran says it is implementing a landmark project to divert water from the Gulf of Oman to its central plateau – a project that could not only address the country’s surging water crisis but could also help push ahead relevant economic plans in host regions.

More details:

<http://ifpnews.com/wired/2017/03/transfer-water-arid-areas/>

#### 4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **MK asks court to overturn PM’s ban on Temple Mount visits**

MK Rabbi Yehuda Glick (Likud) intends to file a petition to the High Court of Justice against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s ban on parliamentarians’ visiting the Temple Mount. For the past ten months, Glick has allegedly been trying to ascertain under what authority Netanyahu, who also leads the party of which the rabbi is a member, ordered the police to prevent MKs from visiting the controversial location, which is the holiest site in the Jewish religion and the third holiest to faithful Muslims.

More Details:

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4940003,00.html>

- **US Stresses 'concern' with Israeli Settlements after intensive talks**

The Trump administration is encouraging the Israeli government to adapt some of its policies toward the Palestinians in preparation for a new round of peace talks. Senior administration officials conducted four days of intensive talks with their Israeli counterparts focused on "concrete near-term measures to improve the overall climate in order to advance the prospects for a genuine and lasting peace," both governments said in a joint statement.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/US-stresses-concern-with-Israeli-settlements-after-intensive-talks-485090>

- **Netanyahu asked publisher to give poor coverage to rival**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly asked a leading newspaper editor for help in denting the popularity of Jewish Home leader Naftali Bennett, whom he views as a rival for leadership of Israel’s political right. Netanyahu is said to have made the request of Yedioth Ahronoth owner and

publisher Arnon “Noni” Mozes ahead of the 2015 Knesset elections, the Haaretz daily reported Thursday.

More Details:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-asked-publisher-to-give-poor-coverage-to-rival-report/>

- **How bomb threat suspect evaded capture for so long**

The Israeli-American suspected of perpetrating more than 100 bomb threats against Jewish institutions used technologies including Google Voice, a call forwarding service, and Bitcoin, a digital currency, to make the threats. According to an article in The Daily Beast, Israel’s anti-fraud squad arrested the 19-year-old suspect at his home in southern Israel and searched the premises on Thursday.

More Details:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/227227>

- **Israeli police officer violently assaulting Palestinians in East Jerusalem**

An Israeli police officer physically assaulted and injured several Palestinians in the occupied East Jerusalem neighborhood of Wadi Joz on Thursday morning, a video filmed by a witness showed. The video shows a plainclothes police officer aggressively verbally confronting a Palestinian truck driver -- later identified as 50-year-old Mazen Rafaat Shweiki -- after the latter allegedly hit the officer’s car.

More Details:

<http://www.maannnews.com/Content.aspx?id=776076>

- **Islamic Bank, UNRWA sign \$40 million agreement for Gaza homes**

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in its capacity as Coordinator for the Program of the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Reconstruction of Gaza, has re-programmed and signed a \$40 million agreement with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for reconstruction of Gaza homes, an UNRWA statement said on Thursday. The revised agreement will now include the shelter repair and reconstruction of at least 1,000 housing units across the Gaza Strip for families whose houses were damaged or destroyed during the 2014 Israeli war on Gaza.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=PsHHW8a65806105926aPsHHW8>

- **Indonesia reiterates support for Palestine`s independence**

The Indonesian government and people have always supported Palestines struggle to become an independent state, not only through political approaches but also capacity building, a Foreign Ministry official stated. "The manifestation of Indonesias support for Palestinian independence is reflected not only by its political support but also development program through capacity building," Director of Public Diplomacy at the Indonesian Foreign Minister Ambassador Busyra Basnur said at the Borobudur Conservation Hall in Magelang, Central Java, Friday.

More Details:

<http://www.antaraneews.com/en/news/110119/indonesia-reiterates-support-for-palestines-independence>

- **Truman approves aid to Palestine**

On this day in 1949, President Harry S. Truman authorized \$16 million in U.S. aid for Palestinian refugees who had been displaced in the aftermath of the 1948 War of Independence waged between Israel and its Arab foes. Truman`s action constituted half of a \$32 million United Nations Palestinian relief package. In signing the enabling resolution, the president said he hoped that “before the relief money ran out, means will be devised for the permanent solution of the refugee problem.

More Details:

<http://www.politico.com/story/2017/03/truman-approves-aid-to-palestine-march-24-1949-236260>

- **Algeria Pays Up First Instalment Of Its Contribution To Palestine's Budget**

Algeria has handed over a cheque for US\$26.4 million to the Secretariat-General of the Arab League, as the first installment of its contribution to the 2017 budget of the Palestinian Authority, according to the Algerian Embassy in Cairo.

More Details:

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v8/wn/newsworld.php?id=1341071>

- **New Hamas Chief: We Will Liberate All Palestine**

The newly elected leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip said on Wednesday that the terror group will not stop attacking Israel until “the liberation of all of Palestine.” Yahya Sinwar, who replaced Ismail Haniyyeh, said Hamas would not allow even a “morsel” of Israel to exist, the Times of Israel reported citing Hebrew-language media reports.

More Details:

<http://www.breitbart.com/jerusalem/2017/03/23/new-hamas-chief-we-will-liberate-all-palestine/>

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Arab summit's preparatory meeting focuses on inter-Arab trade**

The Economic and Social Council of the Arab League on Thursday held the first preparatory meeting of the 28th ordinary Arab summit at the Dead Sea, the Jordan News Agency, and Petra, reported. Industry, Trade and Supply Ministry's Secretary General Yousef Shamali received the presidency of the meeting from Mauritania's representative.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/arab-summit%E2%80%99s-preparatory-meeting-focuses-inter-arab-trade>

- **Army chief, British ambassador discuss ties**

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Major General Mahmoud Freihat, on Thursday, met with the British ambassador to Jordan Edward Oakden. During the meeting, the two officials discussed means of boosting bilateral ties to serve the interests of the armed forces of the two countries.

More Details:

<http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=34555#.WNUQDW-LTcs>

- **Khoury Warns Merchants against Price Manipulation**

Minister of Economy Raed Khoury stressed on Friday that the ministry has started monitoring commercial institutions and prices of commodities, as he urged the Lebanese to report any violation related to manipulation in prices. "The ministry is working to monitor commercial establishments and control violations before any tax is issued in the official gazette," said Khoury in a press conference.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/227459-khoury-warns-merchants-against-price-manipulation>

- **King, Moroccan Monarch hold talks**

His Majesty King Abdullah II held talks here on Thursday with Moroccan Monarch Mohammed VI on bilateral ties and latest developments in the Middle East. The two leaders voiced hope that the upcoming Arab Summit, which will convene in Jordan next week, would crystallize a joint Arab vision towards various crises and challenges facing the region.



More Details:

[http://petra.gov.io/Public\\_News/Nws\\_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site\\_id=1&NewsID=294714&CatID=13](http://petra.gov.io/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site_id=1&NewsID=294714&CatID=13)

- **Khatib: Reinclusion of Salary scale to Budget draft left to Proceedings of debate**

Minister of Environment Tariq Khatib said in an interview with the Voice of Lebanon 100.3-100.5 radio station that "the cabinet is now dedicated to reformulating the draft budget and finalizing the debate on it, to be adopted at a later meeting chaired by President Michel Aoun." He pointed out that "the re-inclusion of the salary scale to the draft budget is left to the proceedings of the debate, which will take place at the cabinet session today."

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/77022/Khatib-reinclusion-of-salary-scale-to-budget-draft-left-to-proceedings-of-debate>

- **Hezbollah's Badreddine killed by his own men: Israeli army chief**

Israel has concluded that Hezbollah's top military commander was killed in Syria last year by rivals within the Shiite militant group, Israel's military chief said Tuesday. The explosive announcement was the latest sign of an escalating feud between Israel and Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed group sworn to Israel's destruction.

More Details:

<http://yalibnan.com/2017/03/24/hezbollahs-c-killed-by-his-own-men-israeli-army-chief/>

- **Beirut Airport to Apply UK Ban on Electronic Devices aboard Flights**

Passengers departing from Beirut's Rafik Hariri International Airport will no longer be allowed to carry large electronics in cabin baggage on United Kingdom-bound aircraft as of Saturday. Based on the United Kingdom's Ministry of Transportation's new restrictions on electronic devices aboard flights bound to the UK, Beirut International Airport said new safety measures will be enacted as of the midnight of March 25, 2017, the National News Agency reported.

More Details:

<http://english.almanar.com.lb/219096>

- **US Air Force Service Member Killed in Jordan Loading Bombs on Plane**

A US airman was killed in Jordan while supporting aerial combat operations in the Middle East, reports said. Alexandria Gleason-Morrow, 25, was killed while loading bombs onto a plane, WHEC TV

reported. "Her mother, Stephanie Gleason, confirms that something broke and the bomb slipped off the plane and hit her in the head.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13960104000275>

- **As Walid Jumblatt Anoints His Son, Lebanon's Crises Persist**

On Sunday, Walid Jumblatt, longtime leader of the Lebanese Progressive Socialist Party, publicly announced that he would step down from parliament after the next elections. He appointed his son Taymour as his political heir. The announcement was part of a televised ceremony commemorating the assassination of Kamal Joumblatt, Walid's father and the man from whom he inherited his political position. The Jumblatts, who have been a prominent Druze family for centuries, are just one example of Lebanon's hereditary sectarian political system, which has stymied the Lebanese state's functions.

More Details:

[http://muftah.org/walid-jumblatt-anoints-son-lebanons-crises-persist/#.WNURrW\\_yjcs](http://muftah.org/walid-jumblatt-anoints-son-lebanons-crises-persist/#.WNURrW_yjcs)

## 6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union renews support for UAE's right over 3 islands occupied by Iran**

The Arab Inter-parliamentary Union has renewed its support for the UAE's complete and legitimate rights over the three Iranian-occupied islands of Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Mousa. It also expressed its complete support for the UAE's peaceful procedures and means to regain its sovereignty over the occupied islands.

More details:

<http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302604812>

- **Two Years of War in Yemen**

Yemen's war has killed around 7,700 people and wounded 42,500 others, according to UN figures, since a Saudi-led Arab coalition intervened in support of the government two years ago.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/227383-two-years-of-war-in-yemen>

- **Yemen war leaves 7,700 dead: UN**

Yemen's war has killed around 7,700 people and wounded 42,500 others, according to UN figures, since a Saudi-led Arab coalition intervened in support of the government two years ago.

More details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1073131/middle-east>

- **Bahrain Condemns Systematic Human Rights Violations by Houthis in Yemen**

Bahrain's permanent representative to the United Nations Office in Geneva and other international organizations, Ambassador Dr. Yusuf Abdul Karim Bucheeri, delivered a statement on behalf of Gulf Cooperation Council countries at a human rights session held in Geneva.

More details:

<http://english.aawsat.com/asharq-al-awsat-english/news-middle-east/bahrain-condemns-systematic-human-rights-violations-houthis-yemen>

- **Bahrain, US cooperation discussed**

Part of his current official visit to the United States, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa met in Washington today with Congresswoman Kay Granger, member of the Financial Committee at the US House of Representatives and reviewed with her ways of developing bilateral relations and defense cooperation between the two friendly countries.

More details:

<http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/776998>

- **Fitch downgrades Saudi Arabia, doubts prospects of reform**

Fitch Ratings cut its assessment of Saudi Arabia's credit quality on Wednesday, citing deterioration of state finances due to low oil prices and doubts over whether Riyadh can achieve its economic reform plans.

More details:

<http://ameinfo.com/money/economy/fitch-downgrades-saudi-arabia-doubts-prospects-reform/>

- **Oil edges up as Saudis cut supplies to US, but global glut remains**

Oil prices edged up on Friday, supported by a fall in Saudi exports to the United States, but overall markets remained under pressure on the back of a world market awash with fuel. Benchmark Brent crude futures were at \$50.65 per barrel at 0633 GMT, up 9 cents from their last close.

More details:

[http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/commodities/article9599791.ece?utm\\_source=RSS\\_Feed&utm\\_medium=RSS&utm\\_campaign=RSS\\_Syndication](http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/commodities/article9599791.ece?utm_source=RSS_Feed&utm_medium=RSS&utm_campaign=RSS_Syndication)

- **2 Years of Al-Saud's Deadly Air Campaign against Yemen**

Saudi Arabia has been striking Yemen since March 2015 to restore power to fugitive president Mansour Hadi, a close ally of Riyadh. The Saudi-led aggression has so far killed at least 13,100 Yemenis, including hundreds of women and children.

More details:

<http://en.alalam.ir/news/1942628>

- **Saudis Using Petrodollars to Kill Yemenis, Export Wahhabi Ideology: German Analyst**

German political analyst said the Saudi regime is using petrodollars to nurture terrorists in Syria, kill civilians in Yemen and export Wahhabi ideology to Europe.

More details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2017/03/23/1362720/saudis-using-petrodollars-to-kill-yemenis-export-wahhabi-ideology-german-analyst>

- **Qatar among Top Donor Countries To Support Refugees Around The World – UNHCR**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Regional Representative to the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCC) Khaled Khalifa on Thursday said Qatar was one of the largest donor governments, which cooperates with international institutions and international organisations providing relief and support for refugees in the Arab region and abroad.

More details:

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v8/wn/newsworld.php?id=1341035>

- **Oman: Anti-Iran speech may force us to pull out of Arab summit**

Oman sent Jordan a messaging saying that the Gulf state will reduce its presence at the Arab Summit scheduled for 29 March or will excuse itself if comments or recommendations made during the event put Muscat in an awkward situation, diplomatic sources have said.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170323-oman-anti-iran-speech-may-force-us-to-pull-out-of-arab-summit/>

## 7. EGYPT

- **Egypt to continue training Lebanese army officers**

Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri has asked Cairo to continue providing Lebanese army officers with military training, Egyptian state media reported Thursday.

More details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/egypt-to-continue-training-lebanese-army-officers/777966>

- **Egypt Court to Reopen Corruption Probe into Mubarak**

An Egyptian court ordered on Thursday a renewed corruption probe into ousted president Hosni Mubarak, who has been cleared for release after almost six years in detention, judicial officials said.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/227432-egypt-court-to-reopen-corruption-probe-into-mubarak>

- **Ten Egyptian troops, 15 extremists killed by in Sinai clashes**

Ten members of Egypt's security forces were killed by bombs which struck their vehicles in central Sinai, a military spokesman said on Thursday, during an operation targeting what the army described as terrorist bases.

More details:

<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2017/03/23/Ten-Egyptian-troops-15-extremists-killed-by-in-Sinai-clashes.html>

- **Sudan's Al-Bashir reaffirms brotherly relations in letter to Egypt's Sisi**

Egypt's President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi received on Thursday a letter from his Sudanese counterpart Omar Al-Bashir that stressed the necessity of preserving cooperation with Egypt on all levels, according to Egyptian presidential spokesman Alaa Youssef.

More details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/261530/Egypt/Politics-/Sudans-AlBashir-reaffirms-brotherly-relations-in-l.aspx>



- **Sisi ready to train Lebanese army: Hariri**

In an interview with state-run news agency MENA, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri said that he called on President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to take part in training the Lebanese army; a request to which Sisi responded favorably during their meeting at the presidential palace on Wednesday.

More details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com//news/sisi-ready-train-lebanese-army-hariri-0>

- **Egypt says Sinai Fighting Kills 12 Security Forces**

Militants killed 10 Egyptian soldiers and two policemen in the Sinai Peninsula on Thursday, underscoring the challenge security forces face in combatting an Islamic State affiliate in the restive area bordering Israel and the Gaza Strip.

More details:

[http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML\\_EGYPT?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-03-23-13-32-31](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_EGYPT?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-03-23-13-32-31)

- **Egypt Says 10 Soldiers and 15 Militants Are Killed in Sinai Fight**

Ten Egyptian soldiers and 15 militants were killed during a raid on an Islamist insurgent base in the restive Sinai Peninsula, a military spokesman said Thursday.

More details:

[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/23/world/middleeast/egypt-soldiers-militants-sinai-peninsula.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/23/world/middleeast/egypt-soldiers-militants-sinai-peninsula.html?_r=0)

- **Vice foreign minister to visit Egypt, India to expand ties**

South Korea's Vice Foreign Minister Lim Sung-nam will visit Egypt and India over the next week to discuss strategic cooperation with the "increasingly important" countries, the foreign ministry here said Friday.

More details:

<http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20170324000867>

- **Egypt asks Haftar to repudiate militia crimes**

Chief of Staff Mahmoud Hijazi said on Tuesday that the Egyptian army has asked Libyan General Khalifa Haftar to repudiate and apologise for the crimes committed by his militia in Benghazi. The

crimes include the exhumation of bodies in Ganfouda cemetery, and the killing and torturing of men, women and children.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170323-egypt-asks-haftar-to-repudiate-militia-crimes/>

- **Roadside bombings kill 10 Egypt soldiers during Sinai raid**

Ten Egyptian soldiers have been killed by two roadside bomb blasts during a raid against jihadist militants in the Sinai Peninsula, the military says.

More details:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39364778>

## 8. NORTH AFRICA

- **King Mohammed VI Offers Condolences to British PM**

King Mohamed VI has sent a message conveying his deep condolences and those of the Moroccan people to British Prime Minister, Theresa May, following Wednesday's carnage outside Parliament.

More Details

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/03/211914/king-mohammed-vi-offers-condolences-to-british-pm/>

- **Justice ministry says Italian migrant MoU did not include more camps**

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by Presidency Council (PC) head Faiez Serraj and the Italian government was never meant to include the return of migrants from Italy to new EU-funded camps in Libya, the justice ministry said today.

More Details

<https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/03/23/justice-ministry-says-italian-migrant-mou-did-not-include-more-camps/>

- **Haftar orders unconditional release of captured families**

Head of the Libya National Army Khalifa Haftar has ordered the immediate and unconditional release of families detained during the liberation of the west of Benghazi. Only those facing criminal charges will continue to be held, under his order.

More Details

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170323-haftar-orders-unconditional-release-of-captured-families/>

- **Hundreds of African Migrants Feared Drowned Off Libyan Coast**

Hundreds of African migrants were feared drowned in the Mediterranean Sea on March 23 after a charity's rescue boat found five corpses close to two sinking rubber dinghies off the coast of Libya. The UN's refugee agency said it was "deeply alarmed" after the Golfo Azzuro, a boat operated by Proactiva Open Arms, reported the recovery of the bodies close to the drifting, partially-submerged dinghies.

More Details

<http://www.rferl.org/a/african-migrants-hundreds-feared-dead-libya/28388021.html>

- **President Bouteflika strongly condemns London attack**

President of the Republic Abdelaziz Bouteflika on Thursday strongly condemned the "appalling attack" in London Wednesday, which claimed many casualties. "It is with a profound emotion and deep indignation that I've learned about the appalling attack in London, plunging into mourning your country by leaving several people dead and injured," President Bouteflika said in a message addressed to UK Prime Minister Theresa May.

More Details

<http://en.aps.dz/algeria/17425-president-bouteflika-strongly-condemns-london-attack>

- **Algeria pays contributions to Palestinian Authority budget**

Algeria on Thursday has handed over a cheque for US\$26.4 million to the Secretariat General of the Arab League, as part of the first instalment of its contribution to the 2017 budget of the Palestinian Authority, said the Algerian Embassy in Cairo in a statement.

More Details

<http://en.aps.dz/algeria/17426-algeria-pays-contributions-to-palestinian-authority-budget>

- **Sharjah ruler apologises for comments on Algerian independence**

The Ruler of Sharjah, Sultan Bin Mohammed Al-Qasimi, has apologised to Algeria after statements made last week where he stated that the French General Charles de Gaulle only granted independence to the North African state to satisfy the late Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

More Details

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170323-sharjah-ruler-apologises-for-comments-on-algerian-independence/>

- **Abdelilah Benkirane: I am Still Alive**

Following his dismissal as appointed Head of Government last week, Abdelilah Benkirane told reporters on Thursday that he is “still the caretaker of the government and Secretary General of the Justice and Development Party (PJD).”

More Details

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/03/211933/abdelilah-benkirane-still-alive/>

- **Tunisia Seeks Better Investment Opportunities in Africa**

Tunisia- Different economic entities in Tunisia, in both the private and public sectors, are searching for successful means to enter the promising African markets. Tunisia is seeking to overcome some obstacles, including political instability, transportation difficulties, and lack of entities representing different state institutions interested in trade and investment in most African countries.

More Details

<http://english.aawsat.com/m-saidani/business/tunisia-seeks-better-investment-opportunities-africa>

- **Tunisia expects IMF to release second loan tranche next month**

Tunisia expects that the International Monetary Fund will release the \$350 million second tranche of a \$2.8 billion loan after a three-month delay, a senior official said on Thursday. The IMF postponed payment from December because of lack of progress on reforms, including cuts to the public-sector wage bill.

More Details

[http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFKBN16U208-OZABS?feedType=RSS&feedName=investingNews&utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FAFRICAbusinessNews+%28News+%2F+AFRICA+%2F+Business+News%29&rpc=401](http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFKBN16U208-OZABS?feedType=RSS&feedName=investingNews&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FAFRICAbusinessNews+%28News+%2F+AFRICA+%2F+Business+News%29&rpc=401)

## 9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Afghan forces arrest mine planter in Nangarhar province**

The Afghan security forces have arrested a mine planter from a restive district of eastern Nangarhar province. According to the local security officials, the detained militant has been identified as Zahidullah and was arrested from the vicinity of Pacher Agam district.

More Details

<http://www.khaama.com/afghan-forces-arrest-mine-planter-in-nangarhar-province-02454>

- **US rejects Russia invitation to Afghan peace conference**

The United States won't attend a multinational peace conference on Afghanistan next month in Russia, a State Department official said Thursday. The US wasn't consulted before receiving the invitation and doesn't know Russia's objectives for the gathering.

More Details

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/03/24/us-rejects-russia-invitation-to-afghan-peace-conference/>

- **Gillani granted visa issuing authorities to Haqqani**

Pakistan's former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani's had authorised Hussain Haqqani to issue Pakistani visas to Americans. A 2010 letter from Gilani office has raised further questions for the Pakistan people's party (PPP) over then-ambassador to the US Husain Haqqani's controversial powers in granting visas to US officials.

More Details

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/24-Mar-17/gillani-granted-visa-issuing-authorities-to-haqqani>

- **Govts come and go but PPP is here to stay: Zardari**

Former President and co-chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Asif Ali Zardari said that governments come and go but his party was here to stay for all times to come. Addressing an event to mark Pakistan Day, Zardari said that he was the first one who had said "Pakistan Khappay." He said that love for Pakistan was the first priority and that it was up to the leaders of today to protect the generation of tomorrow. PPP will remain alive in the pages of history.

More Details



<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/03/24/340011/govts-come-and-go-but-ppp-is-here-to-stay-zardari/>

- **Investigator: Military members stole \$27.7 million in Afghan rebuilding effort**

When the U.S. government spends \$117 billion to rebuild a war-torn country, some of it is bound to get stolen or misspent. And that's what happened in Afghanistan, according to the man responsible for helping find the waste, fraud and abuse.

More Details

<https://www.stripes.com/news/us/investigator-military-members-stole-27-7-million-in-afghan-rebuilding-effort-1.460346#.WNTJCPnyhac>

- **Glorifying politicians**

Bacha Khan was a Pakhtun leader, but he never liked living in Pakistan. He had asked to be buried in Afghanistan and therefore after his death he was buried on the Pakistan-Afghan border area. After reading such a history of Bacha Khan, I was surprised when the previous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government changed the name of Peshawar international airport to Bacha Khan airport. A main junction of Peshawar was also named Bacha Khan Chowk.

More Details

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322403/glorifying-politicians>

- **Zahir Shah rejects Khattak's 'offer' to join Tehreek-i-Insaf**

Former PPP provincial president Syed Zahir Ali Shah has claimed KP Chief Minister Pervez formally offered him to join the ruling PTI of late but he declined the offer. He also insisted earlier, Jamaat-i-Islami chief Sirajul Haq and PML-N senior vice president Amir Muqam, too, had invited him to join their respective parties.

More Details

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322473/zahir-shah-rejects-khattaks-offer-to-join-tehreek-i-insaf>

- **Transporters, custom agents stage protest at visa condition**

Transporters, custom clearance agents and truck drivers on Thursday staged a protest in Landikotal bazaar to demand withdrawal of the passport and visa condition set for Afghanistan-bound Pakistani drivers. A large number of transporters, union leaders, custom clearance agents and Pakistani drivers took part in the demonstration held at the main Landikotal bazaar.

More Details

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/194214-Transporters-custom-agents-stage-protest-at-visa-condition>

- **Russia may be aiding Taliban in Afghanistan, top US general says**

The top U.S. general in Europe told lawmakers Thursday that he sees evidence Russia might be supplying the Taliban in an effort to undermine the United States, in what could be a significant turning point in the Afghanistan conflict. "I've seen the influence of Russia of late, increased influence in terms of association and perhaps even supply to the Taliban," Army Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, the head of the U.S. military's European Command and the Supreme Allied Commander for NATO, told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

More Details

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/03/23/russia-may-be-aiding-taliban-in-afghanistan-top-us-general-says.html>

- **President confers Military Awards on officers and men of armed forces**

President Mamnoon Hussain has decorated the Military awards to the officers and men of Pakistan Army, Navy and Air Force.

More Details

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/194234-President-confers-Military-Awards-on-officers-and-men-of-armed-forces>

## 10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkey sends 13 truckfuls of school supplies to Syria**

Thirteen aid trucks Friday headed from Turkey to the war-torn Syrian cities of Jarabulus and Al-Bab. Coordinated by the provincial Education Directorate, 10 trucks were sent from the eastern Malatya province carrying stationery and educational supplies for the children and schools of the country. Before the trucks left, Malatya Governor Mustafa Toprak said that thanks to the Turkish-led Operation Euphrates Shield in Syria, now civilians can return to their homes in Jarabulus and Al-Bab following their liberation from terrorist groups.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/186769/turkey-sends-13-truckfuls-of-school-supplies-to-syria>

- **Next step against Daesh is Raqqa offensive'**

The next most significant step in the fight against Daesh in Iraq is to retake Raqqa, Turkey's Foreign Ministry spokesman said Thursday. "We have said that we are ready to carry out such an operation together with the U.S.-led international coalition forces against Daesh," Huseyin Muftuoglu told a news conference in Ankara.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/europe/next-step-against-daesh-is-raqqah-offensive/778335>

*\*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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