



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

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Peace Process

Barış Süreci

Ethnic and Secterian Groups

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

Non State Actors

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Relations with the West

Batı'yla İlişkiler

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1. IRAQ

- **Civil party withdraws from State of Law Coalition**

Civil party has withdrawn from the State of Law Coalition, led by former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the party said in a statement on Friday. It added that the party has decided to run for parliamentary and provincial elections independently. It continued that the party is committed to submitting its candidates' list to Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) during the prescribed period.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/22937/Civil-party-withdraws-from-State-of-Law-Coalition>

- **Saadoun: A Govt. And Parliamentary Tendency to Postpone the Provincial Elections for 6 Months**

The head of the parliamentary legal committee Mohsen al-Saadoun confirmed there is a tendency of the government and parliament to postpone the provincial elections for 6 months. He said in a statement to the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / "The provincial elections law is composed of 52 articles, and the parliament voted to approved 50 articles in the last period, and only two articles remained related to the province of Kirkuk," pointing out that "the differences between the deputies of Kirkuk on these two articles still going on. "

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?ouTTFDL0TIYc8K7Z2%252bgplg%253d%253d

- **Meet Iraq's plentiful parliamentary alliances**

Iraq's parliament has approved Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's proposal to hold legislative elections May 12. The run-up to the vote should be interesting, to say the least. New Shiite coalitions have made it clear they want to test their popularity independent of the ruling Shiite National Alliance. The new coalitions are running four Shiite lists: Nasr al-Iraq (The Victory Alliance), led by Abadi The State of Law coalition, led by Vice President Nouri al-Maliki The Fatah alliance of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), led by Hadi al-Amiri The Sairoon coalition, backed by Muqtada al-Sadr, which includes the Iraqi Communist Party.

More Details:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/01/iraq-election-shiite-alliance-sectarianism.html>

- **Interpol returns former minister wanted for corruption to Iraq**

The International Criminal Police Organization, more commonly known as Interpol, has handed over to Iraqi authorities a former minister arrested in Lebanon on charges of “embezzling state funds.” “Former trade minister Abdel Falah al-Sudani has landed in Baghdad after having been handed over by Interpol. It's the first time that Interpol responds to a government request at that level,” a government source said on condition of anonymity on Thursday.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/25/550192/Interpol-Iraq-Abdel-Falah-alSudani-Beirut>

- **Iraq seeks to boost military ties with Kuwait -- Iraqi Defence Min. – Military**

Iraqi Defense Minister Irfan Al-Hayali expressed wishes on Thursday to bolster military cooperation with Kuwait to enhance the security and stability of the region. Iraq is keen to cooperate with Kuwait in security and military fields and to conduct joint ground military exercises between the two nations' armies, and to create a better coordination and communication, said Minister Al-Hayali during a meeting with the visiting Kuwaiti media delegation.

More Details:

<https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2685640&Language=en>

- **Iraq's Shunned Islamic State Families**

Houla, 25, has no children, so technically she can return to her village, where the children of Islamic State militants are not welcome, no matter how young. But as a militant's widow, she says, her presence at home could put her whole family in danger. “If I go home they will be attacked,” she explains.

More Details:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/iraq-shunned-islamic-state-families/4224626.html>

- **Operations against ISIS Move to Diyala; Five Killed in Iraq**

A Shi'ite Waqf endowments organization has reportedly assumed control of a Sunni mosque in Baghdad and turned it into a Shi'ite mosque. At least five people were killed: A militiaman was killed during an attack on a highway in Salah ad Din province.

More Details:

<https://original.antiwar.com/updates/2018/01/25/operations-isis-move-diyala-five-killed-iraq/>

- **IS Attacks Hashd al-Shaabi**

A group of armed gangs from the Islamic State (IS) attacked Iranian-backed Hashd al-Shaabi in Salahaddin province of central Iraq. On a main road between to locations within Salahaddin, revealed a police officer, a group of IS militants attacked Hashd al-Shaabi militias.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/410136>

- **Iraq's air force receives six South Korean-built warplanes with many more to come**

Iraq's air force has received a boost in recent days following the arrival of six new warplanes of South Korean design. Another 18 of the fighters are on the way. Several days ago, official sources reported the arrival of half-a-dozen South Korean-built FA-50 Golden Eagle fighter jets to the Iraqi Air Force making good on a contract reached between Baghdad and Seoul's military export authorities in December 2013.

More Details:

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/pictures-iraqs-air-force-receives-six-south-korean-built-warplanes-many-come/>

- **Reconstruction may cost over \$100b: Iraq PM**

The reconstruction of Iraq may cost more than \$100 billion and will require Baghdad to continue supporting OPEC's oil output cuts and attract maximum investment from abroad, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi said on Thursday. Meanwhile, Interpol handed over to Iraq a former minister arrested in Beirut over a conviction for corruption, in a first such collaboration with the international police body, a government source said.

More Details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/270bcd68-8ce5-4094-b34d-5aea15222c79.aspx>

- **Washington Ambassador to Baghdad: 400 international companies will participate in the donor conference in Kuwait**

Minister of Planning and Minister of Trade Salman Jumaili announced that the Iraqi government has completed its preparations for the donor conference in Kuwait, indicating that the national document for the reconstruction of liberated areas will be presented at the conference. The Ambassador of Washington to Baghdad Douglas Silliman revealed the participation of 400 international companies in the conference and the desire of 100 American companies To enter and invest in Iraq.

More Details:

<http://www.theiqdteam.com/blog/washington-ambassador-to-baghdad-400-international-companies-will-participate-in-the-donor-conference-in-kuwait>

- **Iraq to offer 3 refineries for investment in Kuwait conference**

Iraq plans to offer three of its oil refineries to investors during an upcoming conference of Iraq donors, the government said Thursday. Anadolu Agency quoted a statement from the state's investment authority saying that the refineries include Faw, in the southern Basra province, with a production capacity of 300.000 barrels a day, besides another in Anbar (150.000 barrels per day) and Nasseriya, Dhi Qar province (150.000 barrels per day).

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/business-iraqi-dinar/iraq-offer-3-refineries-investment-kuwait-conference/>

2. SYRIA

- **'Last Hope' Syria Peace Talks End First Day In Vienna**

Negotiators met in Vienna on January 25 for the first of two days of UN-sponsored talks aimed at finding a political solution to Syria's nearly seven-year war. The UN special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, first met with Syrian officials and then separately with the opposition Syrian Negotiations Commission (SNC) for talks focusing on constitutional issues after the eighth round of talks held in Geneva last month ended without progress.

More Details:

<https://en.radiofarda.com/a/syria-last-hope-peace-talks-vienna/28998731.html>

- **Lebanon's 'Fall' in Syria-Iran Axis Raises Arab, Intl Concerns**

Preparations for Lebanon's upcoming parliamentary elections are underway despite the fact that the "map of alliances" is still vague and highly controversial except for the "Shiite duo" of Hizbullah and the AMAL Movement, al-Joumhouria daily reported on Friday. Composition of alliances between political parties "appears to be very difficult." Parties hardly declare their alliances finding it sufficing to only declare the candidates, added al-Joumhouria.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/241381-report-lebanon-s-fall-in-syria-iran-axis-raises-arab-intl-concerns>

- **Ankara-Moscow cooperation made significant gains in Syria, Russian envoy says**

Russian Ambassador to Ankara Aleksey Yerhov stressed that the close cooperation between Turkey and Russia in Syria has paved the way for significant achievements. "Concerning the Syria issue, Turkey and Russia have been cooperating closely. We've accomplished significant achievements so far. We kicked off the Astana process, and within its framework, we were able to set up de-escalation zones in four main conflict points," Yerhov said while speaking in a panel organized by TOBB University titled "Russian Foreign Policy and Contemporary Turkish-Russian relations."

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2018/01/26/ankara-moscow-cooperation-made-significant-gains-in-syria-russian-envoy-says>

- **Syrian Army Finds Terrorists' Modern Equipment of European Origin - Russian MoD**

The US established a military base near the town of al-Tanf on the Syria-Iraq border back in April 2017, citing the need to carry out operations against Daesh. "During the search at the site of the fight with terrorists, the Syrian forces found modern radio-electronic equipment manufactured in Europe, ammunition for light weapons and Daesh literature," the statement issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense said.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201801261061083237-syrian-army-european-equipment/>

- **Syria's Permanent Delegation to UN: US claims against Syria and Russia on chemical investigation aims at protecting terrorists**

The fabricated allegations made by the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations against Syria and Russia on the pretext of disrupting the international mechanisms to investigate the use of toxic chemicals come in the framework of "covering terrorist groups," supported by Known countries, the permanent delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic to the UN in New York said.

More Details:

<https://sana.sy/en/?p=125440>

- **PYD/PKK detains over 1,000 civilians in Syria's Afrin**

The PYD/PKK terrorist organization is keeping over 1,000 innocent civilians in captivity, having released Daesh prisoners on the condition that they would fight against the Turkish army and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in Syria's Afrin region, local sources said Thursday. The terrorist group struck a deal with Daesh terrorists to use them as a tool against Turkey's Operation Olive Branch in Afrin, the sources told Anadolu Agency on condition of anonymity due to security concerns.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/pyd-pkk-detains-over-1-000-civilians-in-syrias-afrin/1042346>

- **Five militants liquidated near US-controlled area in Syria**

On January 24, Syrian military liquidated a group of five militants in the US-controlled Al-Tanf area and found a modern electronic warfare package made in Europe that belonged to the killed terrorists, the Russian Reconciliation Center for the Conflicting Sides in Syria reported. "On January 24, while patrolling the perimeter of the zone of blocking in the Al-Tanf area, a Syrian military patrol spotted a convoy of three off-road vehicles carrying militants armed with heavy machineguns that was moving across the desert.

More Details:

<http://tass.com/defense/987011>

3. IRAN

- **Zarif slams Saudi 'vision of light spin', US 'credit-grabbing' for Daesh defeat**

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says the US and Saudi Arabia cannot alter the facts on the ground about their sponsorship of Daesh and Iran's role in defeating the Takfiri terrorist group. In a post on his Twitter account on Thursday, Zarif reacted to latest remarks by Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, who accused Iran of backing sectarianism.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/25/550170/Iran-Javad-Zarif-Saudi-Arabia-Daesh>

- **Iran Parliament to discuss JCPOA implementation: MP**

Iranian Parliament (Majlis) nuclear committee will discuss a Foreign Ministry report on implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) reached between Iran and world powers in 2015. 'This report was published and distributed among members and the nuclear committee will discuss it,' Spokesperson for the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Hossein Naqavi Hosseini said on Friday.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82808445>

- **Iran Blasts US' Measures to Kill Nuclear Deal**

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani says the Iran nuclear deal is non-negotiable and the US' recent moves to change the JCPOA are 'illegal'. In an exclusive interview with Al-Alam TV on Thursday, Shamkhani called the JCPOA a comprehensive document which cannot be changed under any condition.

More Details:

<http://ifpnews.com/exclusive/iran-blasts-us-measures-kill-nuclear-deal/>

- **Iran's amb. to UN: Israeli regime core of ME crises**

Iran's Ambassador to United Nations Es'hagh Al Habib said on Thursday that occupation of the Palestinian land is the core and central of all conflicts in the Middle East. "The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian land is the core and central of all conflicts in the Middle East," said Es'hagh Al-Habib, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/131619/Israeli-regime-core-of-ME-crisis>

- **Iran building 'world's largest military base' in Syria: Israeli diplomat**

Iran is turning Syria into the "world's largest military base", spending up to \$35 billion on missile factories and an 82,000-strong deployment in the country to threaten the region, Israeli diplomat Danny Danon said on Thursday. Danon, Israel's ambassador to the UN, said he was disclosing classified intelligence to the UN Security Council to show how Tehran's "tentacles of terror" were spreading and posed a danger to Israel, the rest of the Middle East and beyond.

More Details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1233181/middle-east>

- **Counteracting Iran's Gray Zone Strategy in Syria**

As the Islamic State continues to hemorrhage territory in Syria, Iran is extending its influence throughout the country as it works to establish a contiguous land corridor or "bridge" stretching from Tehran to Damascus and on to Beirut. The situation in Syria is transitioning from an active conflict zone to what is known in military parlance as the "gray zone," an area of ambiguity that sits uncomfortably between peace and war.

More Details:

<https://www.rand.org/blog/2018/01/counteracting-irans-gray-zone-strategy-in-syria.html>

- **49% rise in Iran-Pakistan trade in past nine months**

Iran's commercial attaché in Pakistan's Karachi says that trade between Iran and Pakistan is improving as the bilateral trade volume has increased by 49 percent in the past nine months of the Iranian year. In an interview with IRNA, Morad Ne'mati Zargaran said improvement in bilateral trade volume is an encouraging sign showing that both countries are keen to boost bilateral trade.

More Details:

<http://www.iran-daily.com/News/208799.html>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Palestinian envoy to DC slams 'backstabbing' Trump administration**

The Palestinian Ambassador to Washington, Husam Zomlot, slammed what he described as the "backstabbing" Trump administration, in remarks reported by Haaretz on Thursday. Zomlot, speaking at the Middle East Institute, accused the White House of "reneging their own promises" on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180126-palestinian-envoy-to-dc-slams-backstabbing-trump-administration/>

- **Palestinians: If Jerusalem is off the table, then peace is off the table**

Palestinians denounced on Thursday renewed statements by US President Donald Trump that Jerusalem is off the negotiating table and threats to cut all US aid to the Palestinians if they do not return to the negotiating table with Israel saying that if Jerusalem is off the negotiating table, then peace and the US are off the table as well.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=umBdFva96207952005aumBdFv>

- **Trump tries to strong arm Palestine, touts 'America First' at Davos**

US President Donald Trump swaggered into the lion's den to confront the world's political and business elite on Thursday, as his "America First" administration executes an anti-globalist manifesto in trade, taxes and currency rates. A year after taking office, Trump joined the World Economic

Forum in Davos with foreign exchange markets in turmoil and Washington's trading partners in uproar.

More Details:

<https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/trump-tries-to-strong-arm-palestine-touts-america-first-at-davos-14603>

- **US slammed for withholding Palestinian refugee funds**

The leaders of 21 humanitarian aid groups wrote to the Trump administration on Wednesday to object "in the strongest terms" to a decision to withhold \$65 million in planned US contributions to the United Nations agency that serves Palestinian refugees. The US State Department said last week that Washington would withhold \$65 million it had planned to pay the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), saying it needed to make unspecified reforms.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86930>

- **Palestinians: Donald Trump's threats 'will not work'**

The Palestinian leadership has rebuked threats by US President Donald Trump to withhold aid if it refuses to negotiate with Israel. "This policy of threats ... will not work with the Palestinian people," spokesman for the Palestinian presidency, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, said in a press conference on Thursday.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/palestinians-donald-trump-threats-work-180125165024084.html>

- **Israeli forces detain foreign activist from Hebron City**

Israeli forces on Thursday detained an unidentified foreign activist while on the al-Shuhada Street in the Old City of Hebron in the southern occupied West Bank, according to locals. Imad Abu Shamsiyeh, a Palestinian activist, told Ma'an that Israeli soldiers detained an international activist and transferred him to an unknown location.

More Details:

<http://www.maannnews.com/Content.aspx?id=779781>

- **Israel's Netanyahu says only US can broker peace deal**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday that there was no substitute for the United States to broker a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians. "I think there's no substitute for the United States. As the honest broker, as a facilitator, there's no other international body that would do it," Netanyahu said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

More Details:

<https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/25/01/2018/Israel%E2%80%99s-Netanyahu-says-only-US-can-broker-peace-deal>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **The Jordanian Monarch assured Al-Abadi in Davos that the Hashemite Kingdom supports the unity, security and stability of Iraq**

The King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, King Abdullah bin Al Hussein, affirmed Jordanian support for Iraq's unity, security and stability." The Information Office of the Prime Minister Haider Abadi said that Al-Abadi met on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, King of Jordan, during which they discussed bilateral cooperation in all fields and the situation in the region, stressing the support of Jordan for the unity, security and stability of Iraq especially after the big victory achieved on the Daesh terrorist gangs .

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?rr5eiuz%252b8A44bt9%252fBepL3Q%253d%253d

- **Jerusalem is a city of hope that should bring us together — King**

His Majesty King Abdullah said on Thursday that it would be catastrophic for Jerusalem to become a city that divides rather than bring hope, affirming that it is "such an emotional subject for everybody" and wondering: "Is Jerusalem a city that ends up dividing us?... Or is it a city of hope that brings us together?" The city is eternal to all monotheistic faiths, King Abdullah said, underlining that the "subject of Jerusalem has to be part of a comprehensive solution for Israelis and for Palestinians".

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/jerusalem-city-hope-should-bring-us-together-%E2%80%94-king>

- **Jordan King: Saudi Arabia Draws Red Lines for Iran's Regional Activities**

Jordan's King Abdullah II said on Thursday that Saudi Arabia was assuming a positive role in the Middle East and was drawing "red lines" for Iran's worrying activities. During a discussion session

with CNN's Fareed Zakaria at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos, King Abdullah stressed that King Salman bin Abdulaziz was leading an unprecedented proactive Saudi role in the Middle East.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1155331/jordan-king-saudi%C2%A0arabia-draws-red-lines-iran%E2%80%99s-regional-activities>

- **King Hamad invited to visit Jordan**

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa has received a written message from HM King Abdulla II ibn Al-Hussein of Jordan, inviting him to visit his country. HM the King was handed over the letter by the Jordanian Ambassador to Bahrain, Rami Saleh Abdul Karim Wreikat Al Adwan, whom he received at the Sakhr Palace today.

More Details:

http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=37043#.WmsNw65l_cs

- **AMAL Says Seniority Row 'Doesn't Eliminate' Alliance with FPM**

Differences between the AMAL Movement, of Speaker Nabih Berri, and the Free Patriotic Movement, of President Michel Aoun, over the signing of a seniority decree promoting a number of officers "do not annul the possibility of striking an alliance with the FPM," al-Akhbar daily reported on Friday. The daily quoted AMAL sources who said: "The battle over seniority decree between the President and Speaker is one thing, while the electoral alliance is another. The possibility of striking a coalition with the FPM is not rejected in principle, but it is however subject to calculations of profit and loss."

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/241382-amal-says-seniority-row-doesn-t-eliminate-alliance-with-fpm>

- **Mashnouq, interlocutors tackle current developments**

Interior and Municipalities Minister, Nouhad Mashnouq, on Thursday met with outgoing Turkish Ambassador to Lebanon, Cagatay Erciyes, who came on a farewell visit at the end of his diplomatic mission in Lebanon. Talks reportedly touched on the general situation in Lebanon and the broad region.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/87582/Mashnouq-interlocutors-tackle-current-developments>

- **Russia invites Lebanon to Sochi summit on Syria**

Russia on Thursday officially invited Lebanon to a planned summit meeting in Sochi over the Syrian crisis, slated for Jan. 29-30, according to Russia's ambassador in Beirut. "We invited Lebanon to the Sochi summit meeting," Russian Ambassador Alexander Zaspkin said in a news conference after the meeting with Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil in Beirut.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/russia-invites-lebanon-to-sochi-summit-on-syria/1042728>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Campaigners call on UK government to withdraw invitation to Saudi Crown Prince**

Human rights campaigners will appear at Number 10 today to present an open letter calling on the UK government to withdraw its invitation to the Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammad bin Salman. The open letter accuses bin Salman of creating the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today through the bombing campaign in Yemen. It also raises concerns over the lack of substantial progress on human rights in Saudi Arabia, where over 100 people were executed in 2017.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180125-campaigners-call-on-uk-government-to-withdraw-invitation-to-saudi-crown-prince/>

- **Princess Reema Argues For Gender Equality In Saudi Arabia**

Princess Reema bint Bandar made an eloquent plea for gender equality as a driving force for economic change in the Kingdom during her address at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos on Thursday. Saudi Arabia was advancing the cause of women "because it's necessary for our nation from an economic point of view, and also from the holistic nature of how you want a family to actually function as a family if you're constantly segregating family members. It just doesn't work that way," the princess said.

More Details:

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/26012018-princess-reema-argues-for-gender-equality-in-saudi-arabia/>

- **Arab coalition hands over 27 child soldiers to Yemen government -statement**

The Saudi-led military coalition fighting in Yemen has handed over 27 child soldiers to the internationally recognised government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, the Saudi government

media office said on Thursday. The children were taken prisoner during fighting with the with the Iran-allied Houthi militia on the border of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh's Center for International Communication said, citing an unnamed official source.

More Details:

<http://news.trust.org/item/20180125192749-l4k9e>

- **IOM and UNHCR condemn refugee and migrant drownings off the coast of Yemen**

IOM, the UN Migration Agency, and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, are outraged and saddened at the drownings of at least 30 refugees and migrants off the coast of Aden, Yemen earlier this week. Survivors of the incident have reported to UN and partner staff that an over-crowded boat packed with at least 152 Somalis and Ethiopians departed 23 January from the Al Buraiqa coast in Aden in a boat headed across the Gulf of Aden towards Djibouti. The vessel is believed to have been operated by unscrupulous smugglers who were attempting to take refugees and migrants to Djibouti, while also trying to extort more money from these refugees and migrants. The boat capsized amid reports of gunfire being used against the passengers.

More Details:

<https://www.iom.int/news/iom-and-unhcr-condemn-refugee-and-migrant-drownings-coast-yemen>

- **Rights groups fear for Bahraini activist Rajab's health**

International rights groups said Thursday they fear for the health behind bars of Bahrain's most high-profile activist, Nabeel Rajab, slamming the Gulf state over its seven-year crackdown on dissent. Rajab, a leading figure in 2011 protests that erupted in Bahrain, was sentenced to two years in jail last July for "disseminating rumours and false information" in television interviews critical of the government.

More Details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/1/25/rights-groups-fear-for-bahraini-activist-rajabs-health>

- **Kuwait protests to Riyadh after minister 'insulted'**

Kuwait on Wednesday protested to Saudi Arabia over derogatory remarks made by a senior adviser to the Saudi royal court against one of its cabinet ministers. Deputy foreign minister Khaled al-Jarallah told reporters that he conveyed the Kuwaiti complaint to the Saudi ambassador in the country.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86928>

- **Doha seeks no escalation with Abu Dhabi over military overflights: Qatar's FM**

Qatar's foreign minister says Doha seeks no military escalation with the United Arab Emirates amid a growing row between the Persian Gulf neighbors over airspace violations. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said during the World Economic Forum in Davos on Thursday that the rift between Doha and its neighbors was hampering regional security cooperation.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/25/550153/Qatar-UAE--Bahrain-Sheikh-Mohammed-bin-Abdulrahman-Al-Thani>

7. EGYPT

- **Egypt's Sisi looks to have 'intimidated' his way to a second term**

Egypt's last main opposition candidate in the upcoming presidential election has announced he's withdrawing from the race, saying conditions don't allow for a fair contest. This follows the arrest on Tuesday of another potential challenger ahead of the March vote.

More Details:

<https://www.trtworld.com/mea/egypt-s-sisi-looks-to-have-intimidated-his-way-to-a-second-term-14576>

- **Wafd Party chairman Badawy to run for president**

The Wafd Party's supreme body held a meeting at the headquarters of a pharmaceutical company belonging to party Chairman al-Sayed al-Badawy in 6 October City, and chose Badawy as the party's presidential candidate to run against Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Wafd Party sources said on Thursday evening. Sources who wished to remain anonymous told Al-Masry Al-Youm that the party had been choosing between Badawy and party leader Hany Sarrey Eddin. Sources added that a senior security official attended the meeting.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/wafd-party-chairman-badawy-to-run-for-president/>

- **Egypt's NEA says Anan removed from voter registry over violations, responds to allegations by Khaled Ali**

Egypt's National Elections Authority (NEA) issued two statements on Thursday addressing the removal of Lt. General Sami Anan from the voter registry as well as statements made by former presidential hopeful Khaled Ali criticising the NEA. The NEA said that Anan was removed on Tuesday from the voter registry of the upcoming 2018 presidential elections because he is still a member of the Armed Forces, whose personnel are barred from political activity.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptdailynews.com/detail/egypts-nea-says-anan-removed-from-voter-registry-over-violations-responds-to-allegations-by-khaled-ali>

- **Egypt cabinet ratifies law establishing Supreme Council for Combating Terrorism and Extremism**

The Egyptian cabinet has ratified a law establishing the Supreme Council for Combating Terrorism and Extremism (SCCTE), modifying Presidential Decree 355/2017 which created the National Council for Combating Terrorism and Extremism. The cabinet said the SCCTE will act to motivate state institutions and society to eradicate terrorism and trace its funding.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/288791/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-cabinet-ratifies-law-establishing-Supreme-Co.aspx>

- **Tharwat el-Kherbawy unravels Brotherhood mysteries**

Tharwat el-Kherbawy is not just a dissident Muslim Brotherhood former leader, and not just one of the organization's key staff members who decided to leave because he was subjected to its wrath. Tharwat el-Kherbawy is actually one of the few people who tried to examine the depths of the organization and unravel the secrets of the sacred temple of the Brotherhood, and as a result of his endeavor, he has suffered many attacks and slanderous accusations. On the January 25, 2011, he was there in Tahrir Square shaking hands with young brotherhood members who would walk up to him upon seeing him.

More Details:

<https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/41090/EXCLUSIVE-Tharwat-el-Kherbawy-unravels-Brotherhood-mysteries>

- **Egypt's bankruptcy law is credit positive for banks**

The first-ever bankruptcy law in Egypt is credit positive for banks and will encourage local and foreign investment in the country, according to Moody's Investors Service. The law, passed by the parliament, will provide lenders in the most populous Arab country with more options to deal with viable troubled companies, making loan workouts more flexible and faster, the rating agency said in a statement. The legislation will also speed up the liquidation of non-viable companies, which will increase recovery amounts, it added.

More Details:

<https://www.thenational.ae/business/banking/egypt-s-bankruptcy-law-is-credit-positive-for-banks-1.698927>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **UN launches \$330 million appeal for Libya**

The United Nations launched an international appeal Thursday for \$330 million dollars to fund humanitarian aid projects for almost one million people in Libya, a country plunged in chaos and a hub of illegal migration. Maria Ribeiro, the UN humanitarian coordinator for Libya, outlined the priorities for a Humanitarian Response Plan for 2018 at a news conference in Tripoli.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86946>

- **HNEC urges would-be voters to register before the 3 February deadline**

The Libyan High National Election Commission (HNEC) urged Libyans within the country interested in voting at the next election to register themselves as the registration process closes on 3rd February. HNEC has been continuing its voter registration awareness across the country and with a wide spectrum of society, including women and NGOs. HNEC had announced that by yesterday, a total of 660,809 new citizens had registered since the process opened on 6 December last year. This brings the grand total on the electoral roll to 2,170,100 when added to those that had already registered for the 2012 General National Congress, the 2014 Constitutional Drafting Authority elections and the 2014 House of Representatives elections.

More Details:

<https://www.libyaherald.com/2018/01/26/hnec-urges-would-be-voters-to-register-before-the-3-february-deadline/>

- **Moroccan socialist party calls for country's withdrawal from Saudi-led military operations in Yemen**

Morocco's Unified Socialist Party has called for the country's withdrawal from the Saudi-led military coalition that has been fighting Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi militias. The party added in the concluding statement of its fourth congress, held in Rabat, that Morocco should not get involved in any such military interventions.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180126-moroccan-socialist-party-calls-for-country-s-withdrawal-from-saudi-led-military-operations-in-yemen/>

- **UN Envoy extends Western Sahara invite to warring parties for talks**

The UN Secretary General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara has invited the relevant "parties to the conflict" to "separate talks" in Germany, according to reports in Morocco. Horst Kohler initiated the invitation to Morocco, the Polisario front and Mauritania following a ten-day tour of Europe and Africa. Kohler held talks with EU officials in Brussels and AU officials in Addis Ababa to discuss the Western Sahara issue.

More Details:

<http://marocgazette.com/story-z2920137>

- **The evolution of neoliberalism in Tunisia 1980-2017**

In October 2017, the Tunisian Parliament proposed a bill that would cut funding for public schools and hospitals. Shortly after, the Tunisian General Labour Union, with a membership of 900,000, responded: We express our condemnation of the inability of the government to intervene to stop the deterioration and the power of workers... We reject the adoption of the provisions of the General Budget Law 2018 at the expense of the workers and the general public. We call on the government to allocate funds to social programs and to control a fair fiscal policy that reduces the tax burden on workers which has been rising since 2011.

More Details:

<http://tdailynews.net/story-z9733650>

- **Jhinaoui leads Tunisian delegation to 30th Ordinary Session of Conference of AU Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa**

President Beji Caid Essebsi entrusted Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui with leading the Tunisian delegation to the 30th Ordinary Session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU), to be organised January 28-29 in Addis Ababa, under the theme "Overcoming

corruption : a sustainable option for transforming Africa ". According to a Foreign Ministry press release on Friday, Jhinaoui will have on the fringes of his participation in the summit, a set of meetings and working sessions with the heads of African delegations. He will also meet senior AU officials to review bilateral relations and discuss important issues of mutual interest in the Continent.

More Details:

<https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/9795871-jhinaoui-leads>

- **COFACE: Algeria Listed among High Risk Countries**

French Credit Insurance Company Coface has downgraded Algeria ratings to C, the lowest grade, over serious concerns of social frustrations boiling in the oil-producing country wherein high risks of social turmoil are exacerbated by the volatility of oil prices. The Algerian growth “slowed in 2017 due to the state’s dwindling financial resources and public spending cuts. Although the oil sector posted strong growth during the year, it did not offset the slowdown in non-oil activity”, says Coface in its latest report on countries and sectors risks worldwide.

More Details:

<http://northafricapost.com/21896-coface-algeria-listed-among-high-risk-countries.html>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **444 suspects killed in encounters led by Rao Anwar: report**

As many as 444 suspects were killed in 192 police encounters led by Rao Anwar after his appointment as the top cop in the Malir district of the metropolis, according to an inquiry report submitted by the Sindh police in the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The report detailing 745 encounters involving former SSP Malir Rao Anwar, after his appointment seven years back, was submitted by the police after Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar took suo notice of the alleged extra judicial killing of Naqeebullah Mehsood.

More Details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/273313-444-people-killed-in-encounters-led-by-rao-anwar-report>

- **UN sanctions monitoring team briefed on anti-terror measures**

The Uni-ted Nations Security Coun-cil’s sanctions monitoring team on Thursday started its two-day trip to Pakistan for an assessment of the country’s compliance with the world body’s sanctions regime. “The Monitoring Team (MT) of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 1267 Sanctions

Committee, dealing with the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and Daesh, is in Pakistan for a two-day visit,” Foreign Office spokesman Dr Muhammad Faisal told journalists at the weekly media briefing.

More Details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1385322/un-sanctions-monitoring-team-briefed-on-anti-terror-measures>

- **Pakistan's Bilawal Bhutto Zardari: 'We need to counter extremist ideological narrative'**

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari: It is the duty of all of us to present Pakistan's views and concerns on this issue and I shall contribute my part. We should openly debate about extremism and terrorism, not just about militancy. The cultural and ideological narratives should also be discussed. In doing so, militancy should be countered.

More Details:

<http://www.dw.com/en/pakistans-bilawal-bhutto-zardari-we-need-to-counter-extremist-ideological-narrative/a-42317472>

- **Social media a tool for fifth-generation warfare: Ahsan Iqbal**

Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal said on Friday that social media is a tool for fifth-generation warfare. Speaking to the media after an event, Iqbal said it is everyone's responsibility to verify reports circulating on social media before reacting to them.

More Details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/178794-social-media-will-be-used-to-destabilise-pakistan-in-election-year-iqbal>

- **US slaps sanctions on Taliban, Haqqani leaders**

The United States on Thursday designated four Taliban and two Haqqani network leaders as global terrorists and slapped sanctions against them. The Trump administration also asked the Pakistan government to work with it to deny these groups safe haven and aggressively target their funding.

More Details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/01/26/us-slaps-sanctions-taliban-haqqani-leaders>

- **Two foreigners fighting for Taliban group killed in Nangarhar**

At least two foreign insurgents fighting in Taliban militants ranks were killed during the operations in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. The Nangarhar governor's office in a statement said the

militants were killed late on Thursday night during an operation of the Afghan Special Operations Forces.

More Details:

<https://www.khaama.com/two-foreigners-fighting-for-taliban-group-killed-in-nangarhar-04353>

- **Six People Killed As Rocket Hits Home In Ghazni**

Ghazni police said the rocket was fired by the Taliban. However, Taliban rejected the claims. Six members of one family were killed and two others wounded when a rocket hit their home in Ghazni province on Friday, local officials confirmed.

More Details:

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/six%2%A0people%2%A0killed-rocket%2%A0hits-home-ghazni>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Rocket from Syria's Afrin hits Turkish border province Hatay, no casualties reported**

A rocket fired from Syria's Afrin by People's Protection Units (YPG) militants landed in Turkey's Hatay province on Jan. 25, according to a security source. The rocket fired by the YPG from Afrin hit a yard in the Reyhanlı district of Hatay at around 9:10 p.m., according to the security source.

More Details:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/rocket-from-syrias-afrin-hits-turkish-border-province-hatay-no-casualties-reported-126327>

- **Ankara deepens partnership with Moscow as White House confused on Syria**

Talking Syria with U.S. authorities has brought no concrete results for Turkey in the last several years. Even the change in presidents in Washington from Barack Obama to Donald Trump has not altered the situation for Ankara. Just a few hours after press statements following a discussion between Trump and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Pentagon made its own statements. The Pentagon's statements usually contradict press statements from the White House. The Pentagon focused on appeasing Washington's Democratic Union Party (PYD) allies in Syria, whereas the White House tried to appease the U.S.'s NATO ally Turkey. U.S. policies on the ground are usually determined by the Pentagon, and the White House only intervened to maintain relations at the level of leaders.

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2018/01/26/ankara-deepens-partnership-with-moscow-as-white-house-confused-on-syria>

- **Turkey, US must resolve trust issues before discussing Syrian 'safe zone'**

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu on Thursday said that it would not be right for Turkey and the United States to discuss a potential "safe zone" in Syria until trust issues between the two NATO allies are resolved. On Wednesday, local media had quoted Cavusoglu as saying that US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had proposed a 30km safe zone in Syria's northwestern Afrin region during their meeting in Paris on Tuesday.

More Details:

<https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkey-us-must-resolve-trust-issues-before-discussing-syrian-safe-zone--14600>

- **Syria: NATO chief says Turkey has right to self-defense**

Turkey has the right to self-defense like all other countries, NATO's secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg, said as Turkey continues targeting terrorist positions in northern Syria. Speaking at a joint news conference with Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy in Madrid on Thursday, Stoltenberg said: "Turkey suffered most from terrorist attacks over many years."

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/syria-nato-chief-says-turkey-has-right-to-self-defense/1042736>

- **Erdogan: Turkey 'not occupying' Syria's Afrin**

Turkey is not "occupying" Syria's Afrin with its ongoing Operation Olive Branch, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday. Addressing the ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party's provincial heads meeting in capital Ankara, Erdogan said: "We are not occupying Afrin. On the contrary, we are trying to make it a liveable place for the real owners while clearing out terrorists from there."

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/198209/erdogan-turkey-not-occupying-syrias-afrin>

- **White House readout causes diplomatic scandal after Erdoğan-Trump call on Syria**

A diplomatic scandal was exposed late Wednesday after the phone conversation between President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and U.S. President Donald Trump, when Turkish officials indicated that the readout published by the White House did not reflect the actual dialogue, and contained additions to the discussions. In the readout released by the White House, officials from Ankara, who wished to

remain anonymous due to restrictions on talking to the media, claimed that the U.S. president "relayed concerns that escalating violence in Afrin, Syria, risks undercutting our shared goals in Syria."

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2018/01/26/white-house-readout-causes-diplomatic-scandal-after-erdogan-trump-call-on-syria>

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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