



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

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1. IRAQ

- **Iraqi Shiites join with communists for election**

Supporters of a black-turbaned Shiite cleric are seeing red in the runup to Iraq's May elections thanks to an unprecedented alliance with the once-powerful communist party. Populist preacher Moqtada Sadr has defied his clerical rivals and opted to campaign for the May 12 poll alongside former enemies, Marxists who demand a secular state.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87628>

- **Fifteen years after the US entered Iraq, Baghdad breathes new life**

This month marks 15 years since the US invaded Iraq. The country has declared victory over ISIS and hasn't seen a terrorist attack since the beginning of the year. With elections set for May, it appears Iraq is on a peaceful streak. Some Iraqis, such as businessman and economist Hassan Haddad, say their country is starting to turn a corner. Haddad spent much of his life in Canada but returned to Iraq in 2013 to start anew.

More Details:

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-03-12/fifteen-years-after-us-entered-iraq-baghdad-breathes-new-life>

- **Othman: There Are Positive Developments In The File Of Solving Problems Between Baghdad And Erbil**

The Kurdish leader Mahmoud Othman said there are positive developments in the file of solving problems between Baghdad and Erbil. "The last contact between Nechirvan Barzani and Haidar al-Abadi was very positive, and discussed many practical steps to resolve the outstanding problems between Baghdad and Erbil, pointing out that the coming days will see a major breakthrough for the current crisis between Baghdad and Erbil," Othman said in a statement to the NNA.

More Details:

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

- **UN Rep Calls on Iraqi Government to Protect Minorities**

The UN representative in Iraq has reacted to the latest violations against the minorities in the country, urging the federal government to take serious action to protect their lives. The UN

representative Jan Kubis said in a statement that what makes the country rebuild its strength is its diverse culture and religion. The government should try to protect its treasure.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/421973>

- **Russia to equip Iraqi armored brigade**

Russia is supplying equipment to one of Iraqi armored brigades, presidential aide for military and technical cooperation Vladimir Kozhin said on Monday. "Iraq is our traditional partner and it has been boosting its potential by ordering our equipment. Today we are equipping there an entire armored brigade, our equipment is supplied there," Kozhin told the Rossiya 24 TV channel.

More Details:

<http://tass.com/defense/993528>

- **There are 2,000 ISIS terrorists in and around Kirkuk: official**

Former head of police of districts and suburbs in Kirkuk Brigadier Gen. Sarhad Qader said on Monday there are about 2,000 ISIS terrorists are still deployed to some districts and towns in the province. He added they are on the loose in the areas, noting they also conduct trainings.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/24773/There-are-2-000-ISIS-terrorists-in-and-around-Kirkuk-official>

- **Iraq's Sadr allies with communist party in upcoming elections**

Iraq's renowned Shia cleric and leader of the Sadrist movement, Moqtada Al-Sadr, has formed an alliance with the Iraqi Communist Party to run in the upcoming legislative elections scheduled for May. Sadrist movement leader, Ibrahim Al-Jabri, said the alliance is the first in Iraq's history. "It is a revolution by Iraqis who want reform both secularists, like the communists, and moderate Islamists."

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180312-iraqs-sadr-allies-with-communist-party-in-upcoming-elections/>

- **Suspected IS militants detonate mosque on road between Tikrit, Kirkuk**

Suspected Islamic State (IS) militants have detonated a mosque on a road between Tikrit and Kirkuk, a move that is seen by commentators as a new escalation against worship places in Iraq, a security

source was quoted as saying. Speaking to Alsumaria News on Tuesday, the source said, “Armed men believed to be members of the Islamic State (IS) group have sneaked into al-Mustafa mosque on the road between Tikrit and Kirkuk and detonated it.”

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/suspected-militants-detonate-mosque-road-tikrit-kirkuk/>

- **Turkey signals cross-border op to root out PKK from northern Iraq**

Ankara has signaled a cross-border operation in Iraq against the PKK terrorist organization to eliminate threats to its national security, and regional experts agree that the PKK presence has been an important security problem for both Turkey and Iraq. As Iraq has successfully finalized its fight against Daesh, Turkey has also been signaling extending its ongoing counterterrorism operations in northern Syria to Iraq.

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/03/13/turkey-signals-cross-border-op-to-root-out-pkk-from-northern-iraq>

- **Iranian Diplomat Says US Seeks to Interfere in Iraqi Elections**

The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Pentagon are trying to interfere in Iraq’s upcoming parliamentary elections under the guise of the Arab country’s non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a former Iranian ambassador to Baghdad said.

More details:

<http://ifpnews.com/wired/iranian-diplomat-says-us-seeks-to-interfere-in-iraqi-elections/>

- **Iraq: Christian family stabbed to death in Baghdad**

An Assyrian Christian family of three were murdered in their home in a predominantly Shia neighbourhood in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, last Thursday (8 March). Dr. Hisham Shafiq al-Maskuni, 61, a radiologist at a nuns’ hospital, his wife Dr. Shaza Malik Dinno, gynaecologist at the same hospital, and her elderly mother, Khairiyah Dawood Abada, were stabbed by four men who then stole money and some items from the house.

More Details:

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/03/iraq-christian-doctor-and-family-stabbed-to-death-in-baghdad/>

- **ISIS kills over two dozen civilians, Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters in Iraq**

Remnants of the ISIS Takfiri terrorist group have shot and killed more than two dozen civilians and pro-government fighters in two separate attacks amid ongoing counter-terrorism operations to purge the extremists from all parts of the war-battered Arab country. Captain Habib al-Shamri said ISIS terrorists set up a fake security checkpoint on a highway near al-Azim district in the eastern Iraqi province of Diyala, and stopped a number of civilian vehicles.

More Details:

http://en.abna24.com/news/middle-east/isis-kills-over-two-dozen-civilians-hashd-al-sha%E2%80%99abi-fighters-in-iraq_885429.html

- **Sanitation workers in Iraq's Basra decry salary delays**

Sanitation workers in Iraq's southern city of Basra on Monday took the street to protest the local authorities' failure to pay their salaries for the last two months, according to local security officials. Mohamed Khalaf, a captain in the army's Basra Joint Operations Command, said street cleaners from Basra's Zubair district had converged on the city's municipality building to demand their overdue pay.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/sanitation-workers-in-iraqs-basra-decry-salary-delays/1086718>

- **ISIS Tries to take back Iraq as U.S. allies switch sides in Syria**

Fighters loyal to the Islamic State militant group (ISIS) have attempted to relive their self-proclaimed caliphate by taking advantage of fleeing U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish forces to storm the Iraqi border, according to local reports. A group of ISIS fighters active in one of the group's last remaining bastions in eastern Syria reportedly attempted to cross over into nearby Iraq on Sunday, but were quickly defeated by fighters of the Popular Mobilization Forces, an Iran-backed collective of mostly Shiite Muslim Iraqi militias that was officially inducted into the Iraqi military on Friday.

More Details:

http://www.newsweek.com/isis-tries-take-back-iraq-us-allies-switch-sides-syria-841888?piano_t=1

- **Iraq hurtles toward another election: what you need to know**

Iraq continues to move slowly but surely towards recovery. The defeat of ISIL — despite a small insurgent pocket remaining in Kirkuk and Diyala — and the (relative) success of the Kuwait conference give Iraq the tools needed to continue moving forward and begin to solve its myriad of security, economic, and societal problems. Unresolved issues — the integration of Iraq's battered Sunnis, the relationship with the United States, and the diversification of the national economy, to

mention just a few — could lead to a resurgence of the Sunni extremism that saw its latest manifestation in ISIL.

More Details:

<https://warontherocks.com/2018/03/iraq-hurtles-toward-another-election-what-you-need-to-know/?singlepage=1>

- **Islamic State attacks kill 10 in northern Iraq**

Islamic State militants killed at least 10 people including a local Sunni tribal sheikh in two separate attacks late on Sunday in Iraq's northern provinces of Mosul and Kirkuk, police and local officials said. In a village near the Sunni town of Shirqat, south of Mosul, Islamists stormed the house of a tribal sheikh who led a Sunni militia that had fought against the militants, killing him, his son and two guests, police sources said.

More Details:

<http://www.qatar-tribune.com/news-details/id/116017>

- **Iraqi military reportedly finds US Army rations in cave used by Daesh**

The cave may have been used as a staging area from which the jihadists could rest and eat. Directorate 4, a Telegram channel monitoring the security situation in Iraq and Syria, reported the find, saying that US MRE (Meal, Ready-to-Eat) individual field rations packaging was found in the terrorists' cave. "Daesh shelter found by Iraqi forces in southern Mosul."

More Details:

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/iraqi-military-reportedly-finds-us-army-rations-in-cave-used-by-daesh-photos/>

- **Iraq to Reduce Oil Products' Imports by 25 Percent**

Iraq's Oil Ministry on Monday said the nation would reduce its petroleum products' imports by 25%, as crude oil refineries are being rehabilitated following the destruction caused by the self-styled Islamic State terrorist group. Iraq is also producing more oil products by processing natural gas liquids, Oil Minister Jabar al-Luaibi said in a statement, without indicating a specific timeframe for the import cuts, Reuters reported.

More Details:

<https://financialtribune.com/articles/energy/83464/iraq-to-reduce-oil-products-imports-by-25-percent>

2. SYRIA

- **Firms offered £350k to resettle Syrian refugees in Dudley**

Dudley Council has committed to take in 20 families left homeless in the civil war over five years. So far it has taken in six families. Now, the local authority is looking for a firm to support housing and integrating the refugees into borough life. It has now put a four-year contract out to tender valued at between £100,000 and £350,000.

More Details:

<https://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-hubs/dudley/2018/03/13/firms-offered-350k-to-resettle-syrian-refugees-in-dudley/>

- **Briefing Security Council on Syria Ceasefire Resolution, Secretary-General Says Humanitarian Convoys Remain Unable to Safely Enter Eastern Ghouta**

Despite the demands of the Security Council's resolution for a ceasefire in Syria, humanitarian convoys had not been able to enter eastern Ghouta without impediment, members heard today as the Secretary General provided an update on the situation.

More Details:

<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/briefing-security-council-syria-ceasefire-resolution-secretary-general>

- **Syrian Army Cracks Down on Terrorists in Eastern Ghouta**

Last month saw the beginning of the Syrian military's operation in the Damascus suburb of Eastern Ghouta, where at least 10,000 Islamist militants have reportedly held control since 2012. The state-run Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) has released a video of the government forces' offensive on Eastern Ghouta, located near the capital Damascus.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201803131062467464-eastern-ghouta-syrian-army-video/>

- **Syria has taken all measures to alleviate suffering of civilians: UN envoy**

Syria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Bashar al-Jaafari, said that Syria has taken many measures to alleviate the suffering of civilians in al-Ghouta, including the opening of two humanitarian corridors to ensure their safe exit.

More Details:

<http://www.irma.ir/en/News/82860695>

- **U.S. Says Russia, Syria, Iran Not Honoring Cease-Fire, Warns Of Action**

The United States is warning that it is ready to act in Syria to end chemical attacks and "inhuman suffering" if Russia, Iran, and Syria continue to allegedly ignore a 30-day cease-fire approved by the United Nations.

More Details:

<https://en.radiofarda.com/a/u-s-demands-syria-cease-fire-un-haley/29095665.html>

- **Hezbollah's 'Military Engagement' In Syria: Achieving Political Goal Or Religious Drift?**

Since the early 1980s, Hezbollah has been an "aggressive" politico-military actor "influencing" regional politics in the Middle East, particularly Lebanon.

More Details:

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/13032018-hezbollahs-military-engagement-in-syria-achieving-political-goal-or-religious-drift-analysis/>

- **YPG/PKK use force to keep Syrian civilians in Afrin**

Amid rapid advances by Turkish and Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces against terrorists in Afrin, northwestern Syria, YPG/PKK terrorists have been forcibly blocking Syrian civilians from leaving the area. On Jan. 20, Turkey launched Operation Olive Branch to clear YPG/PKK and Daesh terrorists from Afrin, northwestern Syria, near Turkey's southern border.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/ypg-pkk-use-force-to-keep-syrian-civilians-in-afrin-/1086936>

- **Syrian jets hit south in first attacks since truce, rebels say**

Syrian jets struck rebel-held towns in the country's south on Monday, the first aerial attacks on the area since the United States and Russia reached an agreement making it a "de-escalation zone" last year, rebels and residents said. At least eight raids struck the rebel-held towns of Busr al-Harir, Hrak, al-Gharaiya al-Gharbiya and al-Sowara in rural areas in eastern Deraa province in southern Syria, two rebel officials told Reuters.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180313-syrian-jets-hit-south-in-first-attacks-since-truce-rebels-say/>

3. IRAN

- **IRGC Reveals Details of Repulsed Terrorist Attack in Southeastern Iran**

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)'s Quds base in a statement released details of the Sunday terrorist attack on a border checkpoint in Southeastern Iran by the so-called Jeish al-Adl terrorist grouplet. The statement said that almost 40 Jeish al-Adl terrorists attacked a checkpoint near Nahang river in Saravan in the Southeastern province of Sistan and Balouchestan around 16:20 local time on Sunday afternoon, using a combination of various offensive methods, including booby-traps, bomb-laden vehicles, suicide attackers and direct attack.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961222000473>

- **Attack on Iran Embassy in London aimed at appeasing Saudis: Shamkhani**

A senior Iranian official says the attack on the Islamic Republic's embassy in London was a "very disgraceful" bonus by the British government to sweeten a multi-billion dollar arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

More details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/03/12/555210/Shamkhani-London-embassy-attack-Saudi-Arabia-Britain>

- **Iran's ties with India not in conflict with Pakistan**

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Mon. that Iran's good relations with India are not in conflict with Pakistan, just as Pakistan's ties with Saudi Arabia do not tarnish Islamabad's ties with Tehran.

More details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/132779/Iran-s-ties-with-India-not-in-conflict-with-Pakistan>

- **Iran Sentences Unnamed British-Iranian to 6 Years for Spying**

An unnamed British-Iranian national has been sentenced to six years in prison on spying charges, the official news agency of Iran's judiciary reported Sunday, the latest dual national convicted in the country. Mizan news agency quoted Tehran prosecutor Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi announcing the sentencing, though he did not elaborate on what the charges entailed.

More Details:

<https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2018/03/11/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iran-dual-nationals.html>

- **If Saudi Arabia faces any foreign aggression Iran would be first country to help**

Foreign Minister of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif says if God forbid Saudi Arabia faces any foreign aggression or terrorism Iran will be the first country to come to its assistance

More details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82860450>

- **Iran armed forces delegation arrives in Qatar to attend MENC**

An Iranian defense delegation, headed by Deputy Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy Rear Admiral Ali Reza Tangsiri, arrived in Doha city of Qatar on Monday to take part in Middle East Naval Commanders Conference (MENC) due to be held on Tuesday, Mehr News Agency wrote.

More details:

<http://www.iran-daily.com/News/211596.html>

- **Trump Declares Continuation of National Emergency on Iran**

US President Donald Trump extended the country's national emergency with respect to Iran, claiming that the Islamic Republic continues to "pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy and economy of the United States"

More details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2018/03/13/1679641/trump-declares-continuation-of-national-emergency-on-iran>

- **Iran signs industrial cooperation deal with Nordic states**

According to reports, the agreement was signed between the ambassadors of the three countries and the head of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO).

More details:

<http://parstoday.com/en/news/iran-i78869-iran-signs-industrial-cooperation-deal-with-nordic-states>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Israeli Navy Attacks Fishing Boats In Northern Gaza**

Israeli navy ships opened fire, on Tuesday morning, at several Palestinian fishing boats, and used sprayed them with water cannons, in the northern part of the Gaza Strip.

More Details:

<http://imemc.org/article/israeli-navy-attacks-fishing-boats-in-northern-gaza/>

- **Will Israeli Policies change If Netanyahu Leaves Office?**

If scandal-plagued Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, exits his country's political scene today, who is likely to replace him? And what does this mean as far as Israel's Occupation of Palestine is concerned?

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180313-will-israeli-policies-change-if-netanyahu-leaves-office/>

- **Gaza health sector on brink of collapse over Israeli siege**

Israel's blockade on the Gaza Strip is worsening the already dire conditions in the Palestinian enclave. Hospitals in Gaza are now operating under an emergency state as they've run out of medicine. Halla Alsafadi has this report.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/03/13/555256/Gaza-health-sector-on-brink-of-collapse-over-Israeli-siege->

- **Palestinians injured in confrontations at protest against Israeli university raid**

Ten Palestinians were injured on Monday in confrontations that erupted during a protest against Israeli forces raid last week on a university campus, a medical source said.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/region/palestinians-injured-confrontations-protest-against-israeli-university-raid>

- **Palestine Doubtful About US Future Mideast Peace Plan Likely Favoring Israel**

The Palestinians are not very optimistic about a long-awaited US peace plan for Israel and Palestine as it is not likely to promote the two-state solution, Palestinian Ambassador to Turkey Faed Mustafa told Sputnik on Monday.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201803121062458512-palestine-usa-israel-peace-plan/>

- **Netanyahu's coalition looks to be saved by new legislation**

A compromise aimed at saving Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition advanced Monday as speculation built over whether the premier wants early elections to bolster his standing ahead of a potential indictment for bribery.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87646>

- **Palestinian PM unhurt after explosion in Gaza**

An explosion struck near the convoy of Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, according to Palestinian authorities. The blast went off after Hamdallah's convoy passed through Beit Hanoun city in the northern Gaza Strip, the Hamas-run Interior Ministry said in a statement. No casualties were reported.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/palestinian-pm-unhurt-after-explosion-in-gaza/1087299>

- **Paraguay, Honduras to open embassies in Jerusalem**

Paraguay and Honduras have said that they are ready to open their embassies in Jerusalem, a senior Israeli diplomatic source told the Israeli army radio on Sunday. According to Quds Press the senior source said that the two countries are ready "in principle" to open embassies in Jerusalem if the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu first makes an official visit to their countries.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180313-paraguay-honduras-to-open-embassies-in-jerusalem/>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Cabinet endorses 2018 budget ahead of donor conferences**

The Cabinet Monday endorsed the 2018 draft state budget containing a set of reforms and incentives for all sectors and sent it to Parliament for final ratification, Prime Minister Saad Hariri said, in a move designed to slash the crippling deficit and control government spending ahead of international donor conferences in support of Lebanon.

More details:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2018/Mar-13/441305-cabinet-endorses-2018-budget-ahead-of-donor-conferences.ashx>

- **King renews support for Palestinians as they pursue rights**

His Majesty King Abdullah and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Monday held talks that focused on the latest developments in the Palestinian issue and efforts exerted to push forward the peace process. The discussions, held at Al Husseinia Palace, highlighted the importance of sustaining coordination and consultation over developments related to the Palestinian issue and Jerusalem, according to a Royal Court statement.

More details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/king-renews-support-palestinians-they-pursue-rights>

- **King of Bahrain meets Army chief**

King of Bahrain, Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, received here on Monday Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Maj. Gen. Mahmoud Abdel Halim Freihat and the accompanying delegation. During the meeting, the Bahraini monarch lauded the distinguished historic ties between the two kingdoms, and stressed the common keenness to develop them at all levels, especially in the field of military cooperation and coordination.

More Details:

<http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=37375#.WgewD-xubcs>

- **Aoun Receives Qatari Invitation, Promises Defense Strategy Talks after Polls**

President Michel Aoun on Monday received an invitation to visit Qatar from the Gulf emirate's ruler Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. Lebanon's National News Agency said the invitation letter was delivered by Qatari Ambassador to Lebanon Ali bin Hamad al-Meri. The ambassador said the invitation is for the opening ceremony of Qatar's national library that will be held on April 16.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/243373-aoun-receives-qatari-invitation-promises-defense-strategy-talks-after-polls>

- **Berri meets Armenian PM over latest developments**

House Speaker, Nabih Berri, welcomed on Monday at his Ain Tineh residence visiting Armenian Prime Minister, Karen Karapetyan, in the presence of Minister of State for Women's Affairs Jean Ogassapian. Talks reportedly covered the bilateral ties between the two countries and parliamentary cooperation, in addition to most recent developments in the region.

More details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/89076/Berri-meets-Armenian-PM-over-latest-developments>

- **Jordan's king working to revive peace bid; ex-envoy says 2-state solution 'dead'**

Jordan's King Abdullah II said Monday that he has been working to revive the peace process and bring Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table. The Jordanian monarch made the remark during a meeting in Amman with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, according to Palestinian and Jordanian sources.

More details:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/jordans-king-says-hes-working-to-revive-peace-process/>

- **-Lebanon's cabinet agrees 2018 budget with lower deficit**

Lebanon's government will pass its 2018 budget to parliament for approval after the cabinet on Monday agreed a draft that projects a fiscal deficit \$145 million lower than in 2017. Lebanon is under pressure to show it is willing to institute fiscal reforms before a series of international donor meetings this year.

More details:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/lebanon-economy-budget/update-2-lebanons-cabinet-agrees-2018-budget-with-lower-deficit-idUSL8N1QU5KH>

- **U.S. Calls Urgent Meeting in Jordan After Syria Strikes Reports**

The United States has called an urgent meeting in Jordan out of concern about reports of strikes in southwestern Syria within the boundaries of the de-escalation zone negotiated last year, a U.S. State Department official said on Monday.

More details:

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-03-12/us-calls-urgent-meeting-in-jordan-after-syria-strikes-reports>

- **Lebanese President: ‘Hezbollah’ Arms Will Be on Negotiations Table after Elections**

Lebanese President Michel Aoun will place the file of “Hezbollah’s” arms on the negotiation table following the May 6 parliamentary elections. On Monday, the President said his country demands “the necessary international support for the Lebanese armed forces so that they are able to carry on assuming their duty of preserving security and stability nationwide through the national defense strategy.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1203196/lebanese-president-%E2%80%98hezbollah%E2%80%99-arms-will-be-negotiations-table-after-elections>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Report: Qatar Almost Gave Mueller Info on Kushner-UAE Meetings**

Qatari officials claim they have evidence of illicit influence conducted by United Arab Emirates authorities on Jared Kushner and others within the Trump inner circle, NBC News reports.

More details:

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/report-qatar-almost-gave-mueller-info-on-kushner-uae-meetings>

- **Muhammed bin Salman’s U.S. visit marks 75 years of U.S.-Saudi ties**

The alliance between the United States and Saudi Arabia turns 75 this year. Ahead of Crown Prince Muhammed bin Salman’s much-anticipated visit to the United States, beginning March 19, it’s worth looking back on the three quarters of a century that the two countries have been partnered. Sometimes, Washington and Riyadh have worked closely together as friends, and sometimes they’ve become estranged, working for opposite goals.

More details:

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/03/12/muhammed-bin-salmans-u-s-visit-marks-75-years-of-u-s-saudi-ties/>

- **Saudis reportedly wielding veto power over top investor Prince Alwaleed and Kingdom Holdings**

Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal remains chairman of Kingdom Holding Company following his release from detention, but the Saudi government reportedly has final say over decisions at the investment firm. Investment decisions at Kingdom Holding are now subject to approval by the government, The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday, citing senior Saudi advisers. Kingdom Holding has \$12.5 billion invested across more than a dozen sectors around the world, according to its website.

More details:

<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/03/12/saudis-wielding-veto-power-over-prince-alwaleed-kingdom-holdings.html>

- **Al Jazeera documents Bahrain king's role in foiled 1996 coup**

Bahrain's king, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, supported and financed subversive operations inside Qatar during a failed coup attempt in Doha in 1996, a new investigation found. The second part of the Qatar '96 documentary, which was first broadcast on Al Jazeera on Sunday, revealed the involvement of Sheikh Hamad, who at the time was crown prince of Bahrain, in attempting to overthrow the Qatari government 21 years ago.

For more details:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/al-jazeera-documents-bahrain-king-role-foiled-1996-coup-180312114025418.html>

- **Kazakhstan, UAE trade ties on upswing**

Trade relationship between the UAE and Kazakhstan is growing rapidly with bilateral trade between the two countries reaching \$246 million (Dh904 million) for 2016 and the UAE investments in the central Asian country touching close to \$2 billion.

More details:

<http://gulfnews.com/business/aviation/kazakhstan-uae-trade-ties-on-upswing-1.2186815>

- **Sultan bin Suhaim: We Will Return Qatar Back to its Natural Fold**

Sheikh Sultan bin Suhaim al-Thani stressed on Monday that the regime in Qatar has “brought tragedy to its neighbors.” He said in a tweet addressed to Qatari civilians: “We are forging ahead in returning Qatar back to its natural fold.” “We will rid it of the flaws in its regime that has threatened our security and stability,” he added.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1203281/sultan-bin-suhaim-we-will-return-qatar-back-its-natural-fold>

- **Kuwaiti parliamentarians warn of demographic change in Syria**

Kuwaiti parliamentarians warned that there is a secret agreement to permit genocide in Syria, focusing on the recent massacres in Ghouta. This warning came during a conference organised by Kuwait's National Assembly (parliament), on Sunday, entitled "Ghouta is being exterminated", according to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). The parliamentarians denounced the genocide in Ghouta and noted its similarity to other cities such as Aleppo, Homs, and other cities. They also demanded the immediate implementation of the Security Council's ruling on a cease fire in Syria.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180312-kuwaiti-parliamentarians-warn-of-demographic-change-in-syria/>

- **Islamic State claims responsibility for Yemen military kitchen bomb attack**

Militant group Islamic State claimed responsibility for a car bomb attack on a military kitchen in the south of Yemen, the group's news agency Amaq said on Tuesday. At least four people were killed in the attack, which occurred earlier on Tuesday, when a car bomb ripped through a military kitchen in Aden used to prepare meals for Yemeni forces trained and backed by the United Arab Emirates.

More Details:

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-yemen-security-claim/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-for-yemen-military-kitchen-bomb-attack-idUKKCN1GP0W3?rpc=401&>

7. EGYPT

- **Egypt's FM Shoukry meets South Sudan's Salva Kiir, delivers message from El-Sisi**

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry met with South Sudan's President Salva Kiir in Juba, South Sudan, on Monday, delivering a message from Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi aimed at boosting bilateral cooperation, the Egyptian foreign ministry said in a press statement. South Sudan is the first stop in Shoukry's tour of Africa that started on Monday. While in Juba, he will visit the South Sudanese presidential palace, signing a memo to establish a mechanism for political consultation, the ministry said.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/292603/Egypt/Politics-/Egypys-FM-Shoukry-meets-South-Sudans-Salva-Kiir,-d.aspx>

- **Moscow-Cairo flights to resume March 18: reports**

The Deutsche Presse Agentur (DPA) reported on Monday that Moscow-based Domodedovo Airport will resume flights to Cairo on March 18. According to the Russian news website Sputnik, planes will make three journeys a week after the Egyptian government approved of Russian security experts in Cairo International Airport to increase security with flights to Moscow.

More details:

<http://www.egyptdailynews.com/detail/moscowcairo-flights-to-resume-march--reports>

- **Egypt to launch social networking platform similar to Facebook: minister**

Egypt's Minister of Communications and Information Technology Yasser al-Qadi said on Monday that Egypt is taking concrete steps towards establishing a social networking platform similar to Facebook, without however providing any further details regarding the project.

More details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/egypt-launch-social-networking-site-similar-facebook-minister/>

- **Abdel Rahim Ali receives former French MoI at the Center for Middle Eastern center for Studies in Paris**

The Egyptian MP Abdel Rahim Ali, head of the Middle East Center for Studies, met the former French interior minister and current member of the European Parliament and leader of the Republican Party, Bryce Ortovo, who discussed the role of the center in combating terrorism and confronting the financiers of the terrorist groups. Abdel Rahim Ali explained the strategies and plans to confront terrorism in the Middle East region, especially in Egypt and Libya. He commended the Egyptian strategy of combating terrorism in Sinai and the role of the armed forces and police under the leadership of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

More Details:

<http://www.theportal-center.com/2018/03/abdel-rahim-ali-receives-former-french-moi-at-the-center-for-middle-eastern-center-for-studies-in-paris/>

- **Hearing on closure of BBC's Cairo office set for April**

Egypt's Court for Urgent Matters has set a date next month for the first hearing in the case calling for the withdrawal of the BBC's licence to operate in Egypt and closure of its offices in Cairo, local media reported.

More details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1264356/media>

- **Egypt vows to support South Sudan's peace efforts**

The Egyptian government on Monday vowed to continue supporting efforts aimed at restoring peace and stability in war-torn South Sudan.

More details:

<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article64928>

- **Egypt likely to oust Abbas in favour of his rival Mohamed Dahlan**

Egyptian intelligence is likely seeking to oust the Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas in order to pave the way for his rival Mohammed Dahlan to replace him, Arab48.com reported yesterday. In an intelligence report prepared by the Chief of the PA's Intelligence, Majed Faraj, and raised to Abbas, Faraj warned Abbas against falling into the "trap of reconciliation" brokered by Egypt.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180313-egypt-likely-to-oust-abbas-in-favour-of-his-rival-mohamed-dahlan/>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Morocco, Qatar Seal 11 Cooperation Agreements**

Morocco and Qatar signed 11 cooperation agreements covering education, culture, youth, media, finance, banking, housing, training, handicrafts and agriculture. The agreements were signed at the end of the seventh Moroccan-Qatari high Joint commission in Rabat under the chairmanship of head of government Saâd Eddine El Othmani and Qatar's Prime minister and Interior minister Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa AlThani.

More details:

<http://northafricapost.com/22675-morocco-qatar-seal-11-cooperation-agreements.html>

- **Qatar Reaffirms Support for Morocco's Sovereignty Over Western Sahara**

Qatar reaffirmed its support of Morocco's sovereignty over the Sahara during the 7th session of the High Joint Bilateral Cooperation Commission on Monday. The 7th session of Morocco-Qatar High-Level meeting, co-chaired by Morocco's Head of Government Saad Eddine El Othmani and Qatar's Prime Minister Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al-Thani, kicked off today in Rabat.

More details:

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/03/242266/qatar-reaffirms-support-moroccos-sovereignty-western-sahara/>

- **INLUCC office in Sidi Bouzid inaugurated**

A local office of the National Authority for the Fight against Corruption (French: INLUCC) was inaugurated on Monday in Sidi Bouzid as part of Tunisian-German cooperation. The opening of this new office is a part of the project "Supporting the transformation process in Tunisia: preventing and fighting corruption", said INLUCC President Chawki.

More details:

<https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Top-News-EN/9952003-inlucc-office-in>

- **Workers strike at Libya Al-Zawiya port puts off oil loading operation**

Workers' strike at the Libyan oil port of Al-Zawiya delayed loading activity on Monday but negotiations were under way to resolve the dispute, several oil and trading sources told Reuters. Workers at Al-Zawiya, which exports crude from Libya's giant Sharara oilfield, were protesting over salaries, Reuters cited a Libyan oil source as saying.

More details:

<http://www.libyanexpress.com/workers-strike-at-libya-al-zawiya-port-puts-off-oil-loading-operation/>

- **EU kick-starts new program to enhance services in Libyan cities**

The European Union launched Monday a new program worth €50 million, to improve the living conditions and resilience of vulnerable populations in key Libyan municipalities. The EU said in a statement on its website that the program has been adopted under the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (North of Africa window). The EU said that the program will benefit migrants, refugees, Internally Displaced Persons, returnees and host communities (Libyans) alike.

More details:

<https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/eu-kick-starts-new-program-enhance-services-libyan-cities>

- **Former Libyan ambassador to UAE Aref Al-Nayed runs for Libya President**

The former Libyan ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Aref Al-Nayed has officially announced that he is running for the 2018 presidential elections in Libya. Al-Nayed told Egyptian newspaper Youm 7 that he has been working on a significant platform in cooperation with a young teamwork so that they make sure Libya survives and overcomes its ongoing crisis.

More details:

<http://www.libyanexpress.com/former-libyan-ambassador-to-uae-aref-al-nayed-runs-for-libya-president/>

- **Algerian parliamentarian espouses measles conspiracy theory**

Naima Laghlimi Salhi, the Algerian parliamentarian and head of Al-Bayan party, returned to stir up a new controversy after she claimed that what she called “a criminal network of the Zionist Berber sect (the term ‘Berbers’ refers to the indigenous people of Algeria and the Maghreb region) was behind the phenomenon of migration by boats of death, and now lies behind the measles disease (Buhamroun as it is called in some parts of Algeria).

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180313-algerian-parliamentarian-espouses-measles-conspiracy-theory/>

- **Tunisia’s local election prospects spark self-searching among modernists**

Tunisia’s Islamist party Ennahda fielded more candidates than any other political party for municipal elections scheduled for May. The filings prompted serious self-examination among modernists about the political significance of those numbers as well as about the ability of secularists to broaden their bases of support and counter the reach of Islamists.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87623>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **US Defense Secretary James Mattis In Kabul**

Addressing journalists shortly after arriving in Kabul, Mattis said he believed a victory would be a “political reconciliation” with the Taliban. The US Defense Secretary James Mattis said Tuesday he believes victory in Afghanistan is still possible — not necessarily on the battlefield but in facilitating a Taliban reconciliation with the Afghan government.

More details:

<https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/us-defense-secretary-james-mattis-kabul>

- **Islamic Countries' Unity Vital To Ensure Justice, Lasting Peace, VP Danesh**

Second Vice President Sarwar Danesh met with Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) permanent representative and ambassador in Kabul Huseyin Avni Botsal at his office on Monday, BNA reported.

More details:

<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/politics.html>

- **Moscow keen to preserve the use of Russian helicopters by Afghan Air Force**

Amid ongoing efforts to bolster the capabilities of the Afghan Air Force with the deployment of the US-made helicopter, the Russian officials have said Moscow is keen to preserve the use of the Russian helicopters by the Afghan Air Force.

More details:

<https://www.khaama.com/moscow-keen-to-preserve-the-use-of-russian-helicopters-by-afghan-air-force-04636/>

- **Will hear cases of judiciary-related remarks at appropriate time**

Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Saqib Nisar observed on Tuesday that the apex court is noting the remarks being made regarding the judiciary at present and will take up those cases at an appropriate time.

More details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/186056-contempt-cases-will-take-up-judiciary-related-remarks-at-appropriate-time-observes-cjp>

- **What went wrong for ruling alliance**

The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) suspects at least seven senators, including a couple of its own, ditched it in the election of Senate chairman and deputy chairman.

More details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1394940/what-went-wrong-for-ruling-alliance>

- **Mattis arrives in Kabul, says US picking up Taliban interest in Afghan peace talks**

The United States is picking up signs of interest from Taliban elements in exploring the possibility of talks with Kabul to end the more than 16-year-old war, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said on Tuesday as he made an unannounced visit to Afghanistan.

More details:

<http://www.wionews.com/south-asia/mattis-arrives-in-kabul-says-us-picking-up-taliban-interest-in-afghan-peace-talks-35622>

- **Iran invites Pakistan to participate in Chabahar port**

Iran has invited Pakistan and China to participate in the Chabahar seaport, a project that also involves Afghanistan and India.

More details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/03/13/iran-invites-pakistan-participate-chabahar-port>

- **Abdullah slams Taliban for their silence on government's peace proposal**

The Chief Executive of the Government of National Unity Abdullah Abdullah slammed the Taliban group for their silence regarding the proposal of the government for reconciliation.

More details:

<https://www.khaama.com/abdullah-slams-taliban-for-their-silence-on-governments-peace-proposal-04635/>

10. TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkish defense minister meets with Qatar's deputy emir**

Qatari Deputy Emir Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani on Monday met in Doha with Turkish Defense Minister Nurettin Canikli, according to Qatar's official QNA news agency. The meeting was held on the sidelines of the Doha International Maritime Defense Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX 2018), which kicked off Monday in the Qatari capital. According to QNA, the two men reviewed -- and discussed means of enhancing -- Turkey-Qatar military relations.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkish-defense-minister-meets-with-qatars-deputy-emir/1086856>

- **Turkey, Free Syrian Army make advances in Afrin**

The Turkish Armed Forces and Free Syrian Army (FSA) liberated five more villages in Syria's northwestern Afrin region on Sunday. According to Anadolu Agency correspondents on the ground, Turkish troops and the FSA cleared the villages of Qeretepe and Qastel Kisk in Sheran, northeast of

the city of Afrin, as well as the villages of Khalidiah and Jalbul near the region's centre. They also took control of the village of Ka'n Kurk in the Jindires district.

More Details:

<https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkey-free-syrian-army-make-advances-in-afrin-15837>

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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