



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procces of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

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1. IRAQ

- **Abadi Announces Reopening Erbil and Sulaymaniyah Airports for Int'l Flights**

The Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi announced the reopening of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah airports for international flights following the response of local authorities in Kurdistan region to return the federal authority to the two airports. Abadi, during his meeting with the officers of the Ministry of Interior working in the airports of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, confirmed signing the order after the response of local authorities in the Kurdistan region to restore the federal authority to the two airports according to the Constitution, according to a statement of his office, added "This move was to facilitate the travel of citizens through Erbil and Sulaymaniyah airports and create a Directorate for Special Protection on the airports of the Kurdistan region will be commanded and controlled by the Federal Ministry of Interior.

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?sXZZilRE4RVv1VWV%252f46DNQ%253d%253d

- **Iraqi President rejects 2018 budget bill, returns it to parliament**

Iraqi President Fuad Masum has rejected the country's controversial 2018 budget bill, and ordered it back to the parliament, according to a source quoted saying on Tuesday. Alsumaria News quoted an "informed source" saying that the president declined to approve the bill and decided to return it to the parliament for review.

More Details

<https://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/iraqi-president-rejects-2018-budget-bill-returns-parliament/>

- **MP Reveals Why Iraqi President Rejected 2018 Budget Bill**

A member of the State of Law Coalition in Iraq on Tuesday revealed that the reason why the Iraqi President Fuad Masum refused to sign the Iraqi 2018 budget bill was because it was already rejected by the World Bank. The Iraqi top official has rejected the 2018 budget bill and returned it to the parliament, according to Iraqi media outlets. "Returning the budget bill to the parliament by the Iraqi president is because it has failed to be approved by the World Bank," said Alia Nusaif.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/422237>

- **Abadi: The procedures for Kurdistan's employees' payroll has finished**

Iraqi Prime Minister has stated: Today we end the procedures and we will open the airports. Haidar Al-Abadi Prime Minister of Iraq who has arrived at Mosul Province for a visitation has stated: The procedures have finished and from today the airports will be opened to the face of the tourists.

More Details:

http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=42954

- **Abadi slams Masum for disapproving budget bill**

Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi commented Tuesday on President Masum's disapproval of the 2018 budget bill, saying that no one has the right to object to the budget bill after being passed by the parliament. "I hope the presidency approves the budget bill, so we can bring it to effect," Abadi said during his weekly press statements on Tuesday.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/24820/Abadi-slams-Masum-for-disapproving-budget-bill>

- **\$10 billion Iraq housing plan agreed**

The National Investment Commission (NIC) of Iraq is to sign a deal with Emaar Properties of Dubai and Eagle Hills of Abu Dhabi to begin work on the 64,000-home Al-Rashid City in southern Baghdad, Iraq. In a statement on its official website, the Iraq's cabinet secretariat said: "The cabinet has agreed that NIC will complete contractual procedures for Al-Rashid City project with Emaar and Eagle Hills and award them the project after reaching agreement on the final form of the contract, in line with NIC requirements."

More Details:

<https://www.khl.com/international-construction/10-billion-iraq-housing-plan-agreed-/132023.article>

- **UN urges new, 'post-ISIL' Iraq to draw on diversity, support religious minorities**

As Iraq rebuilds after defeating a terrorist group, the country must draw on its religious diversity and protect minorities, including Yezidi and Christians, a senior United Nations official has said. "Iraq needs all its components, all its ethnic and religious groups, to rebuild in the post-Da'esh period and prosper in the future as a stable and united country," said the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, in a press release issued Monday.

More Details:

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/03/1004772>

- **The opportunities and dangers of Iraq's post-Daesh election**

Iraq will in May elect members to its Council of Representatives, which will decide the future shape of a country that has endured war, occupation and external interference for nearly 40 years. This period of conflict may be ending: Prime Minister Haider Abadi declared victory over Daesh in July last year, after Iraqi forces ended the three-year occupation of Mosul, and in October Hawija, the last city under Daesh control, also fell.

More Details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1265431>

- **Kurd Region Govt cedes control over banks to Baghdad**

Northern Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) has agreed to relinquish the right to operate and oversee banks in the region, the governor of Iraq's central bank said Tuesday. At a joint press conference with KRG Finance Minister Rebaz Hamlan, Iraqi Central Bank Governor Ali Mohsen al-Alaq said the KRG had voluntarily surrendered its right to operate, regulate and supervise local banks to the central government in Baghdad.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/kurd-region-govt-cedes-control-over-banks-to-baghdad/1087942>

- **Iraq: No border demarcation with Kurdish region**

The Iraqi military has denied reports about demarcating borders between the central government in Baghdad and northern Iraq's Kurdish region. Local media said Monday Baghdad and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) had agreed to demarcate a border between the two sides, in an effort to solve the issue of the deployment of Kurdish Peshmerga forces in northern Iraq.

More Details:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/iraq-border-demarcation-kurdish-region-180313142513900.html>

- **New book on historical roots of Iraq's tumultuous economy**

Meticulously researched and written by Dr. Amer K. Hirmis, "The Economics of Iraq: Ancient past to distant future," released by Grosvenor House Publishing, takes readers 6,000 years back to the early Mesopotamian polity, culture and religious codes that shaped the economy and continue to shape much of the body of Iraq's polity, economy and society today.

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/books/2018/03/14/new-book-on-historical-roots-of-iraqs-tumultuous-economy>

- **Iraq's PM security detail commander killed in armed clash in Salahuddin province**

Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi security detail commander has been killed in firefight in the country's northern Salahuddin province. According to Iraqi security sources, Special Forces commander Sherif Ismail Ebeid was killed on Tuesday during a shootout with local fighters while preparing the ground for a trip planned for Wednesday by Abadi.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/03/14/555369/iraq-abadi-general-security-detail-killed>

- **No agreement on Peshmerga return to disputed areas, insists Iraq**

There is no agreement between the Iraqi government and the northern Kurdistan Regional Administration (KRG) over demarcating the border between Baghdad and the Kurdish region, the Defence Ministry in the Iraqi capital announced yesterday. Furthermore, it insisted that there is no agreement about returning Kurdish Peshmerga forces to the areas controlled by the federal army.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180314-no-agreement-on-peshmerga-return-to-disputed-areas-insists-iraq/>

- **Shadowy Terrorist Group Emerges in Iraq**

A new group in Iraq called White Flag is coming under close scrutiny by U.S. intelligence agencies amid concerns the terrorist organization could become a regional successor to the Islamic State. White Flag is an armed group operating in areas of northwestern and central Iraq since late last year and appears to be a union of Kurdish terrorists and former ISIS fighters, according to U.S. defense and military officials.

More Details:

<http://freebeacon.com/national-security/shadowy-terrorist-group-emerges-iraq/>

2. SYRIA

- **Al-Qaida in Syria losing ground in battles with insurgents**

For the first time since its meteoric rise in 2012 amid the chaos of war, al-Qaida's branch in Syria is in retreat, battling rival militant groups in the north and fighting for survival in a key foothold near the capital, Damascus.

More Details:

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/al-qaida-syria-losing-ground-battles-insurgents-53732057>

- **Endless agony of Syrian civilians**

Half a million lives have been lost, millions displaced and the country lies in ruins. Yet, there's no indication that the senseless violence in Syria will cease in the near future, a UAE newspaper has commented.

More Details:

<http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302674423>

- **Syrian Civilians Talk about Life in Eastern Ghouta after Escaping Enclave**

Two groups of Syrian civilians, a total of 100 people, left the Syrian city of Duma in the enclave of Eastern Ghouta on Tuesday and told Sputnik about their life in the territory controlled by militants. The situation in Eastern Ghouta has become particularly tense in the last few weeks. The UN Security Council on February 24 approved Resolution 2401 that urges all parties to the conflict in Syria to stop hostilities and ensure a humanitarian pause. However, militants in Eastern Ghouta are making it extremely difficult for the civilians to leave the enclave using humanitarian corridors. At the same time, Damascus and its suburbs are being shelled daily from Eastern Ghouta.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201803141062494856-syria-civilians-life-eastern-ghouta/>

- **Six Czech humanitarian projects for Syria approved**

A commission on Tuesday selected six humanitarian projects worth about 29 million crowns that would secure food, water, medicines, shelter and education to those in need in Syria, Czech Foreign Minister Martin Stropnický said on Twitter.

More Details:

<http://www.praguemonitor.com/2018/03/14/six-czech-humanitarian-projects-syria-approved>

- **US attack on Syria to result in serious consequences**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned the United States against attacking Syria, saying that if this happens, the consequences will be serious. In a press conference in Moscow on Tuesday, Lavrov said that the US representative at the Security Council Nikki Haley should be aware that “It is one thing to irresponsibly use a microphone in the UN Security Council and another thing when [both Russian and American] military have channels of communication, and these channels show very clearly what could be done and what cannot be done,” adding that the US coalition knows this very well.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/132808/US-attack-on-Syria-to-result-in-serious-consequences>

- **Two civilians killed in Damascus in shelling by militants**

Damascus’ residential quarters came under shelling by militants twice in the past day. Two civilians were killed, chief of the Russian center for reconciliation of the warring parties Yuri Yevtushenko said on Tuesday, APA reports quoting TASS.

More Details:

<http://en.apa.az/world-news/asia-news/two-civilians-killed-in-damascus-in-shelling-by-militants.html>

- **3,444 terrorists 'neutralized' in Afrin operation**

A total of 3,444 terrorists have been "neutralized" since the start of Operation Olive Branch in Syria's northwestern Afrin region, the Turkish General Staff said in a statement on Wednesday morning. Turkish authorities often use the word "neutralized" in their statements to imply the terrorists in question either surrendered or were killed or captured.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/3-444-terrorists-neutralized-in-afrin-operation/1088222>

- **Suspects in transportation of ISIS supporters to Syria arrested in Russia**

Officers of the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Interior Ministry have arrested 60 alleged members of an organization behind transportation of people to Syria and Iraq for participation in fights on the side of the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist organization prohibited in Russia, the FSB press-service reports. According to FSB, law enforcement agencies stopped activity of a criminal group

operating in the Moscow Region and Moscow, which, in addition to transportation of ISIS supporters, also organized unlawful legalization of immigrants from Central Asia.

More Details:

<http://www.rapsinews.com/news/20180314/282193814.html>

3. IRAN

- **Iran Asks UN to Stand against US, Allies' Double-Standard Human Rights**

Secretary of Iran's Human Rights Council Mohammad Javad Larijani called on the UN to stand against the US and its allies' double-standard approach towards human rights. Larijani made the remarks, addressing the 37th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) meeting in Geneva on Tuesday.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961222000895>

- **Trial underway in London for attackers of Iran embassy**

Iran's deputy foreign minister said Wed. that the British government has pledged to increase the security of the Iranian embassy, meanwhile, the trial of attackers on Iran's embassy is underway. Speaking on the sidelines of a meeting with Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission which was held on Wednesday morning to discuss a recent attack on Iran's embassy in London, UK, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyed Abbas Araghchi told reporters that he believed that in the case of the attack on the Iranian embassy, the British government had failed to take measures in order to prevent the attack from taking place.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/132807/Trial-underway-in-London-for-attackers-of-Iran-embassy>

- **Iran, Algeria vow to expand media cooperation**

Hashemi made the remarks in a meeting with Algerian Ambassador to Tehran Abdel Moun'aam Ahriz in Tehran on Tuesday. Among the important media missions, it can be referred to capacity building for expansion of mutual relations and IRNA is determined to carry out such a grave responsibility with more strength, Hashemi said.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82861703>

- **FM: Iran, China, Pakistan can cooperate in Chabahar, CPEC**

Iran can play a role in the implementation of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), whereas Pakistan and China can invest in developing Chabahar Port in south Iran, said the Iranian minister of foreign affairs. This is because by promoting economic development in that area which has been the source of extremism, poverty, radicalism and terrorism in both Iran and Pakistan, the life of the people in that neighborhood and the wellbeing of the two nations can be improved, added Mohammad Javad Zarif on the third and final day of his visit to Pakistan.

More Details:

<http://www.iran-daily.com/News/211627.html?catid=3&title=FM--Iran--China--Pakistan-can-cooperate-in-Chabahar--CPEC>

- **Iran Urges Dutch Push to End Saudi War on Yemen**

In a meeting with the ambassador of the Netherlands to Iran, Susana Trestal, on Tuesday, General Hatami denounced the international community's double standards when it comes to the humanitarian crisis and war in Yemen. He called on the Netherlands, a non-permanent UN Security Council member, and on the other UNSC members to push for an end to the massacre of Yemeni people by Saudi Arabia.

More Details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2018/03/13/1680072/iran-urges-dutch-push-to-end-saudi-war-on-yemen>

- **Zarubezhneft – first Russian company to sign two contracts with Iran**

JSC Zarubezhneft is the first Russian oil company, which will sign two IPCs (Iranian Petroleum Contract) with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), TASS agency reported citing a source in the company.

More Details:

<https://en.trend.az/iran/business/2872708.html>

- **Iran FM to visit Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan**

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Ghasemi said on Tuesday evening that Zarif will attend a meeting with his Azerbaijani, Turkish and Georgian counterparts in Baku. Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov had already talked about the four-sided meeting during a meeting with Georgian Defense Minister Levan Izoria on Friday.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/132804/Iran-FM-to-visit-Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan>

- **Iranian Ministers of Roads, Labour Survive Impeachment**

Rabi'ei attended an open session of the Iranian Parliament on Tuesday and defended his performance before the lawmakers. He finally managed to survive the impeachment by a hair's breadth. In the Tuesday session, Akhoundi also appeared in the Parliament to defend himself for the third time since he took the helm in August 2013. He had already survived two impeachment sessions.

More Details:

<http://ifpnews.com/exclusive/iranian-ministers-of-roads-labour-survive-impeachment/>

- **Trump calls Iran 'threat' to US, renews sanctions for another year**

US President Donald Trump has extended sanctions against Iran for another year, claiming that the Islamic Republic continues to pose "an unusual and extraordinary" threat to America. Trump signed an executive order on Monday, continuing a national emergency with respect to Iran first announced by former US President Bill Clinton in 1995.

More Details:

<http://parstoday.com/en/news/iran-i78897-trump-calls-iran-threat%E2%80%99-to-us-renews-sanctions-for-another-year>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Israeli Soldiers Abduct Seven Palestinians in The West Bank**

Israeli soldiers invaded, on Wednesday at dawn, many Palestinians communities in several parts of the occupied West Bank, searched and ransacked homes and abducted seven Palestinians, including a former political prisoner, in addition to invading the homes of a legislator and two journalists. The Nablus office of the Palestinian Prisoners' Society (PPS), in northern West Bank, said the soldiers invaded Rujeib Meadow area and Rujeib town, in addition to Jerusalem Street in Nablus city, before storming and ransacking homes.

More Details:

<http://imemc.org/article/israeli-soldiers-abduct-seven-palestinians-in-the-west-bank-3/>

- **Prime Minister travels to Rome for conference on refugees**

Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah travelled to Rome on Wednesday to attend an extraordinary meeting for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). He was accompanied by Riyad Mansour, Palestine's permanent representative to the United Nations.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=ok77RNa96881793129aok77RN>

- **Gaza: Israel Uses Drones to Drop Tear Gas on Protesters for First Time**

Israeli occupying forces used unmanned drones to drop tear gas on Palestinians in Gaza for the first time last Friday, according to the Times of Israel. Some 200 Gazans had gathered at the border fence with Israel as part of a weekly protest against the ten-year blockade when an unmanned aerial vehicle approached the scene. Footage from the Lebanese Al-Mayadeen news agency shows the drone dropping canisters of tear gas on the protesters who can then be seen running blindly from the scene.

More Details:

<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/gaza-israel-uses-drones-drop-tear-gas-protesters-first-time/>

- **Israeli forces open fire at Gaza fishermen**

Israeli naval forces opened fire on Palestinian fishing boats off the coast of the northern Gaza Strip on Tuesday. Witnesses told Ma'an that Israeli boats were seen and heard opening fire towards fishermen. Meanwhile, Israeli authorities released a 15-year-old fisherman who was detained by Israeli naval forces on Monday off the coast of southern Gaza. He was identified as Ahmad Ziad al-Bardawil.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=779932>

- **No snap Israeli elections, as coalition parties reach agreement**

The prospect of Israeli elections in June ended on Tuesday, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party announced that coalition parties had reached an agreement, reported Haaretz. Shortly after the announcement was made, Netanyahu told the Knesset that he had kept his promise to avoid dissolving the government, and thanked his coalition partners for "showing responsibility".

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180314-no-snap-israeli-elections-as-coalition-parties-reach-agreement/>

- **Hamdallah’s Assassination Attempt Targets Palestinian Reconciliation**

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas condemned on Tuesday the assassination attempt of Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah and head of intelligence Majid Faraj in the Gaza Strip, saying that “this crime was premeditated and its goals and perpetrators are known.” After immediately returning to Ramallah from a trip abroad, Abbas said that the bomb blast targeting the PM’s convoy was in line with the “suspicious goals of destroying the Palestinian national project ... in order to create a suspicious Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip.”

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1204606/hamdallah%E2%80%99s-assassination-attempt-targets-palestinian-reconciliation>

- **Gaza schools stage one-day strike over salaries**

Schools and education directorates staged a one-day strike in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday in protest of being unpaid by the Ramallah-based Palestinian government. Doors of schools and offices of the Education Ministry were locked, while students failed to show up for classes. Wednesday’s strike was called by the teachers union to protest refusal of the Palestinian government to pay monthly salaries for employees hired by Hamas since 2007.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/gaza-schools-stage-one-day-strike-over-salaries/1088355>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **UAE ‘eager to help Kingdom overcome economic challenges’**

His Majesty meets Emirati top diplomat, urges increased UAE investments in Kingdom. His Majesty King Abdullah on Tuesday discussed with UAE’s Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan bilateral relations and the regional situation, according to a Royal Court statement. During the meeting, His Majesty stressed Jordan’s keenness to consolidate the “close and historic relations between Jordan and the UAE and expand the horizons of cooperation in all areas”. During the discussions, which continued over a lunch banquet, the two sides stressed the advanced level of coordination and cooperation between the two countries in their efforts to deal with regional crises and bring about security, stability and peace in the region.

More details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/uae-eager-help-kingdom-overcome-economic-challenges%E2%80%99>

- **Report: Saudi Arabia Keen on Showing Support for Lebanon**

Saudi Arabia's keenness on showing support for Lebanon "at all levels" was reflected in the meetings of Saudi Charge d'Affaires Walid al-Bukhari with Speaker Nabih Berri and Prime Minister Saad Hariri a day earlier, al-Joumhouria daily reported on Wednesday. Saudi Arabia has confirmed participation in international conferences in support of Lebanon, the most recent is Rome II Conference set to boost Lebanon's military and security institutions.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/243461-report-saudi-arabia-keen-on-showing-support-for-lebanon>

- **PM Jordan meets with Egyptian president**

Prime Minister Hani Mulki on Tuesday met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and discussed with him ways to cement ties between Jordan and Egypt, especially in economic spheres, as well as a number of Middle East issues. The Prime Minister underlined the importance of enforcing agreements signed between the two countries and facilitating the exchange of goods and Jordanian exports to Egypt, as well as the registration of Jordanian medicines in the Egyptian market.

More details:

http://petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site_id=1&NewsID=344375&CatID=13

- **Future bloc convenes at center house, hails Biel electoral festival**

Future bloc on Tuesday convened at the Center House under the chairmanship of bloc head Fouad Siniora, to address the overall situation in the country. In a statement issued in the wake of the periodic meeting, the bloc hailed the Biel electoral festival called forth by the Future Movement, deeming it as a national event. The bloc heaped praise on the electoral program announced at the Biel Festival and the names of the selected candidates running on the Future Movement's list in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

More details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/89131/Future-bloc-convenes-at-Center-House-hails-Biel-electoral-festival>

- **Itani released as judge issues arrest warrants**

A military investigative judge Tuesday released actor Ziad Itani from custody without bail and issued arrest warrants for Maj. Suzan Hajj Hobeiche and suspected hacker Elie Ghabash, who are accused of framing the actor as a spy for Israel. “No one has been wronged as I was,” Itani told local media as he left the Directorate General of the Internal Security Forces. “The heroes at the [ISF’s] Information Branch saved us from a scandal of the ages.”.

More details:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2018/Mar-14/441416-itani-released-as-judge-issues-arrest-warrants.ashx>

- **Jordan, Spain agree to ‘unify’ position during upcoming Brussels conference**

Planning and International Cooperation Minister Imad Fakhoury on Tuesday met with Spanish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Ildefonso Castro López and agreed to “unify” the two countries’ positions during the upcoming Brussels conference on refugees to be held in April, a Planning Ministry statement said. Fakhoury stressed the importance of revisiting the EU’s decision to simplify the rules of origin for Jordanian exports to EU countries to harmonise with the Kingdom’s plans to support Jordanian industrialists, attract investments and create jobs. He also outlined the national economic situation and the economic and social challenges the Kingdom is facing due to regional turmoil and hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees, citing “the Jordanian model” in dealing with these challenges.

More details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-spain-agree-unify%E2%80%99-position-during-upcoming-brussels-conference>

- **Jordan’s New Regional Role**

It is significant for a Syrian opposition member to take a photo with a top American official. When the US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson held a meeting in Jordan’s capital, Amman, with the head of the Syrian Negotiations Commission, Nasr al-Hariri, and an accompanying delegation on February 14, the photo, which went viral, signaled how Jordan is set to play a major role in the outcome of ongoing conflicts in the tumultuous Middle East. Indeed, the meeting suggested that Amman is emerging as an increasingly influential actor following the decision made by US President Donald Trump last year to recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.

More details:

<https://intpolicydigest.org/2018/03/13/jordan-s-new-regional-role/>

- **Jordan-Qatar trade: Economics trump politics**

Despite Jordan's decision to downgrade its diplomatic representation with Qatar in light of the Gulf crisis in June 2017, economic relations between the two countries have seen momentum, making some expect that the economy will re-open the doors of diplomacy between them.

More details:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/jordan-qatar-trade-economics-trump-politics-180313172828623.html>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **US must push Saudi Arabia away from Chinese model of governance**

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman will land in the U.S. on March 19 as part of a three week, multi-city tour. It's his first extended foreign travel, which has already taken him to London, since being named Saudi heir apparent in June 2017.

More details:

<http://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/378132-us-must-push-saudi-arabia-away-from-the-chinese-model-of-governance>

- **Israeli officials meet Qatari, Saudi and UAE Counterparts at white house**

Israeli national security officials sat around the same table on Tuesday morning with their counterparts from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, discussing a dire humanitarian situation unfolding in the Gaza Strip. The summit on Gaza, called by Jared Kushner, the US president's son-in-law and senior adviser on Middle East peace, as well as Jason Greenblatt, his special representative for international negotiations, marks an unprecedented moment for Israeli diplomacy, as their dialogue with officials from Arab states is publicly recognized for the first time.

More details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Israeli-officials-meet-Qatari-Saudi-and-UAE-counterparts-at-White-House-544980>

- **Mattis discusses Qatar crisis and Yemen with Oman's Sultan Qaboos**

US Secretary of Defence Jim Mattis discussed with Sultan Qaboos of Oman a number of issues, including the rift between some Arab countries and Qatar and the ongoing war in Yemen. Mr Mattis, who arrived in Afghanistan on Tuesday after official visits to Muscat and Manama, also addressed during talks ways to strengthen US-Omani relations.

More details:

<https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/mattis-discusses-qatar-crisis-and-yemen-with-oman-sultan-qaboos-1.712790>

- **Qatar renews Al-Bundug oil deal with Abu Dhabi**

State-owned Qatar Petroleum (QP) has renewed its contract with Abu Dhabi to continue operating a shared offshore oilfield, amid the continuing blockade by a quartet of Arab countries against Qatar.

More details:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/qatar-renews-al-bundug-oildeal-abu-dhabi-180313112948433.html>

- **Norway's Kongsberg Gruppen in \$1.9 Billion Qatar Weapons Deal**

Norwegian defense contractor Kongsberg Gruppen has signed a letter of intent to supply equipment for military vehicles in Qatar worth up to 15 billion Norwegian crowns (\$1.93 billion), its largest deal to date, the company said on Tuesday.

More details:

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-03-13/norways-kongsberg-gruppen-in-19-billion-qatar-weapons-deal>

- **Qatar emerges as third largest investor in Jordan**

Qatar and Jordan bilateral cooperation in the field of trade and investment is robust and growing fast. With the combined investment of over \$2bn (QR7.28bn), Qatar has emerged as the third largest investor in the Hashemite Kingdom, said a prominent Jordanian businessman.

More details:

<https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/14/03/2018/Qatar-emerges-as-third-largest-investor-in-Jordan>

- **Kuwait, Turkmenistan strike numerous deals**

Kuwait and Turkmenistan yesterday signed a number of agreements in a lavish ceremony with both nations' respective leaders in attendance. Presiding over the proceedings, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah by his side, was joined by Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow. The two

sides have agreed to form a joint committee for cooperation, in addition to a bilateral visa exemption deal for holders of diplomatic, service and special passports.

More details:

<http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/kuwait-turkmenistan-strike-numerous-deals/>

- **Houthi Branch of General People's Congress Slams Pro-Legitimacy Officials**

The General People's Congress (GPC) branch that is controlled by the Houthis in Sanaa, denied any rifts among its members, reiterating its disavowal of party leaderships that show support to Yemen's legitimacy forces. In a statement, the party responded sarcastically to recent calls by some GPC officials, led by Prime Minister Ahmed Obeid bin-Dagher, to unify the party.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1204651/houthi-branch-general-peoples-congress-slams-pro-legitimacy-officials>

7. EGYPT

- **Egyptian-Jordanian Cooperation to Face Regional Challenges**

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi underlined the importance of relations between his country and Jordan, especially in light of the circumstances and challenges facing the region. Sisi received on Tuesday Jordanian Prime Minister Hani al-Mulki in Cairo, where the two officials stressed their keenness to maintain joint cooperation to face common challenges and push strategic relations forward.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1204616/egyptian-jordanian-cooperation-face-regional-challenges>

- **Egyptian-French navies conduct joint military exercise in Red Sea**

Official Spokesperson of Armed Forces Tamer al-Refai stated on Tuesday that Egyptian-French naval forces carried out a joint exercise in the Red Sea as part of the continuation of the military cooperation between the two countries' armed forces. Refai added that the exercise witnessed the participation of Egypt's newly-acquired French-made-helicopter carrier Mistral in addition to several Egyptian-French frigates and rocket launchers.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/egyptian-franch-navies-conduct-joint-military-exercise-in-red-sea/>

- **Egypt's FM discusses bilateral relations, Nile Basin developments with Kenyan President Kenyatta**

Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry met on Tuesday with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, where they discussed boosting bilateral relations and issues relating to the Nile Basin, ministry spokesman Ahmed Abu Zeid said in a statement. Shoukry delivered an invitation from Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi for Kenyatta to visit Egypt. El-Sisi stressed Egypt's keenness to boost relations between the two countries, and Kenyatta expressed his gratitude for Egypt's support during Kenya's recent political crisis.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptdailynews.com/detail/egypts-fm-discusses-bilateral-relations-nile-basin-developments-with-kenyan-president-kenyatta>

- **Flights between Egypt, Russia to resume in April**

Flights between Egypt and Russia are expected to resume in April, after two years of suspension, the Russian state-owned news agency TASS reported on Monday. Russian media published conflicting reports about the exact date of resumption. Russia Today reported that it the official website of Moscow's airport said the first flight will take place on 22 March. Meanwhile, Sputnik said that that first flight will be on 17 March, according to information published on Moscow Domodedovo Airport's website.

More Details:

<https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2018/03/13/flights-egypt-russia-resume-april/>

- **Reactions on Egypt's report on HR in Geneva "very positive": official**

The minister of parliamentary affairs said he met with representatives of diplomatic missions and NGOs, including Amnesty International, as well as officials of the Human Rights Council during his visit to Geneva, noting that all questions were answered with documents and evidence. Marwan added that the reactions were very positive on the issues raised.

More Details:

<https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/45195/Reactions-on-Egypt-s-report-on-HR-in-Geneva-very>

- **Kenya and Egypt 'Committed to International Law' On Nile Water Issue: Minister**

Kenyan and Egyptian states are committed to achieving consensus and mutual benefits for all Nile basin countries, according to a statement by Egypt's ministry of foreign affairs on the foreign minister's meeting with the Kenyan president in the capital city of Nairobi on Tuesday. "The two countries are committed to the rules of international law and to not harm any party," the statement read.

More Details:

<https://egyptianstreets.com/2018/03/14/kenya-and-egypt-committed-to-international-law-on-nile-water-issue-minister/>

- **Egypt's Morsi no 'ordinary prisoner,' British MP says**

Egypt's ousted President Mohamed Morsi "is not an ordinary prisoner" and "if something happens to him in custody, there are likely to be wider consequences than simply just the fate of one prisoner," Crispin Blunt, former chair of British parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee and Conservative MP, said. Blunt told Anadolu Agency that a British attempt last week to visit the country's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi had received no answer from the Egyptian Embassy in London.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/europe/egypts-morsi-no-ordinary-prisoner-british-mp-says/1088272>

- **IMF to start third review of Egypt's economic reform programme next May**

An IMF delegation to visit Egypt next May to conduct the third periodic review of Egypt's economic reform programme in preparation for providing the country the fourth tranche of a \$12 billion loan, which is estimated at \$2 billion. Egypt's economy continues to perform strongly, and reforms that have already been implemented are beginning to pay off in terms of macroeconomic stabilization and the return of confidence.

More Details:

<http://en.amwalalghad.com/business/banks/63157-imf-to-start-third-review-of-egypts-economic-reform-programme-next-may.html>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Morocco, Qatar Sign 11 Agreements, MoU & Action Programs**

The 7th session of the Moroccan-Qatari high joint cooperation commission, held on Monday 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, was marked by the signing of 11 agreements, Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and action programs covering several areas.

More Details:

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/03/242318/morocco-qatar-sign-agreements-mou-action-programs/>

- **Morocco's Performance Drives North African GDP Growth- AfDB says**

The positive performance of the Moroccan economy enabled North Africa to achieve the second highest growth rate of 4.9% at the African level, the African Development Bank said.

More Details:

<http://northafricapost.com/22690-moroccos-performance-drives-north-african-gdp-growth-afdb-says.html>

- **Africa: Working Visit of The Chairman Of The African Union Commission In Algeria**

The Chairman of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, made a working visit to Algeria from March 10 to 12, 2018. He was accompanied by the Commissioner in charge of Peace and Security Smail Chergui, by the commissioner of Human Resources, Science and Technology Sarah Anyang Agbor, by the High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel, Pierre Buyoya, by the Executive Secretary of the Planning and Coordinating Agency of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Ibrahim Mayaki and by other officials of the African Union Commission.

More Details:

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201803130675.html>

- **Algeria to host African conference on counterterrorism**

Algeria will host a high-level African meeting on combating terrorism-financing next month, Algerian Foreign Minister Abdelkader Messahel announced Sunday.

More Details:

<https://www.herald.co.zw/algeria-to-host-african-conference-on-counterterrorism/>

- **Hundreds of women march in Tunis for equal inheritance rights**

Under Islamic law, daughters get half of what sons get. Some fear an extremist backlash. Tunisia remains the engine of change in the Islamic world.

More Details:

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Hundreds-of-women-march-in-Tunis-for-equal-inheritance-rights-43340.html>

- **UN Libya Experts Panel seeking to establish the true value of Libya's frozen assets**

In the section of Libya's frozen assets, the UN Libya Exerts Panel report says that it is investigation the true value of Libya's frozen assets. It says that in 2012 the total sum of Libya's Libya Investment Authority assets was put at US\$ 67 bn. However, this had now decreased to US\$ 34 bn.

More Details:

<https://www.libyaherald.com/2018/03/13/un-libya-experts-panel-seeking-to-establish-the-true-value-of-libyas-frozen-assets/>

- **EU says over 16,000 African migrants repatriated from Libya camps; 5,000 remain**

More than 16,000 African migrants have been repatriated from camps in Libya under an emergency plan, the EU's foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said Tuesday.

More Details:

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/03/14/world/social-issues-world/eu-says-16000-african-migrants-repatriated-libya-camps-5000-remain/>

- **Libyan Militias Viewed as Prime Suspects for Nationwide Abductions**

Missing official statistics make it impossible to know the exact number of abductees in Libya. However, complaints pushed forth by human rights organizations and citizens show that a single account of disappearance occurred almost every day. Local observers told Asharq Al-Awsat that "armed militias" are responsible for the kidnaps in most cases.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1204681/libyan-militias-viewed-prime-suspects-nationwide-abductions>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Chinese Alipay makes inroads into Pakistan with Rs20bln investment plan**

Ant Financial Services Group, an affiliate of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, on Tuesday agreed to acquire 45 percent stake worth around Rs20 billion in a subsidiary of Norwegian Telenor to broaden access to financial services through digital payment solutions in Pakistan.

More details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/291961-chinese-alipay-makes-inroads-into-pakistan-with-rs20bln-investment-plan>

- **Austria deports 2 Afghan sisters to Croatia**

Austria has deported two Afghan and their three young children after they were denied asylum, the BBC reported on Wednesday.

More details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/03/14/austria-deports-2-afghan-sisters-croatia>

- **Victory is possible in Afghanistan: Mattis**

The US Defense Secretary, Jim Mattis arrived in Kabul on an unannounced visit on Tuesday, in which he said victory was possible in Afghanistan through peace talks

More details:

<http://afghanistantimes.af/victory-possible-afghanistan-mattis/>

- **Jokowi should reconsider his role as peace broker in Afghanistan: The Jakarta Post**

In its editorial, the paper says President Joko Widodo should focus on Indonesia's efforts to help resolve the Rohingya crisis, instead of pushing for his peace in Afghanistan.

More details:

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/jokowi-should-reconsider-his-role-as-peace-broker-in-afghanistan-the-jakarta-post>

- **Pakistani immigrant's daughter running for mayor of deprived UK borough**

The daughter of a Pakistani immigrant is looking to be the first directly elected woman of colour in the UK as she bids to become the mayor of Newham – one of the most deprived boroughs in Britain.

More details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/186224-pakistani-immigrants-daughter-hopes-to-improve-conditions-deprived-uk-borough>

- **Rao Anwar sends another 'letter' to CJP, asks court to unfreeze his bank accounts**

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Mian Saqib Nisar on Wednesday revealed that he has received another letter from absconding Sindh police officer Rao Anwar, this time asking the court to unfreeze his bank accounts.

More details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1395203/rao-anwar-sends-another-letter-to-cjp-asks-court-to-unfreeze-his-bank-accounts>

- **Chief Executive inaugurates Afghanistan Pine Nut Union**

Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah in opening ceremony of 'Afghanistan Pine Nut Union' held yesterday in Kabul said that although such moves appeared minor, they would help practically bring key changes in life of Afghan residents and improve the country's economy.

More details:

<http://thekabultimes.gov.af/index.php/newsnational/16632-chief-executive-inaugurates-afghanistan-pine-nut-union.html>

- **Pak-Afghan trade boost tied to termination of tariff barriers**

Pakistan-Afghanistan trade volume can be improved by rationalising/removing uncalled-for tariff barriers that have given rise to illegal trafficking of goods between the two neighbours, an official said on Tuesday.

More details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/291979-pak-afghan-trade-boost-tied-to-termination-of-tariff-barriers>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkey and the US are adopting a road map for Syria, says Turkish FM**

Speaking to the reporters who were with him on the plane on his way to Moscow on Tuesday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu gave detailed information on last week's meeting

between the American and Turkish officials. The US and Turkey will assist in the withdrawal of YPG militants from Syria's Manbij. Turkey and the US will secure the region, but if that fails, Ankara will conduct a military operation.

More Details:

<https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkey-and-the-us-are-adopting-a-road-map-for-syria-says-turkish-fm-15878>

- **Erdogan 'hopes' Afrin is liberated 'by this evening'**

Turkey's president said on Wednesday he hopes the northwestern Syrian city of Afrin would be liberated from terrorists "by this evening." The route terrorists use to enter and exit eastern Afrin will be closed soon, Recep Tayyip Erdogan told a gathering of village and neighborhood heads at the presidential complex in the capital Ankara. Erdogan reiterated that in the Turkish-led counter-terrorist operation, the utmost care is being taken to avoid harming civilians, and that if they had not done so, the operation would have been over by now.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/-erdogan-hopes-afrin-is-liberated-by-this-evening-/1088488>

- **Turkey's Baykar to export armed UAVs to Qatar**

Turkish unmanned aircraft producer Baykar Makina signed an agreement on Wednesday to export six armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) to Qatar's armed forces. Under the agreement, six Bayraktar TB2 armed UAV Platforms, three ground control station systems and equipment, and a UAV training simulator will be delivered within a year.

More Details:

<http://www.anews.com.tr/turkey/2018/03/14/turkeys-baykar-to-export-armed-uavs-to-qatar>

- **Turkish military, FSA liberate 5 more villages in Afrin**

The Turkish Armed Forces and Free Syrian Army (FSA) on Tuesday liberated five more villages from YPG/PKK-ISIL terrorists during Operation Olive Branch in Syria's northwestern Afrin region. According to Anadolu Agency correspondents in the field, the villages of Maghar Juqq and Darmashkanli in Shaykh al-Hadid district, located west of Afrin, were cleared of YPG/PKK-ISIL terrorists.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/199759/turkish-military-fsa-liberate-5-more-villages-in-afrin>

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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