



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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15 MARCH 2018

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1. IRAQ

- **Parliament Speaker: The military establishment dedication and faithfulness were among the reasons for the victory over terrorism**

Under the auspices of the Speaker of the House of Representatives Salim AL-Jubouri a consultative meeting WAS held with a selection of former and current Iraqi army officers. During the meeting, according to a statement by the Office of Al-Jubouri, they discussed the situation in Iraq in general and ways to support the armed forces and their officers as the wall of the country and the protectors of the land and the people.

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?rZ9YmRRi0SP3ENaCECE4GQ%253d%253d

- **Iraq selects Saddam's palace as location for U.S. University**

Authorities in Iraq have selected one of the presidential palaces as the premise for the American University in Baghdad, officials were quoted saying on Thursday. State-owned al-Sabaah newspaper quoted Ahmed al-Rubaye, director-general of the state properties department, saying that the department, in coordination with a commission formed by the cabinet on the management of state assets, selected the Radhwaniyah palace and the surrounding territory for the establishment of the American University in Baghdad.

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/features/baghdad-presidential-palace-selected-as-location-for-u-s-university/>

- **Fuad Masum Reluctant to Return Budget Bill: MP**

A member of the Finance Committee in the Iraqi parliament said that if the Iraqi president is seriously against the 2018 budget bill, he could appeal it to the Federal Supreme Court. "Only the Supreme Court of Iraq can modify the budget bill, thus if the Iraqi president Fuad Masum seriously wants the bill to be modified, he would appeal it the federal court," Sarhan Ahmed told BasNews.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/422761>

- **Iraq police bombs 20 ISIS tunnels in Huwajja**

Police forces bombed six tunnels and two hotbeds belonging to ISIS terrorists in Hawija district, Kirkuk province on Thursday. The forces also bombed three explosive devices, according to a statement from the interior ministry.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/24869/Iraq-police-bombs-20-ISIS-tunnels-in-Huwajja>

- **Qatar, Iraq sign security cooperation agreement**

Qatar signed yesterday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Iraq to strengthen security cooperation between the two countries, the Qatar News Agency (QNA) has reported. The agreement aims to enhance security cooperation and exchanging information and experiences between Qatar and Iraq. "The MoU between the Qatar and Iraq aims at further joint security cooperation and regulates the coordination process between the two countries, as well as the exchange of information and experience, as Iraq accumulates experience in the security field," QNA quoted the country's head of public security, Major General Saad Bin Jassim Al Khulaifi, as saying.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180315-qatar-iraq-sign-security-cooperation-agreement/>

- **Iraqi forces kill 11 Daesh militants in Kirkuk**

Eleven Daesh militants were killed in an Iraqi security operation in the northern Kirkuk province on Thursday, according to a local police officer. The militants were intercepted at a point close to the Riyadh town of Kirkuk as a result of some intelligence obtained, Police Capt. Muntazar Al-Saadi told Anadolu Agency. Meanwhile, five Iraqi soldiers were killed in a Daesh ambush at an area close to a military base in eastern Diyala province in Iraq, Captain Habib al-Shamri told Anadolu Agency.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/iraqi-forces-kill-11-daesh-militants-in-kirkuk/1089166>

- **Christian Leader Slams ISIS Crimes in Iraq**

Rayan al-Kildani, leader of the PMF's Babylon Brigades, hinted that ISIS was the reason behind the latest crimes that targeted Christians in Baghdad. He also said that there might be "options" that he did not explain in response to the continued killing of Christians and Iraqis in general.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1204886/christian-leader-slams-isis-crimes-iraq>

- **Iran says IS resurgence could hamper oil deal with Iraq**

The Islamic State (IS) appears to be staging a comeback in parts of Iraq, which could endanger the country's oil deal with Iran. Hamid Hosseini, the Iranian secretary-general of the Iran-Iraq Chamber of Commerce, warned in late February that the countries' plan can't be implemented fully because of security concerns. The countries signed a bilateral agreement in July 2017 to install a pipeline to transport Kirkuk's crude oil to Iran to be refined. In the meantime, the oil is being transported by trucks, which are vulnerable to attacks

More Details:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/03/iraq-kurdistan-kirkuk-oil-basra.html>

- **Turkey, Iraq to target several PKK camps in Sinjar, Makhmour**

The Turkish-Iraqi joint counterterrorism operation will reportedly be launched to exterminate seven PKK camps in Sinjar and another one near Makhmour. According to a report in the HaberTürk daily yesterday, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) will launch an operation against seven camps in Iraq's Sinjar area and a camp 6 kilometers away from the PKK's Makhmour camp, which is one of the most important logistic centers of the terrorist organization. Thus, it was pointed out in the report that this operation will seek to efface all the PKK's logistical passages.

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/03/15/turkey-iraq-to-target-several-pkk-camps-in-sinjar-makhmour>

- **Iraq PM says corruption more dangerous than terrorism**

Iraqi Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi warned on Wednesday of corruption in his country, saying it is "more dangerous than terrorism". "Corruption has become more dangerous than terrorism because it is an unseen enemy" Abbadi said during a conference on peaceful co-existence in Nineveh province, north.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180315-iraq-pm-says-corruption-more-dangerous-than-terrorism/>

- **Iraq's oil ministry calls for investors for Anbar refinery**

Iraq's oil ministry on Thursday called on companies to invest in a project to build a 70,000 barrel-per-day oil refinery in the western province of Anbar. Potential investors have until June 14 to make proposals, the ministry said in a statement, adding that the project is offered on a Build-Own-Operate or Build-Own-Transfer basis.

More Details:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-oil-refinery/iraqs-oil-ministry-calls-for-investors-for-anbar-refinery-idUSKCN1GR0QB>

2. SYRIA

- **Syrian army forces in key East Ghouta town in major blow to militants**

Syrian armed forces have entered a strategic town in Eastern Ghouta as they press ahead with their push to liberate the suburban area near the capital, Damascus, from years of devastating militant control. The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported Wednesday that army soldiers managed overnight to make their way into the town of Hamouriyah, located 12 kilometers from Damascus city center, which is under the control of the Faylaq al-Rahman militant group.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/03/15/555494/h>

- **Syrian Army Finds Militants' Plant for Manufacturing Chemical Weapons**

The Syrian army has discovered a secret workshop in Eastern Ghouta that was used to produce various military-grade chemicals, according to the SANA news agency. The footage showing a plant full of high-tech equipment located in the town of al-Shefounieh t in Eastern Ghouta has been released by the state-run news agency.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201803151062549525-syrian-army-militants-plant-chemical-weapons/>

- **Syria's civil war has been raging for seven years with no end in sight**

The fighting in Syria enters its eighth year on Thursday. A conflict that began as a peaceful uprising against President Bashar Assad's regime escalated into a full-scale civil war that is now one of this century's deadliest.

More Details:

<https://www.smh.com.au/world/middle-east/syria-s-civil-war-has-been-raging-for-seven-years-with-no-end-in-sight-20180315-p4z4ja.html>

- **Syrian regime forces push into Ghouta rebel enclave**

Syrian regime forces broke into a key town in the beleaguered rebel enclave of Eastern Ghouta late Wednesday amid heavy bombardment, a monitor said.

More Details:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/syrian-regime-forces-push-into-ghouta-rebel-enclave/>

- **Iran warns US against any 'foolish' action on Syria**

Iranian Foreign Ministry on Wednesday slammed the United States for its "interventionist" stance towards Syria. The U.S. "hostile" policies against the countries of the region is nothing new, Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi said, warning the U.S. government against any "foolish" action on Syria.

More Details:

http://www.china.org.cn/world/2018-03/15/content_50710567.htm

- **Syrian lawyer that negotiated Raqa IS deal found dead**

A prominent lawyer involved in a deal that saw some Islamic State jihadists given safe passage out of their Syrian bastion Raqa last year was found dead on Thursday, authorities said. Omar Alloush helped negotiate an agreement with tribal leaders that allowed some IS fighters to leave Raqa before it was overrun by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces on October 17.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87680>

- **Sources to Asharq Al-Awsat: Moscow Coordinates with Ankara, Tehran for 'Post-Ghouta' Phase**

A Russian diplomat told Asharq Al-Awsat on Wednesday that Moscow was now more relieved after Russia, Turkey and Iran started to bridge their differences on Syria. The source said Tehran is less critical of the Turkish military operations in Afrin, while Ankara has softened its language when speaking about the ongoing military operation in Ghouta and other areas, such as Idlib.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1205776/sources-asharq-al-awsat-moscow-coordinates-ankara-tehran-post-ghouta-phase>

3. IRAN

- **Russian firm to re-develop Iranian oil fields**

Iran has awarded its second post-sanctions oil contract to Russia over the re-development of two western fields. Based on an agreement it signed in Tehran on Wednesday, Russia's state-controlled Zarubezhneft would re-develop Aban and West Paydar oil fields.

More details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/03/14/555477/Russian-firm-to-redevelop-Iranian-oil-fields>

- **Indian govt. approves MoU to ban double taxation with Iran**

The Indian government, in an unprecedented move, approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which calls banning imposition of double taxation with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the issue of which leads to the increased investment and reduced tax evasion.

More details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/132833/Indian-govt-approves-MoU-to-ban-double-taxation-with-Iran>

- **Iran official stresses importance of President Rouhani visit to Baku**

Top Iranian official said that President's visit to Baku is a good opportunity for improvement of relations between the Islamic Republic and Azerbaijan Republic. Iran is committed to boost all-out ties with Azerbaijan, Chief of staff of Iran's President Mahmoud Vaezi said in a meeting with Azerbaijan's Economy Minister Shahin Mustafayev.

More details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82862910>

- **Iran FM leaves for Baku for quadrilateral meeting**

The Iranian foreign minister, heading a political delegation, left here for Baku to take part in a quadripartite meeting between Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Georgia.

More details:

<http://www.iran-daily.com/News/211707.html>

- **Iran, South Korea trade continues to fall**

Iran and South Korea's mutual trade continued to fall during the second month of 2018. The bilateral trade witnessed a fall by 20.6 percent in January-February 2018 and stood at \$1.7 billion, according to the latest data released by the Korean Customs Service.

More details:

<https://en.trend.az/iran/business/2873182.html>

- **UK Appoints New Ambassador to Tehran**

The British government has decided to replace its ambassador to Iran Nicholas Hopton with Rob Macaire. In a statement posted on gov.uk on Wednesday, London said Macaire will take up the post in Tehran in April 2018. The statement didn't elaborate any further on the surprise announcement.

More details:

<http://ifpnews.com/exclusive/uk-appoints-new-ambassador-to-tehran/>

- **No Missile Talks, Iran's Assembly of Experts Reiterates**

Iran's Assembly of Experts stressed the need for constant boost to the country's defense capabilities, dismissing any negotiations on its missile program.

More details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2018/03/15/1681568/no-missile-talks-iran-s-assembly-of-experts-reiterates>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Israel has destroyed 5,000 Palestinian homes in al-Quds since 1967: Report**

A new report shows that Israeli forces have destroyed some 5,000 Palestinian houses in Jerusalem al-Quds since the Tel Aviv regime's occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/03/15/555496/Isrtael-Palestine-Jerusalem-alQuds-Land-Research-Center>

- **Palestine, UN launch 539 mln USD appeal to aid Palestinians**

Jamie McGoldrick, the United Nations' Humanitarian Coordinator, speaks during a press conference in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza Strip, on March 14, 2018. The Palestinian government and the United Nations launched on Wednesday a 539.7-million-U.S. dollars appeal to address the urgent humanitarian needs of 1.9 million Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory in 2018.

More Details:

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/14/c_137039229.htm

- **Israeli Tanks Target Hamas Posts in Gaza in Response to Explosions – IDF**

Israeli tanks attacked the positions of Palestinian militants from Hamas movement in response to the detonation of several improvised explosive devices along the security fence surrounding the Gaza Strip, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said on Thursday.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201803151062550341-israel-tanks-gaza-detonation/>

- **Washington: A Meeting on Gaza without Palestinians Present**

The White House on Tuesday hosted 19 nations, including Israel and Arab Gulf states, to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, but the Palestinian Authority boycotted the meeting, angered by the Trump administration's policies on Jerusalem.

More Details:

<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/washington-meeting-gazas-humanitarian-crisis-without-palestinians-present/>

On the 12th anniversary of the attack on Jericho prison: Resistance continues until liberation

Samidoun is republishing the following statement from the Campaign to Free Ahmad Sa'adat, issued on the 12th anniversary of the attack on Jericho prison by Israeli occupation forces. Free Ahmad Sa'adat and all Palestinian prisoners!

More Details:

<http://samidoun.net/2018/03/on-the-12th-anniversary-of-the-attack-on-jericho-prison-resistance-continues-until-liberation/>

- **PFLP boycotts Palestinian National Council meeting**

The Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) announced on Wednesday that it is boycotting the planned meeting of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) set to be held on 30 April in Ramallah, Quds Press has reported. “We will not attend the meeting of the PNC for the same reasons that we boycotted its meeting held in 2005,” explained a member of the PFLP Political Bureau, Rabah Muhana. In short, the current PNC “does not unite” the Palestinians.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180315-pflp-boycotts-palestinian-national-council-meeting/>

- **Arab-Israeli MP voices defiance despite Knesset ban**

Haneen Zoabi, an Arab member of the Knesset (Israel’s parliament), declared Thursday that she would continue to “speak the truth” regarding Israeli violations of Palestinian rights. Zoabi made the assertion a day after being banned from attending Knesset sessions for criticizing Israeli aggression against Palestinians and describing Israeli soldiers as “murderers”.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/arab-israeli-mp-voices-defiance-despite-knesset-ban/1089612>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Geagea hints LF might go it alone in May elections**

Lebanese Forces chief Samir Geagea Wednesday unveiled the LF’s political platform for May’s parliamentary elections but signaled that his party might go it alone in the electoral battle, offering no indication of a possible coalition with the Future Movement or the Free Patriotic Movement. The LF’s platform called for fighting rampant corruption in the public administration and for the state to have the sole monopoly over the use of arms – in an indirect jab at Hezbollah’s arsenal.

More details:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2018/Mar-15/441590-geagea-hints-lf-might-go-it-alone-in-may-elections.ashx>

- **Jordan, Greece seek to build on Nicosia summit**

His Majesty King Abdullah on Wednesday met with Speaker of the Greek Parliament Nikos Voutsis over Jordanian-Greek relations and the means to develop them at all levels. The meeting, attended by Lower House Speaker Atef Tarawneh, focused on ways to expand bilateral cooperation, especially in the legislative and economic fields, according to a Royal Court statement.

More details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-greece-seek-build-nicosia-summit>

- **Hezbollah Denies “Farda News” Report on Alleged Remarks by Sayyed Nasrallah**

Hezbollah Media Relations denied as baseless a report by Iranian news website “Farda News” on alleged remarks by Secretary General Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah. The report by “Farda News” is totally baseless, Hezbollah media Relations said in a statement released on Tuesday.

More details:

<http://english.almanar.com.lb/462988>

- **Hariri arrives in Rome, chairs Lebanon delegation to Rome II Conference**

Prime Minister Saad Hariri arrived in Rome on Monday evening, chairing the Lebanese delegation to the Rome II conference called forth by the International Support Group for Lebanon, aimed at supporting the official security and military institutions in Lebanon. Premier Hariri chairs an official delegation to the Conference, including Ministers of Defense, Interior and Municipalities and Foreign Affairs, as well as Army Commander General Joseph Aoun, Internal Security Forces chief Imad Othman, and General Security chief Abbas Ibrahim.

More details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/89166/Hariri-arrives-in-Rome-chairs-Lebanon-delegation-to-Rome-II-Conference>

- **Bassil Calls for 'Liberating State Institutions from Civilian Militias'**

Free Patriotic Movement chief and Foreign Minister Jebran Bassil on Wednesday called for “liberating the state” from what he described as “civilian militias.” “Lebanon was liberated from Israeli occupation in 2000 and from Syrian tutelage in 2005. Israel was defeated in the July 2006 war and terrorism was ousted in August 2017. This is the core of the agreement between us and Hizbullah: Lebanon's protection and strength,” Bassil said in a speech during the FPM's annual dinner.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/243502-bassil-calls-for-liberating-state-institutions-from-civilian-militias>

- **Gov't ministerial team meets Jerash MPs, senators**

Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Economic Affairs Jafar Hassan said that stimulating economic growth in Jerash Governorate needs full cooperation with citizens of the governorate due to the competitive environment and investment opportunities in the area. Chairing a meeting for the government's economic team with Jerash MPs, senators, Jerash mayor and other officials, the minister stressed need to focus on the policy of employing young people through projects of economic feasibility.

More details:

http://petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site_id=1&NewsID=344463&CatID=13

- **Lebanon's Judicial Authorities Hint of Disrupting Parliamentary Elections**

A looming crisis in Lebanon might place the government in a direct confrontation with judicial authorities, after judges hinted on Wednesday to start a strike next week, a step that could disrupt the parliamentary elections. Judges plan to strike in protest of a decision to decrease the budget of the Justice Ministry and therefore, lessen benefits and dry out sources of the solidarity fund, which provides judges a benefit of less than one month's salary every three months, in addition to family medical and education benefits.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1205726/lebanon%E2%80%99s-judicial-authorities-hint-disrupting-parliamentary-elections>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Jordan, Oman discuss parliamentary ties**

A Senate delegation, currently on a visit to Oman, discussed with Omani officials parliamentary relations and ways to enhance cooperation in various domains, mainly in the economic field.

More details:

http://petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?Site_Id=1&lang=2&NewsID=344419&CatID=-1

- **HM King receives US Defence Secretary**

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, today at the Sakhir Palace, in the presence of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First

Deputy Prime Minister, received US Secretary of Defence James Mattis and his accompanying delegation.

More details:

<http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/830954>

- **State Department shake-up leaves Qatar hanging**

In ousting his chief diplomat on Tuesday, US President Donald Trump has eliminated a key champion for ending the monthslong Gulf crisis over Qatar and left US plans to resolve the dispute in flux.

More details:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/03/state-department-shakeup-qatar-hanging-pompeo.html#ixzz59nbrDlus>

- **Qatar to Curb Transfers to Its Sovereign Fund Until 2022**

A combination of lower energy prices and increased domestic investments will curb the net transfer of funds to Qatar's sovereign wealth fund until 2022, according to the gas-rich country's latest forecast.

More details:

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-14/qatar-says-to-curb-transfers-to-its-sovereign-fund-until-2022>

- **Kuwait labor delegation due in Manila**

The Philippines is looking to put at rest the dispute with Kuwait on the employment of Filipinos which took a turn to the worse after the body of a 29-yearold Filipino maid was found in the freezer of a Kuwait apartment more than a year after her employers had left the country, according to the standard. com.ph. Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said an eight-member Kuwaiti delegation will be in Manila on March 15 and 16 to resume negotiations which may culminate in the final labor agreement that will provide strong guarantees on the safety and welfare of Filipino domestic workers.

More details:

<https://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/kuwait-labor-delegation-due-in-manila/>

- **Ethiopian domestic workers ban from Kuwait ‘remains effective’**

The Interior Ministry’s decision to ban Ethiopian domestic workers from entering the country remains in effect, reports Al-Rai daily quoting sources. Sources vehemently denied rumors that Ethiopian domestic workers are now allowed to enter country, affirming no such decision has been taken so far.

More details:

<https://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/ethiopian-domestic-workers-ban-from-kuwait-remains-effective/>

- **Calls on UNHRC to investigate UAE recruitment of mercenaries in Yemen**

The Arab Organisation for Human Rights in Britain has called on the UN Human Rights Council to form a special committee to investigate the UAE’s recruitment of mercenaries in Yemen. During a seminar organised at the UNHRC in Geneva, the organisation accused the United Arab Emirates of carrying out “indiscriminate attacks against civilians” during its war along with Saudi Arabia against Houthi rebels in Yemen.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180315-calls-on-unhrc-to-investigate-uae-recruitment-of-mercenaries-in-yemen/>

7. EGYPT

- **Egypt Could Be Hacking Citizens’ Computers To Mine Cryptocurrency Covertly**

Amid reports that cryptocurrency mining attacks are multiplying by the dozen, Toronto University’s The Citizen Lab released data showing that Egyptian government has been reportedly hacking into its citizens’ computers to mine digital currencies.

More Details:

<http://www.kitco.com/news/2018-03-14/Egypt-Could-Be-Hacking-Citizens-Computers-To-Mine-Cryptocurrency-Covertly.html>

- **Egyptian-Americans launch human rights push ahead of Sisi re-election**

President Donald Trump relished showing off his deal-making skills when he hosted Aya Hijazi at the White House last year after convincing Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to release the Egyptian-American NGO worker and her husband.

More Details:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/03/egyptian-americans-launch-human-rights-push-sisi-election.html#ixzz59nctHm9e>

- **Egyptian expats vote in presidential race tomorrow**

Egyptian expats are set to cast their ballots tomorrow (Friday) at a total 139 polling stations at Egyptian embassies and consulates in 124 countries. The Egyptian government in general and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in particular have made proper preparations and arrangements for the vote of Egyptian expats, which runs between March 16 and 18.

More Details:

<https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2703209&language=en>

- **Egyptian abroad to vote in presidential elections on March 16-18**

The countdown for Egyptian expats voting in the 2018 presidential elections has begun as the voting process is set to kick off on Friday March 16 and will last until Sunday March 18.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/egyptian-abroad-to-vote-in-presidential-elections-on-march-16-18/>

- **Militant threat emerges in Egyptian desert**

The desolate terrain of Egypt's Western Desert is emerging as a new frontier in the global fight against terrorism. Militant groups linked to the Islamic State and al-Qaida are using the desert as both a haven and a crossing point for smuggling fighters, weapons and illicit goods from Libya, where lawlessness rules.

More Details:

<https://www.stripes.com/news/africa/militant-threat-emerges-in-egyptian-desert-1.516827>

- **Egypt's Sisi calls on citizens to vote, meets with top officials to review security situation**

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi called on Egyptians to participate in large numbers in the upcoming presidential elections in order to continue "building the nation," speaking at a meeting with top security officials at the interior ministry on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/292786/-.aspx>

- **Egypt expects tourism upsurge ahead of vote**

Egypt is seeing a promising rebound in tourism following devastating jihadist attacks, in welcome news to the government of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as he seeks re-election this month. In the eastern Red Sea city of Hurghada, tourists lounge on sunbeds on the beach or play volleyball as boats carrying divers pass by.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87681>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Morocco, Serbia sign deals to step up bilateral cooperation**

Morocco and Serbia signed Wednesday two cooperation agreements in the areas of diplomatic training and culture. These agreements were inked by the Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita and his Serbian counterpart Ivica Dacic, who is on a working visit to the North African kingdom.

More details:

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/15/c_137039567.htm

- **PM briefs Cabinet on outcome of visit to Morocco**

Iran intends to again accuse the United States of violating the landmark 2015 nuclear accord between Tehran and world powers at next week's meeting on the agreement in Vienna. "The U.S. is regularly violating the nuclear deal and this is a source of concern for Iran. Therefore, we will raise this issue in Vienna," Iranian Ambassador to Britain Hamid Baeidinejad.

More details:

<http://www.gulf-times.com/story/585195/PM-briefs-Cabinet-on-outcome-of-visit-to-Morocco>

- **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. Following his talks with visiting Chairperson of African Union (AU) Commission Moussa Faki in Algiers, Messahel told reporters that the meeting will be held on April 9, as it has been approved by the AU Peace and Security Council in September 2014 to enhance cooperation in combating terrorism among the African states.

More details:

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

- **Minority Rights In Algeria: Tension Among Tuareg Chiefs**

The rugged Hoggar mountains, stretching over an expanse of the Sahara desert in southern Algeria, are home to a large ethnic Tuareg population that has long been marginalized at the hands of the country's Arab majority.

More details:

<https://www.worldcrunch.com/culture-society/minority-rights-in-algeria-tension-among-tuareg-chiefs>

- **UAE used \$30 billion of Libya frozen assets to support strongman Haftar, The New Arab**

The New Arab unveiled Wednesday that the United Arab Emirates has used the Libyan frozen assets that are worth 50 billion dollars at its banks to send money to Khalifa Haftar and build his military empire in eastern Libya.

More details:

<http://www.libyanexpress.com/uae-used-30-billion-of-libya-frozen-assets-to-support-strongman-haftar-the-new-arab/>

- **Libya issues arrest warrants for over 200 alleged traffickers**

Libya has issued arrest warrants for more than 200 Libyans and foreigners suspected of involvement in a smuggling network for Europe-bound migrants.

More details:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-5501299/Libya-issues-arrest-warrants-200-alleged-traffickers.html>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **EU Envoy Urges Countries to Bring Taliban to Talks Table**

In an address to journalists after a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Kobia said there is a window of opportunity the Taliban needs to make use of.

More details:

<https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/eu-envoy-urges-countries-bring-taliban-talks-table>

- **Group of Anti-Government Militias Join Peace Process**

A group of 6 armed oppositions by understanding true put down their hand weapons and joined peace process in Daikundi province yesterday.

More details:

<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/tech/item/32382-group-of-anti-government-militias-join-peace-process.html>

- **Suicide attack in Lahore of Pakistan leaves 9 dead, 25 wounded**

At least nine people were killed and twenty five others were wounded in a suicide attack in Lahore city in Punjab province of Pakistan.

More details:

<https://www.khaama.com/suicide-attack-in-lahore-of-pakistan-leaves-9-dead-25-wounded-04654/>

- **SC indicts State Interior Minister Tallal Chaudry for contempt of court**

The Supreme Court indicted on Thursday State Interior Minister Tallal Chaudry's for contempt of court. A three-judge bench headed by Justice Ejaz Afzal Khan read out the charges against the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader, to which Chaudry pleaded not guilty.

More details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/186449-sc-indicts-state-interior-minister-tallal-chaudry-for-contempt-of-court>

- **Karachi nuclear power plants heavily protected: IAEA chief**

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Yukiya Amano has praised the arrangements made for the security of nuclear power plants operating in Karachi.

More details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1395361/karachi-nuclear-power-plants-heavily-protected-iaea-chief>

- **Arghandiwal defies Hekmatyar, vows to continue political activities for HIA**

The senior member of Hezb-e-Islami Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal reacted at Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's decision for his removal from the leadership council of the party as he insisted that no one has the right to remove him.

More details:

<https://www.khaama.com/arghandiwal-defies-hekmatyar-vows-to-continue-political-activities-for-hia-04655/>

- **Abdul Does Not Celebrate Norouz': Anti-Norouz Campaign Prompts Backlash In Afghanistan**

An online campaign in Afghanistan calling for the boycott of the ancient festival of Norouz has prompted a backlash among many Afghans, who have vented their exasperation at the growing influence of fundamentalist Islamic ideology in the war-torn country.

More details:

<https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-anti-norouz-campaign-backlash-islamists/29100380.html>

- **Our strength lies in unity, says President Ghani**

President Ashraf Ghani emphasized on political patience on Wednesday in order to allow opportunities to increase, saying the strength of Afghans lied in their unity.

Speaking at a gathering marking the 23th death anniversary of Abdul Ali Mazari, the president said the national unity government (NUG) was created to preserve unity and end disunity. It was created for welfare, peace and stability of the country, the president said.

More details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/03/14/our-strength-lies-unity-says-president-ghani>

10. TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkish defense companies clinch key deals in Qatar**

Turkey's leading defense firms have announced significant agreements with Qatari officials on the sidelines of a sector exhibition in Doha, pledging to deliver key products, including drones and armored vehicles.

More details:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-build-two-training-warships-for-qatar-navy-128714>

- **Turkish jets destroy 8 terror targets in northern Iraq**

Turkish jets have destroyed eight terrorist targets in northern Iraq, the military said on Thursday morning. The airstrikes were carried out on Wednesday in northern Iraq's Hakurk and Zap regions,

the Turkish General Staff said in a statement. Turkish strikes in this region normally target PKK terrorists.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/199823/turkish-jets-destroy-8-terror-targets-in-northern-iraq>

- **Turkey establishes security in almost 70 percent of Syria's Afrin**

Over 70 percent of Syria's Afrin region has been secured during an ongoing border security mission, Turkey's presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said in a live interview with the TRT Haber news channel on Thursday. Turkey launched Operation Olive Branch on January 20 to clear the Afrin enclave in northwestern Syria from the YPG, which Turkey says is linked to the PKK. The PKK is considered to be a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the US and the EU.

More Details:

<https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/turkey-establishes-security-in-almost-70-percent-of-syria-s-afrin-15934>

- **Turkish army, FSA liberate 9 more villages in Afrin**

The Turkish military and Free Syrian Army (FSA) on Thursday liberated nine more villages in northwestern Syria from the control of YPG/PKK terrorists. According to Anadolu Agency correspondents on the ground, the villages of Kafr Shil, Birka, Ali Jaro, Humuraju, Korzlu, Juqur, Naz, Zarkanli and Balal in Afrin were cleared of terrorists during the ongoing Operation Olive Branch.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkish-army-fsa-liberate-9-more-villages-in-afrin/1089550>

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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