



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

Energy Security

Enerji Güvenliđi

Economy News

Ekonomi Haberleri

Peace Process

Barıő Süreci

Ethnic and Secterian Groups

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

Non State Actors

Devlet-dıő Aktörler

Relations with the West

Batı'yla İliőkiler

1. IRAQ.....	4
• Iraqi Turkmen official shot dead in Iraq	4
• The Electoral Commission Calls on the Parliament to Expedite the Ratification OF the Parliamentary Elections' Date	4
• Security forces apprehend two terrorists, defuse bombs west of Baghdad.....	4
• Generations for Peace and UNFPA Launch New Partnership in Iraq	4
• Iran reopens border checkpoint with Iraq	5
• Iraqi PM: Kurdistan Government has promised to hand over customs and border crossings	5
• Senior security officials urge people to overthrow Shiite parties	5
• ISIS claims 771 suicide attacks in Iraq, Syria in 2017.....	5
• Islamic State Returns to Guerrilla Warfare in Iraq and Syria	6
• KRG ready to collaborate with Iraq over borders, airports based on constitution.....	6
• Iraq to spend USD 100 bln on rebuilding	6
• Dreaded, sadistic ISIS executioner reportedly captured in Iraq; could be executed himself	6
• Pro-Iran PMU factions prepare for electoral battle in Iraq	7
• IDP crisis costing Iraq \$500m annually since 2014.....	7
• Abadi: I won't allow the KRG to receive 17% budget share By Rudaw 13 hours ago	7
• Three lawyers working on IS-related cases killed in Iraq	8
• Iran, Iraq emphasize broadening bilateral ties in all fields	8
2. SYRIA.....	8
• Government air raids intensify in Syria's Eastern Ghouta.....	8
• Frenchwoman on US terror blacklist detained in Syria.....	8
• Kazakhstan transferred over 185 mln tenge to Syria of humanitarian aid	9
• SDF Releases Scores of ISIL Members in Northeastern Syria	9
• Under-reported: Syria's peace process and the West's absence.....	9
• Russian military helicopter crashes in Syria, killing two.....	9
• Brothers in arms: Syria's opposition say Iran protests echo their own struggle for freedom ..	10
3. IRAN.....	10
• France 'worried' about Iran unrest.....	10
• Iran accuses 'enemies' as US seeks emergency UN session.....	10
• Death penalty calls for Iran protesters.....	11
• EU regrets demonstrations' victims in Iran	11
• Unblocking telegram in Iran subject to removal of pro-terrorism channels.....	11
• Public Prosecutor: CIA, Mossad Spy Agencies, Saudi Petrodollars behind Iran's Unrests	11
• Culture minister praises media role in recent Iran unrests.....	12
• Trump ready to impose sanctions on Iran's Revolutionary Guard as state crackdown on protesters intensifies.....	12
4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE.....	12
• Trump threatens to cut off US aid to Palestine	12
• Palestinian Injured by Shrapnel in Nablus, Settlers Erect Tents	13



ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES
مركز الشرق الأوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية

• Abbas adviser: Trump's twitter storm on aid has 'absolutely no justification'	13
• Israeli settlers set up tents on Palestinian land in Nablus area.....	13
• Israeli forces detain 20 Palestinians from West Bank, Jerusalem	13
• Nour Tamimi remains imprisoned as Israeli military prosecution files appeal	14
• Palestinians say Jerusalem 'not for sale' after Trump aid threat	14
• Israel 'confiscates' money from Palestinians in occupied West Bank and Jerusalem	14
5. JORDAN and LEBANON.....	15
• Effective foreign diplomacy behind Jordan's survival — PM	15
• Army foils drug smuggling attempt	15
• Hariri, Hizbullah Reportedly Seek Mediation to Resolve Seniority Decree Row.....	15
• Kanaan after Maronite bishops meeting says seeking solutions to soaring scholastic fees.....	16
• PM Hariri trying to resolve Aoun, Berri crisis	16
• Jordan: Israel denying the region peace	16
• Amid shifting regional alliances, will Jordan open up to Iran?.....	16
• Jordan allocates initial \$2 million for joint pipeline project with Israel	17
6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA.....	17
• Sleepless in Yemen: Living in fear of Saudi air strikes	17
• Previously detained ex-finance minister Assaf seen at Saudi cabinet meeting	17
• Saudi Arabia: UN rights experts condemn 'repression' of activists.....	18
• Saudi Arabia and Cyprus enhance relations.....	18
• Norway suspends arms exports to UAE over Yemen War	18
• Yemen calls for int'l investigation into Saudi war crimes.....	19
• Bahrain arrests death-row activist amid protests	19
• Kuwait, Bahrain promote, boost diplomatic relations	19
7. EGYPT.....	19
• Egypt extends state of emergency for three months	19
• Egypt files murder charges against man held for Coptic Church attack	20
• Egypt's external debt rises by 41%.....	20
• Saudi Arabia, Egypt discuss relations	20
• Egypt's NEC to announce timeline of this year's presidential election next Monday.....	20
• Al-Sisi ratifies new law to regulate youth centres.....	21
• 400 children participate in activities against gender discrimination.....	21
• Pence visit to Egypt remains in plans: vice president office	21
• Death Penalties, Death Sentences on the Rise in Egypt.....	22
8. NORTH AFRICA.....	22
• Emirates suspends Dubai-Tunis flights after security row	22
• How Morocco has weakened its press, pushing readers to social media for news.....	22
• Morocco Bolsters its F16 Jets with AMRAAM Missiles	22
• Parliament passes bill on granting special leave to public officials running as candidate for elections	23
• HoR member Emhimed Shoaib appointed ambassador to Spain	23
• 91 terrorists killed, 40 others arrested in 2017	23
• Tunisia removes immunity of former Interior Minister Najem Gharsalli.....	23
• AFRICOM Expects ISIS Attack on Libya's Oil Crescent	24

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN	24
• Crisis looms over PML-N’s Balochistan govt.....	24
• Ahsan Iqbal reminds Trump of Soviet-Afghan War, calls it the root cause of modern conflict	24
• NDS hits back at ousted Balkh governor’s accusations	25
• Suspected terrorists killed in Karachi encounter were affiliated with TTP: sources.....	25
• Afghan soldiers and militants suffer casualties in Laghman clash	25
• “We Should Change 1397 To Year of Nationwide Education Drive,” President Ghani	25
• US Plans More Offensive Afghan Strategy	26
10. TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST	26
• Erdoğan highlights importance of stability in Iran in phone conversation with Rouhani.....	26
• Turkey and Qatar: Behind the strategic alliance	26
• Turkey condemns killing of Iraqi Turkmen official	27

1. IRAQ

- **Iraqi Turkmen official shot dead in Iraq**

An Iraqi Turkmen Front official was assassinated by unknown gunmen in northern Iraq's Kirkuk city, police said Tuesday. Capt. Hamed al-Obeidi told Anadolu Agency: "Alaa al-Din al-Salihi [also known as al-Bayati], a Turkmen Front official, has been shot dead in the Al-Askari neighborhood in Kirkuk by unknown gunmen." He added the gunmen fled after shooting him dead.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/iraqi-turkmen-official-shot-dead-in-iraq/1020982>

- **The Electoral Commission Calls on the Parliament to Expedite the Ratification OF the Parliamentary Elections' Date**

The Electoral Commission called on the House of Representatives to speed up the ratification of the date of parliamentary elections. A member of the Board of Commissioners, spokesperson for the Commission, Karim al-Tamimi said in a press statement "The Commission sent a letter to the House of Representatives for the purpose of approving the date of parliamentary elections set by the Council of Ministers on 2018/5/12."

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?spRpdJ3Jw%252fAf8CoDraRWxQ%253d%253d

- **Security forces apprehend two terrorists, defuse bombs west of Baghdad**

Security forces arrested on Wednesday two terrorists and dismantled a large amount of explosive charges in different parts of Baghdad, a military command said. "Two terrorists were apprehended in Abu Gharib area west of Baghdad," the Baghdad Operations Command said in a statement, a copy of which was obtained by Baghdad Today on Wednesday.

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/security-forces-apprehend-two-terrorists-defuse-bombs-west-baghdad/>

- **Generations for Peace and UNFPA Launch New Partnership in Iraq**

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Iraq and Generations For Peace have launched a new partnership to support transformational leadership training for youth leaders from six cities in Iraq. The partnership is UNFPA's first-ever support to Generations For Peace. This collaboration aims at training youth leaders in transformational leadership, to prepare them to lead trust-building

activities in their own communities to overcome conflict and foster social cohesion and resilience as part of Iraq's recovery and development effort.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/404239>

- **Iran reopens border checkpoint with Iraq**

Iran has reopened Parvizkhan border crossings with Iraq's northern Kurdistan region after closing the border checkpoint at Baghdad's request in response to the secession referendum in the area back in October. The governor-general for Iran's western province of Kermanshah, Houshang Bazvand, has said that officials reopened the border checkpoint on Tuesday morning, Mehr news agency reported.

More Details:

http://www.shafaaq.com/en/En_NewsReader/c4fbf6ae-1b2d-4a9b-8abf-674c3579f13d

- **Iraqi PM: Kurdistan Government has promised to hand over customs and border crossings**

The Iraqi government announced the approval of the Kurdistan region to hand over the international border with Turkey and Iran to the federal authority, based on the desire of the region to resolve the crisis caused by the referendum, according to the Iraqi constitution.

More Details:

http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=42459

- **Senior security officials urge people to overthrow Shiite parties**

Senior officers within the ministry of interior on Tuesday called on the Iraqis to take to the streets to unseat the Shiite parties working for Iran. They also accused these parties of spilling the blood of Iraqis and squandering the country's resources over the past 14 years.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/21823/Exclusive-Senior-security-officials-urge-people-to-overthrow-Shiite-parties>

- **ISIS claims 771 suicide attacks in Iraq, Syria in 2017**

The so-called Islamic State's (ISIS) official media wing alleged on Tuesday that their terrorist carried out 771 suicide bombings in both Iraq and Syria. According to Al-Amaq, ISIS carried out 493 suicide attacks against the Iraqi Armed Forces, 136 against the Kurdish forces in Syria, 120 against the Syrian

Arab Army (SAA) and their pro-government allies, and finally 22 against the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and other rebel groups.

More Details:

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/isis-claims-771-suicide-attacks-iraq-syria-2017/>

- **Islamic State Returns to Guerrilla Warfare in Iraq and Syria**

Despite Syrian and Iraqi claims of victory over Islamic State, thousands of militants still holed up in both countries have mounted a number of recent guerrilla-style attacks on civilians and military forces, according to the U.S.-led coalition fighting the extremist group and others.

More Details:

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-returns-to-guerrilla-warfare-in-iraq-and-syria-1514889000>

- **KRG ready to collaborate with Iraq over borders, airports based on constitution**

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) welcomes any positive steps to begin a dialogue between the Kurdistan Region and Iraq, a spokesperson said on Tuesday. In a statement on the KRG website, spokesperson Safeen Dizayee reiterated Kurdistan's position on seeking peaceful ways to resolving the issues between Erbil and Baghdad through negotiations.

More Details:

<http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/124c5a78-c747-4c21-8199-7304bc5fd0e0>

- **Iraq to spend USD 100 bln on rebuilding**

The Iraqi Government on Tuesday launched a 10-year reconstruction plan tentatively estimated at USD 100 billion. Prime Minister Haidar Al-Abadi said at a news conference that the 2018-2028 scheme is designed to rebuild key facilities and boost development in all governorates.

More Details:

<https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2681549&Language=en>

- **Dreaded, sadistic ISIS executioner reportedly captured in Iraq; could be executed himself**

A white-bearded ISIS militant who presided over the killings of dozens of gay men and others who ran afoul of the so-called "caliphate" was captured in the Iraqi city of Mosul last week, according to

reports. Abu Omer was arrested after locals in Mosul tipped security forces off to his hideout in the city, the Iran-based AhlulBayt News Agency (ANBA) reported, citing Iraqi media outlets.

More Details:

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/02/dreaded-sadistic-isis-executioner-reportedly-captured-in-iraq-could-be-executed-himself.html>

- **Pro-Iran PMU factions prepare for electoral battle in Iraq**

As the Iraqi parliamentary elections set for May draw nearer, many Iraqis are concerned about the potential participation of a coalition of pro-Iran political and military movements. Ahmed al-Asadi, secretary-general of Kata'ib Jund al-Imam (the Imam's Soldiers' Battalions), announced Nov. 28 the launch of the Mujahedeen Coalition. The alliance comprises the main political factions whose volunteers and leaders helped form the Iran-backed Popular Mobilization Units (PMU). Asadi also announced he was resigning as PMU spokesman to instead serve as the Mujahedeen Coalition's spokesman.

More Details:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/12/pmu-shiite-militia-iraq-election-sistani-abadi.html>

- **IDP crisis costing Iraq \$500m annually since 2014**

Iraq announced victory over Daesh late last year but the country is still facing a number of challenges including the return of the internally-displaced persons. In an exclusive interview with Press TV, Iraq's Minister of Displacement and Migration says the IDP crisis costs the Iraqi government five-hundred million dollars annually.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/03/547662/IDP-crisis-costing-Iraq-500m-annually-since-2014>

- **Abadi: I won't allow the KRG to receive 17% budget share By Rudaw 13 hours ago**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said he will refuse to allow the Iraqi parliament change the KRG's share of the 2018 budget. He insisted Erbil's demand for 17 percent belongs in the past, but assured his commitment to paying the salaries of KRG employees despite "big problems" with the payroll lists. "We have now set the share of the [Region] to one based on the population ratio. There is justice in it," Abadi said on Tuesday.

More Details:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/020120181>

- **Three lawyers working on IS-related cases killed in Iraq**

Three lawyers were shot and killed in Iraq's northern Nineveh Province by attackers believed to have ties with the Islamic State (IS), local police sources said on Tuesday. According to police officers in the province, the deadly assault took place on the main road linking the city of Mosul and the Hamam al-Alil district, south of Nineveh.

More Details:

<http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/6b8526cb-5b28-4301-84bd-0aba83d968ef>

- **Iran, Iraq emphasize broadening bilateral ties in all fields**

In his meeting with Speaker of Iraqi Parliament in Baghdad Salim al-Jabouri on Tuesday, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi called on enhancing bilateral ties between the two countries. The two sides also exchanged their views on the political and security developments in Iraq and region as well as bilateral cooperation in all arenas.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/130897/Iran-Iraq-emphasize-broadening-bilateral-ties-in-all-fields>

2. SYRIA

- **Government air raids intensify in Syria's Eastern Ghouta**

The videos show chaotic scenes: first responders rush to evacuate wounded civilians in a marketplace, while others pull an injured man, covered in dust, out of the rubble of a stone home and onto a stretcher. Dozens of people have been killed in a recent spike in violence in Syria.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/syria-government-air-strikes-intensify-ghouta-180102145701397.html>

- **Frenchwoman on US terror blacklist detained in Syria**

Emilie Koenig, a Frenchwoman suspected of recruiting fighters for the Islamic State (IS) group who figured on US and UN blacklists, has been arrested by Kurdish forces in Syria, her mother said Tuesday. The 33-year-old daughter of a gendarme is "being held in a Kurdish camp and has been interrogated and tortured," her mother told Ouest-France newspaper.

More Details:

<http://www.france24.com/en/20180103-frenchwoman-islamic-state-group-terror-blacklist-detained-syria>

- **Kazakhstan transferred over 185 mln tenge to Syria of humanitarian aid**

Kazakhstan has transferred over 185 mln tenge of humanitarian aid to Syria according to the order N857 dated December 20 2017. "185 mln 617 thousand tenge have been provided from Kazakhstani state material reserve for the official humanitarian aid to Syria," reads the message.

More Details:

<http://www.kaztag.kz/en/news/detail.php?ID=589741>

- **SDF Releases Scores of ISIL Members in Northeastern Syria**

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have released over 25 ISIL members, and started a fresh wave of arrests against civilians in camps under their control in Raqqa province, local sources reported on Wednesday. The sources said that the SDF has freed 26 ISIL members that had been previously captured in the town of Ein Issa in Northern Raqqa. The sources further said that SDF has, instead, started arresting civilians in a camp near Ein Issa.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961013000521>

- **Under-reported: Syria's peace process and the West's absence**

As the tragic Syrian civil war enters its seventh year, the British media can be commended for keeping the war in the headlines, especially in terms of spotlighting regime atrocities against civilians. The media has also capably covered two major unintended consequences of this relentless war: the massive migration flows that surged across Europe in 2015-16 as well as the growth of the so-called Islamic State, which metastasized in Iraq and Syria due to the civil war.

More Details:

<https://unherd.com/2018/01/reported-syrias-peace-process-west-absence/>

- **Russian military helicopter crashes in Syria, killing two**

A Russian military MI-24 helicopter crashed in Syria on Dec. 31 due to a technical fault, killing both pilots, Russian news agencies cited the Ministry of Defense as saying on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://en.apa.az/world-news/cis-countries-news/russian-military-helicopter-crashes-in-syria-killing-two.html>

- **Brothers in arms: Syria's opposition say Iran protests echo their own struggle for freedom**

Syria's main opposition group said on Tuesday they stand in solidarity with anti-government protesters in Iran, who have held nearly a week of demonstrations against the Tehran regime. The Syrian National Coalition statement said the opposition "stands by the [Iranian] people" in their struggle and condemned Tehran's "brutal crackdown" against protesters, which has cost at least 21 lives.

More Details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/blog/2018/1/2/syrias-opposition-say-iran-protests-echo-their-own-struggle>

3. IRAN

- **France 'worried' about Iran unrest**

French President Emmanuel Macron Tuesday expressed his concern over unrest in Iran during a telephone conversation with counterpart Hassan Rouhani and called for "restraint and appeasement," his office said. Macron brought up "the number of victims from the demonstrations", and the two leaders also decided to postpone French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian's visit to Tehran this week to a later date, the Elysee said.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86622>

- **Iran accuses 'enemies' as US seeks emergency UN session**

Iran's supreme leader has blamed external "enemies" for heightening turmoil in the country, as the death toll in ongoing nationwide anti-government rallies has passed 20. The comments by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's top authority, came on Tuesday hours before the US said that it would seek emergency United Nations talks on the protests in the Islamic republic.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/iran-khamenei-blames-enemies-death-toll-rises-180102145255360.html>

- **Death penalty calls for Iran protesters**

Pro-government rallies in several Iranian cities have drawn thousands of marchers. It follows six days of rarely-seen unrest that have caught the country's leaders off-guard. State television has broadcast live footage of rallies in Kermansheh, Ilam and Gorgan. Marchers waved Iranian flags and pictures of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

More Details:

http://www.euronews.com/2018/01/03/death-penalty-calls-for-iran-protesters?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+euronews%2Fn%2Fnews+%28euronews+-+news+-+en%29

- **EU regrets demonstrations' victims in Iran**

The European Union has expressed its regret at the number of victims killed in demonstrations in Iran, calling on all concerned parties to refrain from any acts of violence. The European Union affirmed in a statement today that it is closely monitoring ongoing demonstrations in Iran, increasing violence and unacceptable loss of human lives.

More Details:

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewfullstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1705067>

- **Unblocking telegram in Iran subject to removal of pro-terrorism channels**

Minister of Communications and Information Technology (ICT) Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi, said that pro-terrorist media are banned all over the world and Iran will not allow these channels to operate in Iran. "What's clear is the fact that the good capacity created for developing entrepreneurship, job market, and business was abused by a small group and the consequences were visible in the last days," said Minister of Communications and Information Technology (ICT) Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/130899/Unblocking-telegram-in-Iran-subject-to-removal-of-pro-terrorism>

- **Public Prosecutor: CIA, Mossad Spy Agencies, Saudi Petrodollars behind Iran's Unrests**

Iranian Public Prosecutor Mohammad Jafar Montazeri underlined that Saudi Arabia has financed the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Israel's Mossad to fish from troubled waters in Iran's street protests. "The dignity and status of our beloved nation is much higher than being put in the same category with rioters and we have to distinguish between those who have legitimate demands and

those who are seeking anarchy," Montazeri said while underlining that Iran's judiciary system will meticulously trial and punish those who are seeking unrests in the country.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961013000627>

- **Culture minister praises media role in recent Iran unrests**

Iran minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, appreciating the Iranian media for the role they played in recent Iran unrests, saying that the media did their duty well regarding the events. 'Media as the fifth pillar of social life plays a leading role in controlling the critical conditions,' Abbas Salehi-Amiri told reporters after the cabinet session held in the Iranian capital this morning.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82784662>

- **Trump ready to impose sanctions on Iran's Revolutionary Guard as state crackdown on protesters intensifies**

White House adviser Kellyanne Conway has said that the Trump administration is ready to impose sanctions on Iran if Tehran continues to crackdown on protests - and they'll likely target the Islamic Revolutionary Guard. President Donald Trump is rooting for anti-government protesters despite the risk of helping Iranian authorities dismiss the demonstrations as the product of American instigation.

More Details:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5231277/Trump-impose-sanctions-Irans-Revolutionary-Guard.html>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Trump threatens to cut off US aid to Palestine**

U.S. President Donald Trump threatened late Tuesday to cut off U.S. aid money to Palestine and acknowledged that the Middle East peace process appears to be stalled. Trump said in a pair of tweets "we pay the Palestinians HUNDRED OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS a year and get no appreciation or respect. They don't even want to negotiate a long overdue ... peace treaty with Israel."

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2018/01/03/trump-threatens-to-cut-off-us-aid-to-palestine>

- **Palestinian Injured by Shrapnel in Nablus, Settlers Erect Tents**

A Palestinian was injured by bullet shrapnel on Tuesday, during clashes which broke out with Israeli soldiers in Salem village, to the east of Nablus, said medical sources. Ahmad Jibrel, head of the ambulance and emergency department of the Red Crescent in Nablus, told Wafa that paramedic crews dealt with a shrapnel injury during clashes that erupted in Salem village, with Israeli forces.

More Details:

<http://imemc.org/article/palestinian-injured-by-shrapnel-in-nablus-settlers-erect-tents/>

- **Abbas adviser: Trump's twitter storm on aid has 'absolutely no justification'**

US President Donald Trump's tweets threatening to cut aid to the Palestinians have "absolutely no justification," a senior Palestinian official said Wednesday. Late Tuesday evening, Trump tweeted "with the Palestinians no longer willing to talk peace, why should we make any of these massive future payments to them," referring to the hundreds of millions of dollars the US makes in aid payments for the benefit of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Abbas-adviser-Trumps-Twitter-storm-on-aid-has-absolutely-no-justification-532695>

- **Israeli settlers set up tents on Palestinian land in Nablus area**

Israeli settlers on Tuesday set up tents on Palestinian-owned land in the northern occupied West Bank district of Nablus, seemingly marking the beginnings of a new illegal settlement outpost. Official Palestinian Authority (PA)-owned Wafa news agency reported that settlers from the illegal Elon Moreh settlement set up tents in the Ras al-Ein area east of the Deir al-Hatab village, and fenced off the area.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=779714>

- **Israeli forces detain 20 Palestinians from West Bank, Jerusalem**

Israeli forces Wednesday conducted multiple predawn raids across the West Bank and Jerusalem, detaining 20 Palestinians, said the Palestinian Prisoner's Society (PPS). Israeli forces detained seven Palestinians after ransacking their family homes during separate raids into Yaabad and Qabatiya towns, south of the northern West Bank city of Jenin.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=En04q6a95895777021aEn04q6>

- **Nour Tamimi remains imprisoned as Israeli military prosecution files appeal**

Nour Tamimi, the cousin of Ahd Tamimi who was scheduled to be released on bail today after being charged by an Israeli military court on 1 January, instead remains imprisoned after occupation military prosecutors appealed her release. According to Naji Tamimi, Nour's father, the military prosecution filed the appeal on 2 January, minutes before Nour was to be released; a military appeals court hearing will be held in the coming days. Nour, 21, was seized by occupation forces a day after Ahd and her mother Nariman; she is charged with Ahd for confronting occupation soldiers on their family's land outside their home in the village of Nabi Saleh shortly after their cousin Mohammed, 14, was shot in the head with a rubber-coated metal bullet by occupation forces, critically injuring him.

More Details:

<http://samidoun.net/2018/01/nour-tamimi-remains-imprisoned-as-israeli-military-prosecution-files-appeal/>

- **Palestinians say Jerusalem 'not for sale' after Trump aid threat**

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's office said Wednesday Jerusalem is "not for sale" after US President Donald Trump threatened to cut annual aid of more than \$300 million to force them to the negotiating table. "Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the state of Palestine and it is not for sale for gold or billions," Abbas spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeina told AFP, referring to Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

More Details:

<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2018/01/03/Palestinians-say-Jerusalem-not-for-sale-after-trump-aid-threat-.html>

- **Israel 'confiscates' money from Palestinians in occupied West Bank and Jerusalem**

Israel's occupation forces have "confiscated" thousands of Israeli Shekels from Palestinians in several cities across the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, Felesteen.ps reported on Tuesday. The money was taken on the pretext that it was intended for "funding terror activities". Local sources pointed out that the Israeli occupation forces have, over the past three months, also taken 14 large items of machinery, four lorries and 20 other vehicles, four cameras, eight PCs and four mobile phones owned by Palestinian citizens. They added that 14 instances have been recorded of Israeli troops taking NIS 213,000 (\$61,700) as well as jewellery from Palestinian-owned homes and shops.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180103-israel-confiscates-money-from-palestinians-in-occupied-west-bank-and-jerusalem/>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Effective foreign diplomacy behind Jordan's survival — PM**

Prime Minister Hani Mulki on Tuesday met with Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi and a number of ambassadors and senior officials at the Foreign Ministry, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. During the meeting, Mulki stressed the importance of the ministry's role in implementing the Jordanian foreign policy in line with His Majesty King Abdulla's vision that is dedicated to defend the Arab and Muslim nations' causes, in addition to serving Jordan's interests and enhancing its role in facing with the challenges within a moderate and balanced approach.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/effective-foreign-diplomacy-behind-jordan%E2%80%99s-survival-%E2%80%94-pm>

- **Army foils drug smuggling attempt**

The northern military command, in coordination with the Anti-Narcotic Department and the Military Security Department on Monday foiled an attempt to smuggle large quantities of drugs into the Kingdom, a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army source said. The surveillance troops on the northern front line spotted 7 persons trying to cross into the Kingdom from Syria, the army source said, adding that the troops immediately dealt with the situation in accordance with the rules of engagement and forced the infiltrators to flee back into Syria.

More Details:

http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=36880#.Wky8dFVl_cs

- **Hariri, Hizbullah Reportedly Seek Mediation to Resolve Seniority Decree Row**

Prime Minister Saad Hariri and Hizbullah are reportedly trying to mediate a solution for the crisis that emerged between President Michel Aoun and Speaker Nabih Berri over the signing of a promotion of a number of officers, media reports said on Wednesday. Al-Mustaqbal daily quoted ministerial sources who said that "Hariri is trying to coordinate a solution between Aoun and Berri and plans to visit Ain el-Tineh (Berri's residence) this week."

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/240374-hariri-hizbullah-reportedly-seek-mediation-to-resolve-seniority-decree-row>

- **Kanaan after Maronite bishops meeting says seeking solutions to soaring scholastic fees**

Member of Parliament, Ibrahim Kanaan, took part on Wednesday in the Maronite Bishops' meeting after which he gave a statement explaining that the gathering had been an occasion to raise some concerns over different issues, especially the soaring scholastic fees. "There are a lot of financial, economic and social issues of interest to the Maronite Patriarch and bishops, most importantly the scholastic fees and the salary scale," Kanaan said, confirming a full understanding on how to deal with these issues in cooperation with other political blocs.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/86936/Kanaan-after-Maronite-Bishops-meeting-says-seeking-solutions-to-soaring-scholastic-fees>

- **PM Hariri trying to resolve Aoun, Berri crisis**

Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri is reportedly planning to visit Ain el Tinah prior to this week's cabinet session to seek a solution to the crisis between Speaker Nabih Berri and president and President Michel Aoun, according to media reports.

More Details:

<http://yalibnan.com/2018/01/02/pm-hariri-trying-to-resolve-aoun-berri-crisis/>

- **Jordan: Israel denying the region peace**

Jordan's Foreign Minister, Ayman Safadi, on Tuesday blasted Israel, after the Knesset approved the "United Jerusalem Bill" and the Likud Central Committee voted in favor of applying Israeli sovereignty over Judea and Samaria. "Knesset approval of amended Basic Law on Jerusalem and decision by ruling party to annex settlements and impose sovereignty on West Bank are null and void under international law," he tweeted.

More Details:

<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/240169>

- **Amid shifting regional alliances, will Jordan open up to Iran?**

As Jordanians bade farewell to an exceptionally bad year for the kingdom in terms of worsening economic and social conditions, forecasts for 2018 were noticeably not optimistic. Parliament is expected to pass a controversial state budget that will approve an International Monetary Fund (IMF) mandated suspension of subsidies that will include bread — an essential daily staple for millions of Jordanians. In addition, a draft income tax law will limit exemptions for paying income tax and lower the threshold for those who will have to pay the tax. Economic growth remains sluggish and the state

budget continues to suffer from deficits, while foreign and local debt has passed the \$36 billion mark. Economists have warned that foreign aid to the kingdom might also decrease in 2018.

More Details:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/01/jordan-iran-alliance-jerusalem-israel.html>

- **Jordan allocates initial \$2 million for joint pipeline project with Israel**

Jordan has allocated 1.5 million dinars (around \$2.1 million) in the 2018 national budget for a gas pipeline linking the Hashemite Kingdom with Israel. According to Al-Ghad newspaper on Sunday, the cost of the joint Jordanian-Israeli project is expected to rise to 3 million dinars (\$4.2 million) in 2019, and to 6 million dinars (\$8.5 million) by 2020. The pipeline will pass over the Sheikh Hussein border crossing, 90 km from Amman. In September 2016, Jordan's government-owned National Electric Power Company (NEPCO) and Noble Energy signed an agreement to import 40 per cent of the Kingdom's electricity-generating needs from Israel. Noble Energy owns 39 per cent of the Leviathan natural gas field in Israeli territorial waters.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180102-jordan-allocates-initial-2-million-for-joint-pipeline-project-with-israel/>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Sleepless in Yemen: Living in fear of Saudi air strikes**

The hum of warplanes over Sanaa's sky is almost constant, stalking Anas Shahari's thoughts as he tries to maintain his daily routine in the face of Yemen's war. It is not the murmur of jet engines flying thousands of feet above him that keep the 30-year-old awake at night, but rather the fear of a more consuming sound - that of an explosion.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/sleepless-yemen-living-fear-saudi-air-strikes-180101091927567.html>

- **Previously detained ex-finance minister Assaf seen at Saudi cabinet meeting**

Saudi state minister Ibrahim al-Assaf was seen attending a cabinet meeting on Tuesday, according to a photograph published on official media, almost two months after the veteran official was reported detained in a crackdown on corruption. There was no immediate comment from Saudi officials, but a Saudi source familiar with the matter said Assaf retained his positions as minister of state and adviser to the king.

More Details:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-corruption/previosly-detained-ex-finance-minister-assaf-seen-at-saudi-cabinet-meeting-idUSKBN1ER0Z4?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>

- **Saudi Arabia: UN rights experts condemn 'repression' of activists**

A group of United Nations human rights experts on Tuesday condemned Saudi Arabia's use of counterterrorism and security-related laws to justify the recent arrests of prominent human rights activists. In a rare instance of UN criticism directed at the Saudi kingdom, a panel of five independent experts reported that more than 60 prominent activists — including clerics, journalists and academics — had been detained since September.

More Details:

<http://www.dw.com/en/saudi-arabia-un-rights-experts-condemn-repression-of-activists/a-42005927>

- **Saudi Arabia and Cyprus enhance relations**

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Cyprus have become closer under the leadership of President Nicos Anastasiades, Abdul Latif Bin Rashid Al Zayani, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) said on Wednesday. According to an announcement from the presidency, Anastasiades met with Al Zayani on Wednesday, in Riyadh. The GCC official thanked Anastasiades for the position Cyprus maintains within the EU vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia.

More Details:

<http://cyprus-mail.com/2018/01/03/saudi-arabia-cyprus-enhance-relations/>

- **Norway suspends arms exports to UAE over Yemen War**

Norway has suspended arms exports to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over concerns that the weapons could be used in the deadly Saudi-led military campaign against Yemen, in which Abu Dhabi has played an active role. Under the existing circumstances, permits for arms export to the UAE have been temporarily revoked and no new licenses will be issued, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/03/547705/yemen-UAE-norway>

- **Yemen calls for int'l investigation into Saudi war crimes**

Yemen on Tuesday called for establishing an independent and impartial international commission to investigate into war crimes committed by the US-backed Saudi-led aggression coalition in Yemen since March 2015, the Ministry of Human Rights said in a statement obtained by Saba.

More Details:

<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news483646.htm>

- **Bahrain arrests death-row activist amid protests**

Bahraini regime forces have arrested two political activists, including one who has been sentenced to death, amid ongoing anti-regime protests across the country. On Tuesday, Bahraini police forces detained Hussein Abdullah Hali al-Rashed, 29, who has been handed a death penalty and also stripped of his citizenship.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/03/547684/Bahrain-death-sentence-protest>

- **Kuwait, Bahrain promote, boost diplomatic relations**

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met with visiting Bahraini Prime Minister Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa and his accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace yesterday. 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 were present at the meeting.

More Details:

<http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/kuwait-bahrain-promote-boost-diplomatic-relations/>

7. EGYPT

- **Egypt extends state of emergency for three months**

Egypt has extended by another three months a nationwide state of emergency, citing security reasons. The latest extension, which will commence on January 13 under a decree issued by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on Tuesday, comes after two deadly attacks on Friday against Coptic Christians in Helwan district, south of the capital, Cairo.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/egypt-extends-state-emergency-months-180102184217232.html>

- **Egypt files murder charges against man held for Coptic Church attack**

Egypt's public prosecutor has filed murder charges against a man accused of killing 11 people in an attack on a Coptic church and a Christian-owned shop in a Cairo suburb last week, judicial sources said. The man, arrested after the Dec. 29 attack, was receiving medical treatment in custody for injuries sustained in an exchange of gunfire with authorities outside the church. The prosecutor ordered him detained pending investigations, the sources said.

More Details:

<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2018/01/02/Egypt-files-murder-charges-against-man-held-for-Coptic-church-attack.html>

- **Egypt's external debt rises by 41%**

Egypt is expected to pay off over \$12 billion of its foreign debts in 2018, the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) announced today. The current external debt value amounts to third of its country's total foreign reserves, which amounted to 36.723 billion dollars at the end of November. According to MENA state news agency, the government has already repaid around \$30 billion of its financial commitments and foreign debts in 2017.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180103-egypts-external-debt-rises-by-41/>

- **Saudi Arabia, Egypt discuss relations**

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, today received Dr. Ali Abdel-Aal Sayed Ahmed, Speaker of the Egyptian House of Representatives. According to the Saudi Press Agency, SPA, the meeting touched on the fraternal relations between the two countries and areas of cooperation between the Kingdom and Egypt in the parliamentary field.

More Details:

<http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302657931>

- **Egypt's NEC to announce timeline of this year's presidential election next Monday**

Egypt's National Electoral Commission (NEC) said Tuesday that the timeline of the country's 2018 presidential election will be made public at a press conference next Monday. "All the details on this

election's timeline will be made public next Monday because the NEC is keen that all measures are announced in a clear and transparent way," the commission's spokesman Mahmoud El-Sherif told reporters.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/286465/Egypt/Politics-/Egypsts-NEC-to-announce-timeline-of-this-years-pres.aspx>

- **Al-Sisi ratifies new law to regulate youth centres**

President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi ratified on Tuesday the Youth Centres Law that was recently approved by parliament. The legislation was published in Egypt's official state gazette early Tuesday. The new law will ban young people from practising politics inside these centres, a decision that stirred great controversy among parliament members and members of the centres. It also prohibits smoking, gambling, and drinking alcohol inside the youth centres.

More Details:

<https://dailynewsegypt.com/2018/01/02/al-sisi-ratifies-new-law-regulate-youth-centres/>

- **400 children participate in activities against gender discrimination**

Humanitarian organization Plan International Egypt organized four training camps in Sohag governorate, Upper Egypt, under the slogan "no violence against girls" to raise awareness about discrimination against women. The camps targeted children of both sexes from four villages in Sohag governorate, the total number of participants being more than 400 boys and girls.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/400-children-participate-in-activities-against-gender-discrimination/>

- **Pence visit to Egypt remains in plans: vice president office**

Mike Pence's office on Monday said the US vice president still plans on visiting Israel this month, despite an apparent delay in the schedule. Pence had been scheduled to come during the week of January 14. But Israel's Foreign Ministry said Monday that the visit was no longer on its schedule for January. Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon gave no reason for the apparent delay, but said it was still possible that Pence could still decide to come. "It's not on our schedule," he said. "We can always adapt it and change it."

More Details:

<http://www.egyptdailynews.com/detail/pence-visit-to-egypt-remains-in-plans-vice-president-office>

- **Death Penalties, Death Sentences on the Rise in Egypt**

Egyptian authorities executed five people early on Tuesday who allegedly belonged to the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood group. The defendants were convicted of executing a terrorist attack in Kafr al-Sheikh governorate in April of 2015. The terrorist attack left three students in the Egyptian Military Academy dead and several others were injured.

More Details:

<https://egyptianstreets.com/2018/01/02/death-penalties-death-sentences-on-the-rise-in-egypt/>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Emirates suspends Dubai-Tunis flights after security row**

Emirates Airline has suspended flights from Dubai to Tunis in a row between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Tunisia over the carriage of Tunisian women. According to media reports, several Tunisian women were barred from traveling to Dubai from Tunis on Emirates flights shortly before Christmas, a decision that caused anger in the North African state.

More Details:

<http://tdailynews.net/story-z9671010>

- **How Morocco has weakened its press, pushing readers to social media for news**

For David Alvarado, a Spanish journalist who has been covering North Africa for more than a decade, the real indication of how free journalists are to report in Morocco is which government ministry is watching most closely. Officially, it's the Ministry of Communications that issues press cards and can expel journalists or ban them from working here, says Mr. Alvarado, the former North African correspondent for Spanish-language CNN.

More Details:

<http://marocgazette.com/story-z2901333>

- **Morocco Bolsters its F16 Jets with AMRAAM Missiles**

Morocco will bolster the defense capabilities of its F16 fighter jets with the acquisition of advanced medium range air-to-air AMRAAM missiles, the Pentagon said in a press release. A contract has been signed between Morocco's air force and the US defense contractor, Raytheon, providing for the acquisition of the air-to-air missiles as well as for technical support including special tooling, test equipment, spares and telemetry kits, said the Pentagon press release.

More Details:

<http://northafricapost.com/21552-morocco-bolsters-f16-jets-amraam-missiles.html>

- **Parliament passes bill on granting special leave to public officials running as candidate for elections**

The House of People's Representatives (HPR) passed at a plenary session Tuesday the draft law on granting special leave to public officials running as candidates for the presidential, legislative, regional and municipal elections. 92 MPs voted for the bill, 21 voted against it and 13 abstained. According to Article 1 of this law, public officials who are candidates for these elections are entitled to exceptional paid leave during the election campaign.

More Details:

<https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/9716693-parliament-passes>

- **HoR member Emhimed Shoaib appointed ambassador to Spain**

The former first deputy speaker of the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) Emhimed Shoaib has been appointed Libya's ambassador to Spain. Local Libyan media outlets reported sources from the HoR as saying that Shoaib has been appointed in the place of the late ambassador who died in Madrid last June

More Details:

<http://www.libyanexpress.com/hor-member-emhimed-shoaib-appointed-ambassador-to-spain/>

- **91 terrorists killed, 40 others arrested in 2017**

The forces of the National People's Army (ANP) have killed ninety-one terrorists in 2017 and arrested forty others, including five women, said Tuesday the annual report of the Ministry of National Defence (MDN).

More Details:

<http://en.aps.dz/algeria/22110-91-terrorists-killed-40-others-arrested-in-2017>

- **Tunisia removes immunity of former Interior Minister Najem Gharsalli**

The Supreme Judicial Council of Tunisia, an independent constitutional institution, lifted the judicial immunity of the former Minister of Interior and Judge Mohamed Najem Gharsalli on Tuesday, Anadolu has reported. According to Ahmed Al-Majri of the Council's Information and Communication Office, judicial immunity in Tunisia is a social guarantee enjoyed by some political positions, such as judges, ministers, parliamentarians and diplomats. "The lifting of immunity causes a person to be

subject to fair trial while enjoying guarantees like any other ordinary citizen,” he explained. No reasons were given for the move against Gharsalli, who served as Tunisia’s ambassador to Morocco until October last year, when he was dismissed for no apparent reason.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180103-tunisia-removes-immunity-of-former-interior-minister-najem-gharsalli/>

- **AFRICOM Expects ISIS Attack on Libya’s Oil Crescent**

A senior official in the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) said that ISIS was likely plotting attacks on Libya’s strategic oil crescent. In remarks to Asharq Al-Awsat, AFRICOM spokeswoman Robyn Mack said: “At the moment, we believe that the organization (ISIS-Libya) is likely to give priority to the restructuring of security forces and infrastructure, and to launch strikes, which may include targets in the Libyan oil crescent.”

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1131771/exclusive-africom%2%A0expects-isis-attack-libya%E2%80%99s-oil-crescent>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Crisis looms over PML-N’s Balochistan govt**

PML (N)-led coalition government in Balochistan is bracing for a serious crisis as another cabinet member resigned after a no-trust motion was submitted against Chief Minister Sanaullah Zehri. 14 lawmakers on Tuesday submitted a no-confidence motion against the chief minister who had to cut short his foreign trip to handle the emerging political situation.

More Details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/264068-crisis-looms-over-pml-ns-balochistan-govt>

- **Ahsan Iqbal reminds Trump of Soviet-Afghan War, calls it the root cause of modern conflict**

Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday lashed out at the incumbent US administration, saying that no one has the right to label Pakistan a 'liar' given its sizable contribution to the so-called 'War on Terror'. In a strongly worded speech, he also reminded US President Donald Trump how the region's terrorism-marred past is actually the US's own doing.

More Details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1380554/ahsan-iqbal-reminds-trump-of-soviet-afghan-war-calls-it-the-root-cause-of-modern-conflict>

- **NDS hits back at ousted Balkh governor's accusations**

The National Directorate of Security on Wednesday lashed out at recent remarks by ousted Governor Atta Mohammad Noor on attempts to destabilise northern Balkh province. The powerful intelligence agency slammed as unfortunate Noor's allegations that the intelligence service was being used to foment insecurity in the Northern Province.

More Details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/01/03/nds-hits-back-ousted-balkh-governor%E2%80%99s-accusations>

- **Suspected terrorists killed in Karachi encounter were affiliated with TTP: sources**

Three suspected terrorists affiliated with the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were killed in an encounter with law enforcement agencies in the city's Baldia Town area late Tuesday night. Rangers and the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of Sindh Police conducted a targeted operation in Kaimkhani Colony area of Baldia Town on a tip-off regarding the presence of the TTP terrorists in the vicinity.

More Details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/175062-three-suspected-terrorists-killed-during-encounter-in-karachis-baldia-town>

- **Afghan soldiers and militants suffer casualties in Laghman clash**

The Afghan national army soldiers and the anti-government armed militants suffered casualties during a clash in eastern Laghman province of Afghanistan, the local officials said Wednesday. According to a statement released by the governor's office, the clash took place late on Tuesday in the vicinity of Alingar district in Basram area.

More Details:

<https://www.khaama.com/afghan-soldiers-and-militants-suffer-casualties-in-laghman-clash-04185>

- **"We Should Change 1397 To Year of Nationwide Education Drive," President Ghani**

Chaired by President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, the High Human Resource Council's session was held yesterday at presidential palace. In the session, civil society's overall plan in connection with reforms

in education titled “Afghanistan Education Task Force” was delivered by Najiba Ayoubi, a representative of civil society organizations.

More Details:

<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/politics/item/31498-%E2%80%9Cwe-should-change-1397-to-year-of-nationwide-education-drive%E2%80%9D-president-ghani.html>

- **US Plans More Offensive Afghan Strategy**

A top US commander wants to launch a more aggressive military strategy to pressurize the Taliban and other insurgent’s groups, according to reports. The top US commander for the Middle East, Gen. Joseph Votel wants a more aggressive strategy to pressurize Taliban and other insurgents over the normally quieter months of Afghanistan's winter.

More Details:

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/us-plans-more-offensive-afghan-strategy>

10. TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Erdoğan highlights importance of stability in Iran in phone conversation with Rouhani**

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan discussed the ongoing protests in Iran with his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani in a phone conversation Wednesday, highlighting the importance of stability and calm in Iran for Turkey, presidential sources said. Erdoğan told Rouhani that he backs Iranian president's statement warning Iranians not to violate laws while exercising their right to protest.

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2018/01/03/erdogan-highlights-importance-of-stability-in-iran-in-phone-conversation-with-rouhani>

- **Turkey and Qatar: Behind the strategic alliance**

Turkey expects enhanced cooperation with Qatar, Turkish minister for transport, maritime affairs and communications said on Monday. In November, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived in Qatar on Tuesday to attend the third meeting of Turkey-Qatar Supreme Strategic Committee on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/turkey-qatar-strategic-alliance-171024133518768.html>

- **Turkey condemns killing of Iraqi Turkmen official**

Turkish Foreign Ministry on Wednesday "strongly" condemned the deadly attack on an Iraqi Turkmen Front official in northern Iraq's Kirkuk city. Alaa al-Din al-Salihi, also known as al-Bayati, was shot dead in the Al-Askari neighborhood in Kirkuk by unknown gunmen on late Tuesday. The attackers fled after shooting him dead.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkey-condemns-killing-of-iraqi-turkmen-official-/1021112>

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.*

Bu bülten **ORSAM Ortadoğu Uzman Yardımcısı Firuze Yağmur Gökler tarafından hazırlanmaktadır. Bülten Ortadoğu ülkelerinin yerel haber kaynaklarından derlenmektedir. Belirtilen görüşler bölge ülkelerinin haber kaynaklarına ve ismi geçen yazarlara ait olup ORSAM'ın görüşünü yansıtmamaktadır.*