



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

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1. IRAQ

- **Hakim Stresses Importance of Holding Elections on Schedule and Commitment to Constitutional Timing**

The head of the National Alliance, Ammar al-Hakim, stressed the importance of holding the elections on time and complying with the constitutional deadline. "Hakim met in his office with the head of Hal party, Jamal Karbouli and discussed with him the latest developments in the security and political situation and the post-victory phase and the challenges of national unity and societal challenges," a statement Hakim's office said.

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?FdEAp2ic3tk4FVeuywIxfQ%253d%253d

- **Iraqi troops prepare to attack IS members hiding in village, south of Mosul: Officer**

Iraqi troops will invade a village in south of Mosul, into which tens of Islamic State militants infiltrated, an officer from the Joint Operations Command said. Speaking to BasNews website, Col. Falah Aref announced preparations to invade hawija village, which links between Qayyarah and Hammam al-Alil towns, south of Mosul, in the wake of infiltration of IS members, who are hiding there.

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/features/iraqi-troops-prepare-attack-members-hiding-village-south-mosul-officer/>

- **Hashd al-Shaabi Struggling to Clear Hawija from IS**

The Shi'ite militias of Hashd al-Shaabi, after three months since the liberation of Hawija district in southwest Kirkuk province, is still struggling to completely clear the town from the remaining Islamic State (IS) jihadists and war remnants. The group said on Wednesday it has launched a massive operation in Hawija to remove the IEDs and remaining explosives in the city.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/406249>

- **US forces in Iraq play strictly 'advisory' role: Envoy**

U.S. troop deployments in Iraq have been greatly reduced, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Douglas Silliman said Wednesday, adding that all forces that remained in the country were there in a strictly non-combat capacity. Speaking to reporters in Baghdad, Silliman stressed that U.S. troops still in the

country -- for which he did not provide an exact number -- were there with the full consent of the Iraqi government.

More Details:

http://www.shafaaq.com/en/En_NewsReader/551212ce-3db6-46ca-945b-5d03a4e3d456

- **Germany has contributed over \$50mIn for clearance of explosive hazards in Iraq**

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) welcomes an additional contribution of € 17 million (\$20.2 million) from the Government of Germany towards survey and clearance of explosive hazards in support of humanitarian and stabilization initiatives. The overall contribution, totalling € 44.2 million (\$52.5 million) since 2016, makes the Government of Germany the most significant donor to UNMAS in Iraq.

More Details:

http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=42519

- **DTM declares rates of IDPs, returnees in Iraq**

As of 31 December 2017, the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) has identified 2,615,988 internally displaced persons (435,998 families) displaced after January 2014, dispersed across 97 districts and 3,711 locations in Iraq, ReliefWeb reported on Thursday. For the same period, DTM has also identified 3,220,362 returnees (536,727 families). Overall, the total number of identified IDPs decreased by approximately 9% (267,750 individuals). Decreases were recorded across 17 of Iraq's 18 governorates.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/22206/DTM-declares-rates-of-IDPs-returnees-in-Iraq>

- **ISIS presence on Iraqi-Saudi border annihilated by Iraqi forces in major operation**

Iraq forces have kicked-off a major anti-insurgency operation throughout western Anbar province all the way down to the country's southern border with Saudi Arabia, detecting and neutralizing a noteworthy ISIS presence in the process so far. On Tuesday, Iraqi troops launched a wide-scale anti-insurgency operation in the western countryside of Anbar province with elite counter-terrorism units of the army's 1st Division and pro-government tribal fighters sweeping as far south as the border with Saudi Arabia.

More Details:

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/isis-presence-iraqi-saudi-border-annihilated-iraqi-forces-major-operation/>

- **Iraq: “Hospitals must always be prepared; you never know what will happen.”**

Patrick Durrant was the Project Coordinator for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Sulaymaniyah, northern Iraq. MSF started working in Sulaymaniyah in 2015 when a huge influx of people escaping violence in their towns and cities arrived in the area. Initially, we provided water and sanitation services in Arbat camp for displaced people, and then extended the project to provide mental health services in Ashti camp, and rehabilitation and staff support for the Sulaymaniyah Emergency Hospital. The project closed on 30 November 2017. As the project finished, Patrick reflected on the challenges, achievements and the state of healthcare in Iraq.

More Details:

<https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-hospitals-must-always-be-prepared-you-never-know-what-will-happen>

- **Iraq to ask foreign oil firms to build housing, provide services for employees**

Iraq will ask foreign oil companies operating in the country to build housing for Iraqis employed on their projects, the oil ministry in Baghdad said in a statement on Wednesday. Oil Minister Jabar al-Luaibi “issued a general notice which commits contracted companies to build modern housing compounds and provide essential services to employees,” the statement said.

More Details:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/iraq-oil-gas/iraq-to-ask-foreign-oil-firms-to-build-housing-provide-services-for-employees-idUSL8N1P53V4?rpc=401&>

- **Shell sells stake in Iraq oilfield to Japan’s Itochu: Official**

Iraq has approved the sale by Royal Dutch Shell of the company’s 20 percent stake in Iraq’s West Qurna 1 oilfield to Japan’s Itochu Corp, a senior Iraqi oil official said on Jan. 10. The deal comes as the Anglo-Dutch company agreed to exit the Majnoon oil venture, one of the largest fields in OPEC member Iraq, and hand over its operation to the state-run Basra Oil Co. (BOC) by the end of June 2018.

More Details:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/shell-sells-stake-in-iraq-oilfield-to-japans-itochu-official-125543>

- **Underwhelming US aid to Iraq: ‘If you broke it & failed to fix it, find somebody else to do it’**

The US should contribute to international efforts to rebuild Iraq rather than focus on direct aid, considering Washington’s initial responsibility for “breaking” the country, global affairs expert Jonathan Steele told RT. Earlier this week, the US announced it would double the sum of

reconstruction aid to the Iraqi government in 2018 to \$150 million, but this is just a fraction of what is needed. Steele, a veteran British journalist and author, said that was not enough and that an international effort would be required to rebuild the Middle Eastern country.

More Details:

<https://www.rt.com/news/415510-us-broke-iraq-isis-fix/>

- **US to play leading role in Iraq reconstruction conf. in Kuwait – envoy**

The United States will play a leading role in the February 12 Iraqi reconstruction conference hosted by Kuwait, US Ambassador to Iraq Douglas Silliman revealed on Wednesday. In a press statement, the ambassador said that his country is currently planning to carry out some key investment projects in Iraq that include the rehabilitation of the international road between Baghdad and the port of Trebil bordering Jordan, west of Iraq.

More Details:

<https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2682497&Language=en>

- **Black and white: Iraq's 'new' enemy is nothing new**

Wildly circulating rumours first published December last year posit the birth of a new armed Kurdish faction, dubbed, the “the bearers of White Flags” (WF). As the name suggests, their flag of choice is white and bears the face of a lion stencilled in black.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180110-black-and-white-iraqs-new-enemy-is-nothing-new/>

- **Qatar Red Crescent, QFFD in Iraq health outreach**

Under a strategic partnership between Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) and Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) to support the health sector in Iraq, QRCS' mission in Al-Anbar Governorate has launched a field hospital to offer emergency health care for patients and victims of the ongoing clashes across the country. Set up in Ana District, west of Al-Anbar, the health facility provides a wide range of medical services for the displaced from western parts of the governorate.

More Details:

<http://www.gulf-times.com/story/577741/Qatar-Red-Crescent-QFFD-in-Iraq-health-outreach>

2. SYRIA

- **40 civilians 'killed' in Syria's E. Ghouta in two days**

A total of 40 people were killed over the past two days as Assad forces intensified their attacks on the besieged Damascus suburb Eastern Ghouta, according to the White Helmets civil defense agency. In a statement, 161 civilians also lost their lives over the last two weeks, the agency said. Home to some 400,000 inhabitants, Eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus, has remained under a crippling siege by the Bashar Assad regime since late 2012.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/40-civilians-killed-in-syrias-e-ghouta-in-two-days/1027745>

- **UN High Commissioner condemns violation of Astana deal in Syria**

UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein condemned the upsurge in civilian casualties in Eastern Ghouta in Syria amid the recent escalation in airstrikes and ground-based attacks by Government forces and their allies, stressing that all parties are obliged under international law to distinguish between lawful military targets and civilians and civilian objects, reports the UN news center.

More Details:

<http://www.kaztag.kz/en/news/detail.php?ID=591679>

- **Syria denounces France allegations, categorically refutes targeting hospitals and civilians in Idlib**

Syria has denounced the French Foreign Ministry's allegations on targeting hospitals and civilians in Idlib Province by the Syrian Arab Army, and categorically refuted these allegations. "The Syrian Arab Republic is surprised at insistence of the French Foreign Ministry to continue the campaign of misleading the French public opinion about what is happening in Syria, exploiting the humanitarian sides to divert attention from the failure of the policies it has adopted towards Syria," an official source at Foreign and Expatriates Ministry said Thursday, denouncing the Ministry's adoption of allegations of Jabhat al-Nusra terrorist organization.

More Details:

<https://sana.sy/en/?p=124018>

- **Syria: Children Under Attack in Damascus Enclave**

Attacks by Syrian-Russian forces in an area near the Damascus in late October and early November 2017 killed eight children and destroyed or damaged four schools, Human Rights Watch said today.

The attacks on Eastern Ghouta, 15 kilometers from the Syrian capital, resulted in the closing of schools, depriving many children in the besieged area of access to education.

More Details:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/11/syria-children-under-attack-damascus-enclave>

- **Turkey: Iran, Russia should adhere to Syria ceasefire**

Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu is demanding both Iran and Russia fulfill their responsibilities as guarantors of ceasefires in Syria. His comments follow the latest attacks by Syrian government forces and their two, main allies on Idlib province, the largest area still controlled by opposition fighters.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/turkey-iran-russia-adhere-syria-ceasefire-180111075145275.html>

- **Syria troops make gains near air base**

Syrian pro-government forces reached the outskirts of a sprawling rebel-held air base on Wednesday, the target of a wide-ranging offensive in the northwestern Idlib province. Recapturing the Abu Zuhour air base, which the rebels took in 2015, has been one of the main goals of the government offensive launched in late October.

More Details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/104b7395-3043-441b-b36f-19106b2f9330.aspx>

- **Lapid: No regional stability as long as Iranian forces in Syria**

There will be no stability in Syria as long as Iran tries to entrench itself militarily in the war-torn country, according to MK Yair Lapid, the head of the Yesh Atid party. In a recent interview with The Times of Israel Persian, the opposition lawmaker largely backed the government's position on Iran, declaring that Israel will continue to act to prevent the Islamic Republic from establishing military installations in Syria and calling for changes to the Iran nuclear deal.

More Details:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/lapid-no-regional-stability-as-long-as-iranian-forces-in-syria/>

- **UN Rights Chief Slams Spike In Civilian Casualties In Syria's 'De-Escalation' Areas**

The United Nations human rights chief has condemned an upsurge in civilian casualties in Eastern Ghouta in Syria amid the recent escalation in airstrikes and ground-based attacks by Government forces and their allies, noting that at least 85 civilians have been killed since 31 December. "The suffering of the people of Syria knows no end," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said, noting that residential areas in Eastern Ghouta on the outskirts of the nation's capital, Damascus, are being hit day and night by strikes from the ground and the air, forcing civilians to hide in basements.

More Details:

<http://www.app.com.pk/un-rights-chief-slams-spike-civilian-casualties-syrias-de-escalation-areas/>

- **Syria: UN aid reaches Rakban camp, near Jordan border**

A total of 50,000 Syrians (10,000 families) at al Rukban refugee camp, near Jordan's northeastern border with Syria, benefited from UN aid delivered through Jordan in an exceptional situation, the UN said in a statement today. "The approval by the Jordanian government is received with sincere appreciation by the UN agencies who are now proceeding with the exceptional delivery of food, essential non-food items and winterisation kits designed to help the affected population cope with the harsh winter conditions, said the UN statement.

More Details:

http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/generalnews/2018/01/11/syria-un-aid-reaches-rakban-camp-near-jordan-border_4f276237-de47-4acc-af7b-de5595455b91.html

3. IRAN

- **Iran protests end but regime now faces 'race against time,' experts say**

Iran's most significant protests in almost a decade may have calmed, but anger that fueled the nationwide demonstrations lingers and could erupt again at any time, according to experts. Suzanne Maloney, deputy director of the Foreign Policy program at the Brookings Institution, called the recent rallies "one of the most serious crises Iran has faced in the past 25 years."

More Details:

http://www.euronews.com/2018/01/11/iran-protests-end-but-regime-now-faces-race-against-time-experts-say?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+euronews%2Fen%2Fnews+%28euronews+-+news+-+en%29

- **Iran-EU nuclear talks start in Brussels**

A fresh round of talks between Iran and the EU on implementation of the nuclear deal started at the European External Action Service in Brussels, Belgium Jan. 11. Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, as well as the foreign ministers of E3 countries - Jean-Yves Le Drian of France, Sigmar Gabriel of Germany, and Boris Johnson of the UK – are attending the meeting which takes part in the context of the ongoing work to ensure a full and continued implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA, aka nuclear deal), Iran's media reported.

More Details:

<https://en.trend.az/iran/politics/2846349.html>

- **Enemy Failed to Incite Sedition in Iran: IRGC Chief**

IRGC Chief-Commander Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari says the enemy failed in its efforts to trigger sedition in the country. Speaking in a ceremony on Thursday, General Jafari said, "What was proven in this sedition (the recent riots and unrest in Iran) was the enemy's embarrassment because the enemies failed despite extensive planning to trigger the third [wave of] local sedition against the Islamic Republic, and that was because of Iranian people's 40-year resistance.

More Details:

<http://ifpnews.com/exclusive/enemy-failed-incite-sedition-iran-irgc-chief/>

- **German Foreign Minister: Preserve Nuclear Deal, but Confront Iran About Its Role in Middle East**

Europe and the United States should confront Tehran about its ballistic weapons program and its role in Syria's civil war but a 2015 deal to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear bomb must be preserved, Germany's foreign minister said on Thursday. Speaking before a meeting with his counterparts from Iran, Britain and France and the European Union, Sigmar Gabriel said the United States was right to address concerns about Iran's strategy in the Middle East.

More Details:

<https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/1.834249>

- **EU Confirms Iran Nuclear Deal Works as US Faces Deadline for Sanctions Waiver**

On January 9, the US State Department announced that the US administration was expected to decide on extending the Iran sanctions waiver on Friday. EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini has confirmed that the 2015 Iran deal is delivering its main goal of keeping the nuclear program in check.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/world/201801111060671322-eu-mogherini-iran-nuclear-deal/>

- **Iran interior minister tasked with preparing report on recent violence**

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani says he has tasked the interior minister with preparing a detailed report on the recent wave of violence that hit some areas of the country. During a cabinet session on Wednesday, Rouhani said he had delegated Abdolreza Rahmani to compile a comprehensive report within one week on the violence as well as the individuals arrested, injured or killed during the course of the unrest.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/10/548469/Iran-protest-unrest--Rouhani-Leader-Khamenei>

- **Iranian, French FMs discuss JCPOA implementation**

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif on Thursday held talks with his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian on importance of implementation of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal. The talks were held in the Belgian capital where Zarif is due to meet with the European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and also his German and British counterparts later in the day.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82792656>

- **Intelligence Ministry recounts measures against riots**

The Iranian Intelligence Ministry issued a statement on Wednesday recounting some measures undertaken by the ministry in regards to the recent riots that hit some cities in the country. The ministry said it managed to identify and arrest some terrorists involved in the riots, Mehr news agency reported. It said that the anti-revolution terrorists were tasked with turning the peaceful protests over economic problems into anti-establishment riots.

More Details:

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/420216/Intelligence-Ministry-recounts-measures-against-riots>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Israeli settlers vandalize Palestinian farm lands**

Israeli settlers used bulldozers to vandalize some agricultural lands belonging to Palestinian families in Nablus city's Madama district in occupied West Bank on Wednesday. Israeli soldiers intervened against Palestinian residents reacting against settlers' vandalizing of their lands; five Palestinian journalists, including an Anadolu Agency photo journalist, who were trying to photograph the incident, were detained briefly by Israeli soldiers.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/israeli-settlers-vandalize-palestinian-farm-lands/1027700>

- **Israeli settler killed in shooting attack near Nablus**

An Israeli settler, 35, was killed late Tuesday after he succumbed to wounds sustained in a shooting attack near the Surra village, south of Nablus City in the northern occupied West Bank. Israeli media identified the settler as Raziel Shevah. Reports said that Shevah came under fire while driving in his car near.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=779737>

- **Search for justice drags on for slain Palestinian teen**

Nearly four years after Nadeem Nawarah, 17, was killed by a single live round fired into his chest by an Israeli police officer, his family is still relentlessly pursuing justice. At a court hearing on Tuesday, the prosecutor asked for a 20 to 27-month prison sentence for the officer, Ben Deri, 21 at the time. He has pled guilty to a negligent killing charge, and sentencing is now scheduled for April 26.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/search-justice-drags-slain-palestinian-teen-180110135838685.html>

- **Political committee to recommend redefining relationship with Israel - official**

The political committee established by the Palestinian leadership to formulate recommendations to the upcoming Central Council meeting is going to recommend redefining Palestine's relationship with Israel, a senior Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) official said on Thursday/ Ahmad Majdalani, member of the PLO's Executive Committee, told Voice of Palestine radio that the political committee

also discussed in its meeting in Ramallah on Wednesday the possibility of suspending recognition of Israel.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=U8pOmMa95986193556aU8pOmM>

- **Israeli Minister Says More Palestinians Need to Die**

Minister Uri Ariel said Wednesday that there needs to be more dead and wounded Palestinians in Israel's attacks on the Gaza Strip, reported Haaretz. Gaza is home to some 1.8 million Palestinians, counts one of the highest population densities in the world. Ravaged by wars and nearly a decade of a grueling Israeli blockade, the United Nations has warned that it could become uninhabitable for residents within just five years.

More Details:

<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/israeli-minister-says-palestinians-need-die/>

- **Palestine blames U.S. for giving green light to Israeli settlement plan**

Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Riad Malki on Wednesday blamed the U.S. over the new Israeli settlement plan in the West Bank, saying it gave Israel the green light for settlement activity. Malki made the remarks in response to Israel's newly declared plan to build 1,285 settlement units in the West Bank.

More Details:

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/10/c_136885669.htm

- **Israel blocks major road connecting Palestine**

In yet another clampdown by its forces, Israel on Wednesday blocked a major road connecting the country with Nablus in West Bank. The Wafa news agency reported that Israeli forces closed the Huwwara checkpoint after an Israeli settler was shot dead on Tuesday night.

More Details:

<https://www.aninews.in/news/world/middle-east/israel-blocks-major-road-connecting-palestine201801101725150004/>

- **Donor group for Palestine to convene special session**

Norway and the European Union will convene an extraordinary session of the international donor group for Palestine, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), the European Union's foreign service said

on Wednesday. The extraordinary session will be held in Brussels on Jan. 31 at the ministerial level and will be co-chaired by Ine Eriksen Soreide, Norway's foreign minister, and Federica Mogherini, the EU foreign policy chief, said a statement by the European External Action Service.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/donor-group-for-palestine-to-convene-special-session/1027493>

- **Salman reaffirms support for Palestine**

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia made a telephone call to President Mahmoud Abbas of the State of Palestine, to discuss the Palestinian cause. According to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) King Salman reaffirmed the Kingdom's firm position on the Palestinian cause and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to establish their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

More Details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/211df24c-25af-4841-b554-547a822d70ea.aspx>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Beirut Tightens Security Measures for Syrians Seeking Entry into Lebanon**

Lebanon's General Security announced on Wednesday new conditions for the entry of Syrians into Lebanon through the al-Masnaa land border crossing. In a statement on its website, the directorate listed six categories under which Syrians are eligible entry into or residency in the country.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1139321/beirut-tightens-security-measures-syrians-seeking-entry-lebanon>

- **Syrian refugee sets himself on fire outside UN office in Lebanon**

A Syrian refugee in Lebanon set himself on fire Wednesday outside a UN office in desperation at aid getting cut off to his family, suffering serious burns. Refugee agency UNHCR and the World Food Programme said that the man -- named by family as 43-year-old father of four Ryad Khalaf Zibou -- "set himself alight" at a UN compound in the northern city of Tripoli.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86724>

- **1,500 refugee families receive aid vouchers by IOM, Japanese NGO**

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) on Wednesday distributed vouchers to a total of 1,500 vulnerable Syrian female-headed households in Zarqa, with the aim of complementing the winterisation assistance provided by other non-governmental organisations and UN agencies. The distribution, which was held in cooperation with the Japanese NGO Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development (NICCOD), provided each family with two vouchers amounting to a total of JD70 to be redeemed at supermarkets.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/1500-refugee-families-receive-aid-vouchers-iom-japanese-ngo>

- **PM visits Telecommunication Regulatory Commission**

Prime Minister, Hani Mulki, on Wednesday paid a visit to the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC), during which he was briefed on its achievements, activities, facilities and services it provides to the ICT and post sectors. In a meeting with TRC Chairman of the Board of Commissioners and CEO, Ghazi Al-Jobor and board members, the prime minister said Jordan is proud of the TRC's advanced performance and great effort, not only in organizing the sector, but also in providing better service to citizens and ensuring that this service reaches them with a quality that is equal to the price they pay for it.

More Details:

http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=36952#.WldSh65l_cs

- **Report: Hizbullah Says Hariri More Eligible to Mend Aoun-Berri Row**

In light of lingering conflict between President Michel Aoun and Speaker Nabih Berri over the seniority decree, Hizbullah said it will not engage in mediation between the two men but believes that Prime Minister Saad Hariri is the man for the job, al-Joumhouria daily reported on Thursday. “ We are not in the right place to play a mediator role,” an unnamed Hizbullah official told the daily.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/240721-report-hizbullah-says-hariri-more-eligible-to-mend-aoun-berri-row>

- **Rahi tackles developments with Yemeni Ambassador, Wadih Khazen, and Rifi**

Maronite Patriarch Mar Bechara Boutros Rahi met in Bkerke on Thursday, Yemen's Ambassador to Lebanon, Abdallah Abdel Karim Al-Daes, for an overview of the latest developments and bilateral relations. He also discussed with the head of the Maronite Council, Wadih Khazen, the thorny

political and economic situation in the country - a situation that requires holding legislative elections on time.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/87144/Rahi-tackles-developments-with-Yemeni-Ambassador-Wadih-Khazen-and-Rifi>

- **Jordan: 50 MPs demand ambassador be recalled from Israel**

Fifty members of the Jordanian Parliament signed a petition yesterday urging the government to summon the Jordanian Ambassador to Israel, Walid Obeidat, in protest against the “unilateral and racist practices” of the occupation authorities. In the petition, which was introduced by MP Mustafa Yaghi, the members of the Jordanian parliament demanded the action be taken as a response to the Israeli Knesset’s ratification of a law that would subject Jerusalem to Israeli sovereignty, which would pave the way for expelling Palestinian people from Jerusalem.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180110-jordan-50-mps-demand-ambassador-be-recalled-from-israel/>

- **Talal Abu-Ghazaleh & Co. Consulting Develops Strategic Plan for Jordan Senate**

Talal Abu-Ghazaleh & Co. Consulting (TAG-Consult) started developing a strategic plan for the Jordanian Senate as the Council pursues institutional development and enhancement of performance levels. A special committee has been formed for the strategic development plan, headed by President of the Senate HE Mr. Faisal Al Fayez, and with the membership of HE Senator Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Assistant Presidents HE Mr. Munir Soubar and HE Ms. Yasera Ghousheh, Secretary General of the Senate Mr. Khaled Al-Louzi, General Manager of the President’s Office Mr. Ali Al Zyoud, and with the membership of the Administrative Manager, Director of the Constitutional Performance Department, in addition to the Head of the Planning Division at the Senate as the committee rapporteur.

More Details:

<http://www.ag-ip-news.com/news.aspx?id=47435&lang=en>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Qatari FM decries ongoing regime attacks in NW Syria**

Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani on Wednesday said continued attacks by the Assad regime in Syria’s northwestern Idlib province are intended to prevent

a political solution to the crisis. “Continued attacks in Idlib are intended to undermine a political solution to the Syria crisis and kill civilians and the regime’s opponents on the pretext of fighting terrorist groups,” the foreign minister tweeted.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/qatari-fm-decries-ongoing-regime-attacks-in-nw-syria/1027595>

- **Houthis Break Into Currency Exchange Offices, Confiscate Money**

Houthi militias continued their aggression on public and private institutions that fall under their control in Sana'a and other governorates as they raided a number of local banks, currency exchange offices and money transfer companies in the Yemeni capital and confiscated large sums of cash from various currencies.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1140061/houthis-break-currency-exchange-offices-confiscate-money>

- **Qatar seeks international arbitration to end blockade**

Qatar has begun seeking international arbitration in an attempt to end the blockade imposed by three of its Gulf neighbours and Egypt. Foreign ministry spokesperson Lulwah Al Khater announced the moves on Wednesday, days after a UN investigation said the blockade was negatively impacting the people of the region.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/qatar-seeks-international-arbitration-blockade-180110132230125.html>

- **Covert wars: Iran and Saudi Arabia revisit different strategies**

Expressions of support by U.S. President Donald J. Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have provided the grist for Iranian claims that anti-government protests were instigated by foreign powers. The largely baseless assertions nonetheless offer insight into the very different strategies adopted by Iran and Saudi Arabia in their vicious struggle for regional dominance.

More Details:

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2018/01/197_242205.html

- **Air strikes in north Yemen kill at least 14: witnesses, rebels**

Saudi-led coalition air strikes on a marketplace and house in rebel-held northern Yemen have left at least 14 people dead, witnesses and a rebel-run news agency said Thursday. An eyewitness in the northern province of Saada told AFP that 12 people had been killed in strikes on the marketplace on Wednesday evening, including women.

More Details:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-5257987/Air-strikes-north-Yemen-kill-14-witnesses-rebels.html>

- **Yemeni Forces Capture Military Base in Southwestern Saudi Arabia**

Yemeni forces captured a Saudi military base in the kingdom's border region of Najran during a retaliatory operation, killing several of the troops stationed there. A video released by the Ansarullah movement on Wednesday shows the Yemeni forces ambush the base, using simple weaponry, while the Yemeni forces seized Saudi weapons after capturing the base, according to the al-Masirah television network.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961021000760>

- **UAE, Saudi Arabia discuss boosting security cooperation**

H.H. Lt. General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, yesterday met with Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Minister of Interior, and his accompanying delegation at his office. During the meeting, the two sides discussed a number of issues of mutual interest, especially in the security and policing fields, and means of enhancing and developing relations between the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

More Details:

<http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302659458>

- **Iran, Qatar stress on boosting bilateral ties**

Senior foreign policy advisor to the Iran's Parliament (Majlis) and Qatar's ambassador to Tehran emphasized the need to boost bilateral relations in various spheres, including the parliamentary. Hossein Amirabdollahian and Ambassador Ali bin Hamad Al Sulaiti met on Thursday and discussed latest regional and international developments.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82792753>

- **Kuwait, Bahrain mull over military issues**

General Commander of the Bahraini Defense Force Field Marshal Sheikh Khalifa bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa and visiting Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met in Manama Thursday on an array of mutual issues, mainly military ones.

More Details

<https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2682579&Language=en>

- **Bahrain Military Court Upholds Death Penalty for 1st Time**

Bahrain's highest military appellate court on Wednesday upheld a death penalty for the first time since it was established seven years ago. The Military Court of Cassation confirmed the verdict handed down against a soldier who had shot dead his friend and hid his body in January 2016, according to the local Al Ayam daily. Verdicts by the court are final and cannot be appealed.

More Details:

<https://www.albawaba.com/news/bahrain-military-court-upholds-death-penalty-1st-time-1072276>

7. EGYPT

- **Egypt Seeks Greater Influence in the Horn of Africa through Broad Cooperation with Eritrea**

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi held talks with his Eritrean counterpart, Isaias Afwerki, on bilateral relations and coordination of efforts on all issues related to the situation in the Horn of Africa. According to observers who spoke to Asharq Al-Awsat, Egypt, through extensive cooperation with Eritrea, is seeking greater influence in the Horn of Africa, which is strategically important for its national security, with the growing Turkish and Qatari presence there, and the current tensions with Ethiopia and Sudan.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1139021/egypt-seeks-greater-influence-horn%20africa-through-broad-cooperation-eritrea>

- **Egypt's Court of Cassation orders retrial for former interior minister Habib El-Adly in illicit gains case**

Egypt's Court of Cassation overturned on Thursday a seven-year prison sentence for former Interior Minister Habib El-Adly on charges of illicit gains, ordering a retrial. El-Adly and 12 other defendants in the case were convicted by a lower court in April 2017 on charges of illicit gains of EGP 2 billion from the interior ministry in the period between 2000 to 2011.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/287945/Egypt/Politics-/Egypys-Court-of-Cassation-orders-retrial-for-forme.aspx>

- **Citizens can ask Al-Sisi about his first term for 5 days: presidency**

President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi is re-launching the "Ask the President" initiative for five days to receive inquiries from citizens regarding his first presidential term, according to state-run Akhbar Al-Youm on Wednesday. The initiative will kick off on 10 January and end on 15 January on social media platforms to allow citizens to ask the president regarding their concerns and questions over different political, social, and economic issues.

More Details:

<https://dailynewsegypt.com/2018/01/10/citizens-can-ask-al-sisi-first-term-5-days-presidency/>

- **Military court jails 51 MB members for 15 years**

Assiut Military Court sentenced on Thursday 51 Muslim Brotherhood members to 15-years of imprisonment on charges of attacking a police point in Minya city in 2013 after the police and army dispersed Rabaa al-Adawya sit-in in August 2013. Legal experts told al-Masry al-Youm that the court issued its verdict after hearing eyewitnesses and the lawyer's argument.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/military-court-jails-51-mb-members-15-years/>

- **Economic reforms should reflect positively on Egyptians: Sisi**

President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi said Wednesday that economic reforms should reflect positively on the livelihoods of Egyptians, stressing on the importance of addressing the economy's structural deficits. This came during his meeting with Acting Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly and Finance Minister Amr el-Garhy Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptdailynews.com/detail/economic-reforms-should-reflect-positively-on-egyptians-sisi>

- **Egyptian prosecutor orders probe into New York Times' report**

Egypt's chief prosecutor has ordered an "urgent" investigation into a New York Times' report about recordings purportedly of an intelligence officer instructing TV talk show hosts and a famous actress to downplay President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Chief prosecutor Nabil Sadeq's statement says the report, published over the weekend, "undermines Egypt's security, public peace and hurts the public's interest."

More Details:

<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2018/01/11/Egyptian-prosecutor-orders-probe-into-New-York-Times-report.html>

- **Egypt court overturns sentence against Mubarak-era interior minister**

An Egyptian court on Thursday quashed the conviction and prison sentence for alleged corruption against ex-interior minister Habib al-Adly and ordered a retrial, judicial sources said. A criminal court had sentenced Adly, who served under former President Hosni Mubarak before his fall to a popular uprising in 2011, to seven years in prison in April after convicting him on charges of abusing public funds.

More Details:

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-egypt-politics-court/egypt-court-overturns-sentence-against-mubarak-era-interior-minister-idUKKBN1F01KW?rpc=401&>

- **Regeni Egypt murder: Cambridge tutor's data seized**

Italian investigators have obtained the computer and mobile phone of a Cambridge University lecturer whose student was murdered in Egypt in 2016. They received the items from UK police, who searched Dr Maha Abdelrahman's Cambridge home on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42647681>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Tunisia's Bread Protests Expand amid Heavy Military Deployment**

Protests in Tunisia have expanded to major cities such as Beja, Nabeul, Qebily, Bizerte and Sidi Bouzid, after initially breaking out in a number of poor neighborhoods in the capital, and in Monouba, Gafsa and Kasserine. Security forces have reportedly arrested more than 230 people in the protests, which were triggered by unemployment and rising prices of basic goods.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1140046/tunisia%E2%80%99s-bread%C2%A0protests-expand-amid-heavy-military-deployment>

- **ECJ court adviser says EU-Morocco fish deal invalid**

The European Union's fisheries deal with Morocco should be declared invalid because it includes Western Sahara, an adviser to the EU's top court said on Wednesday in the latest legal opinion on trade ties involving the disputed territory. Western Sahara has been contested since 1975 when Spanish colonial powers left. Morocco claimed the territory as its own and fought the 16-year war with the Polisario Front independence movement which established its self-declared Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86719>

- **U.N. endorses elections for Libya by end of 2018**

The United Nations is committed to helping Libya organize elections by the end of this year, encouraged by the rate at which Libyans have been registering to vote, a top U.N. official said on Wednesday. The U.N. hopes elections can help stabilize Libya, which was thrown into turmoil after long-time leader Muammar Gaddafi was toppled in a NATO-backed uprising in 2011.

More Details:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-election-un/u-n-endorses-elections-for-libya-by-end-of-2018-idUSKBN1EZ1NA>

- **Tunisia rallies simmer before Arab Spring anniversary**

Hundreds of people clashed with police, blocked roads and burned tires overnight in a northern Tunisian city, with more protests expected before January 14 - the anniversary marking the removal of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the country's former president. At least eight security officers were injured

in the coastal town of Nabeul during clashes with young protesters late on Tuesday, according to Tunisia's press agency TAP.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/tunisia-rallies-continue-arab-spring-anniversary-180110063344072.html>

- **Tunisian Minister of Interior discusses deepening security cooperation with Algeria**

Algerian sources have revealed an Algerian-Tunisian security agreement, wherein Algeria will train Tunisian security officers in forensic analysis. This came during a visit by Tunisian Minister of Interior Lotfi Ebrahim to Algeria earlier this week who his meet with his Algerian counterpart Nouredine Bedoui and then with Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180111-tunisian-minister-of-interior-discusses-deepening-security-cooperation-with-algeria/>

- **Forces Trying to Block Morocco's Access to the Continent Are Playing a Losing Game**

Developments with respect to the Western Sahara of Morocco call for attention. First, Morocco has strongly condemned provocative moves by the separatist Polisario Front in the restricted area of Guerguerat in south-west Morocco. Guerguerat lies near Morocco's border with Mauritania. It is considered as a buffer zone by the 1991 UN ceasefire agreement between Morocco and Polisario.

More Details:

<https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/01/238044/morocco-guerguerat-africa-polisario/>

- **Morocco, South Africa set to open new chapter in bilateral ties: Moroccan FM**

The Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Nasser Bourita said here on Tuesday that Morocco and South Africa are set to open a new chapter in bilateral cooperation. Speaking at a press briefing following talks with his South African counterpart Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Bourita said the meeting was an opportunity to move forward in the goal set by the countries' leaders to strengthen diplomatic interaction and explore cooperation topics.

More Details:

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/10/c_136883609.htm

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **PTI to join Tahirul Qadri in anti-government protests from Jan 17**

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf will join Pakistan Awami Tehreek-led anti-government campaign from January 17. This was announced by PTI Chief Imran Khan while talking to media here Thursday. PAT Chief Tahirul Qadri had announced to launch countrywide anti-PML-N campaign from January 17, after all parties conference (APC) seven-day deadline ended on January 7 for the resignation of Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Law Minister Rana Sanaullah over their alleged involvement in the Model Town carnage.

More Details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/267287-pti-to-join-tahirul-qadri-in-anti-government-protests-from-jan-17>

- **6 policemen killed in Helmand's Nawa district**

Six policemen have been killed in a Taliban attack in Nawa district of southern Helmand province, officials said Thursday. The district police chief, Capt. Amanullah, told Pajhwok Afghan News that Taliban militants stormed a police post in Chahar Qulfan area of Nawa district on Wednesday night.

More Details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/01/11/6-policemen-killed-helmand%E2%80%99s-nawa-district>

- **PM Abbasi, army chief visit SSG headquarters in Cherat**

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa visited the Special Service Group (SSG) Headquarters in Cherat on Thursday, the military's media wing reported. Upon arrival, the prime minister laid a floral wreath at the Shuhada Monument, after which he was briefed about the capabilities and performance of SSG, read a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

More Details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1382262/pm-abbasi-army-chief-visit-ssg-headquarters-in-cherat>

- **Pakistan in talks with US over security assistance: FO**

The Pakistan Foreign Office said on Thursday it is in talks with the United States over matters of mutual interest, including security assistance, but it was too soon to reveal more at this point in time. In his weekly briefing, Foreign Office spokesperson Dr Mohammad Faisal said the two countries were

in talks over matters of mutual interest, including security assistance, details of which cannot be revealed to media just now.

More Details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/176363-pakistan-in-talks-with-us-over-security-assistance-fo>

- **Quetta attack traced back to Afghanistan, claims Pakistani officials**

The Pakistani officials have claimed that Tuesday's deadly suicide attack has been traced back to Afghanistan as tensions remain high between the two neighboring countries who are often blaming each other for remaining reckless to act against the terror group. "The Chief of General Staff thanked them and informed the diplomatic corps that yesterday's terrorist attack had been traced back to Afghanistan," according to a statement by the foreign ministry of Pakistan.

More Details:

<https://www.khaama.com/quetta-attack-traced-back-to-afghanistan-claims-pakistani-officials-04246>

- **National Distribution Program of E-Tazkiras Taken Hostage By Tribal Extremist Groups, VP**

Sarwar Danesh, Second Vice President, delivering speech at the 14th anniversary of constitution, said despite of anticipation of millions of Afghanistan people, national distribution program of e-Tazkiras has been taken into hostage by tribal extremist groups. Danesh considered provoking tribal division as dangerous and clear violating of constitution, adding that based on the country's constitution, no group was superior on another group and no group could impose its particular vision on others.

More Details:

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

- **Govt Releases 75 Hizb-e-Islami Prisoners from Kabul Prison**

At least 75 Hizb-e-Islami prisoners were released from Pul-e-Charkhi prison in Kabul city on Thursday in accordance with the peace agreement. The Afghan government on Thursday released 75 Hizb-e-Islami party members that had been imprisoned in Pul-e-Charkhi prison in east of Kabul city, officials confirmed. The prisoners were released in accordance with the peace agreement between government and Hizb-e-Islami last year.

More Details:

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/govt-releases-75-hizb-e-islami-prisoners-kabul-prison>

10. TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Ankara summons US charge d'affaires over Syria issue**

Turkish Foreign Ministry on Wednesday summoned the U.S. Embassy Charge d'Affaires Philip Kosnett in capital Ankara to express its "discomfort" over the U.S support for the PKK/ PYD terror group, according to a diplomatic source. The U.S. weapons training of PKK/PYD terrorist organization members was discussed when Kosnett was summoned to the ministry, the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to restrictions on talking to the media, said.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/ankara-summons-us-charge-d-affaires-over-syria-issue/1027523>

- **FM, Turkish counterpart discuss repercussions of US decision on Jerusalem**

Minister of Foreign and Expatriates Affairs Ayman Safadi and his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu affirmed the importance of continuing coordination and consultations to deal with ramifications of the US decision to recognize occupied Jerusalem as Israel's capital. During a telephone conversation, the two ministers agreed that an end to the Israeli occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state along the lines of the 4th of June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital, is key to achieving security and stability in the region.

More Details:

http://www.petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site_id=1&NewsID=335612&Type=P

- **Erdogan: No one can establish new state in north Syria**

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Thursday said no one could dare to establish a new state in northern Syria, warning that any such effort would be "useless". In his remarks at a meeting with local administrators known as mukhtars at the Presidential Complex in capital Ankara, Erdogan said: "Those who are willing to set up a terror passage in northern Syria right now ... those areas used to be included [in Turkey's] national pact borders [also known as Misak-i-Milli].

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/197742/erdogan-no-one-can-establish-new-state-in-north-syria>

- **Solution to Syrian conflict long overdue, FM Çavuşoğlu says**

Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu urged the international community not to procrastinate regarding its efforts to settle the Syrian crisis, in an article published Thursday. In his opinion piece for U.S. magazine Newsweek, Çavuşoğlu said the brutality of the Assad regime and inaction of the international community have "given rise to the most severe terrorist threat that has affected the entire" world.

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2018/01/11/solution-to-syrian-conflict-long-overdue-fm-cavusoglu-says>

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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