



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procees of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

Energy Security

Enerji Güvenliđi

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Ethnic and Secterian Groups

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

Non State Actors

Devlet-dış Aktörler

Relations with the West

Batı'yla İlişkiler

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12 JANUARY 2018

NO: 2523

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1. IRAQ

- **Change Movement Discusses With the PUK the Elections in Iraq**

A delegation of the Change Movement is scheduled to meet with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) to discuss the election process. "A high-level delegation from the Change Movement, under the supervision of the movement's general coordinator, will meet on Thursday with the PUK in Sulaymaniyah," local media reported.

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?vil%252fcM05sBsbRFeBLMhGA%253d%253d

- **One killed, 4 wounded in bomb blast southeast of Baghdad**

One person was killed and four others were wounded on Friday when a bomb blast rocked an area southeast of Baghdad, a security source was quoted saying. A security source told Alghad Press that an improvised explosive device went off near a fish market in Madaen, southeast of the capital, killing one person and wounding four others.

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/one-killed-4-wounded-bomb-blast-southeast-baghdad/>

- **Islamic State: Iraq estimates damage at \$100 billion**

Iraqi authorities have estimated that the cost of the damage from the war against the Islamic State terrorist group amounts to 100 billion dollars and hope to rebuild the country's damaged areas over the course of 10 years. The Iraqi government's spokesman Saad Hadithi said in an interview with Sputnik Thursday: "the loss ... was estimated at 100 billion dollars, this is the amount with which the government expects to work for 10 years within the framework of the adopted document for gradual restoration of these [damaged] areas."

More Details:

http://www.shafaaq.com/en/En_NewsReader/062ee24e-1057-49d7-bacd-c3a8c5f00335

- **Media Observer Releases 2017 Report on Violations against Journalists**

Kurdistan Region's Journalists Syndicate published its annual report on violations against journalists in 2017, warning that the violations are on the rise compared to the previous year. Azad Hama Amin, the head of Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate, said during a press conference on Thursday that three assassination attempts were recorded against four journalists throughout the last year.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/kurdistan/406519>

- **Sadrists reveal new coalition ahead of elections**

Istıqlal Party, affiliated with the Sadrist Movement, revealed on Thursday details of the coalition it has formed for the coming elections. Member of the party's secretariat general Mohammed Rashk said that the party is aligning itself with the blocs that adopt the same platform based on rebuilding the institutions of the state and enforcing comprehensive reforms.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/22259/Sadrists-reveal-new-coalition-ahead-of-elections>

- **Inside Mosul Dam, Iraq's biggest potential weapon of mass destruction**

From the crack of dawn to a starry dusk, hundreds of technicians from around the world can be seen against a backdrop of pale-colored mountains and a still, sapphire reservoir. It appears serene and picturesque, but those workers are rushing to salvage Iraq's deteriorating Mosul Dam – which was once under ISIS control and straddles the Tigris River just 40 miles upstream from the city of Mosul. Failure to reinforce and maintain the dam could mean unleashing what is, in effect, a potential weapon of mass destruction.

More Details:

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/11/exclusive-inside-iraqs-biggest-potential-weapon-mass-destruction-mosul-dam.html>

- **Al-Hashd al-Shaabi reports capturing an Islamic State weapons cache in Iraq's Kirkuk**

Near Hawija, Kirkuk province, al-Hashd al-Shaabi media reported that the 52nd Brigade al-Hashd al-Shaabi (Badr Organisation) captured Islamic State weapons caches that included small arms, artillery rockets, tank ammunition, and suicide bomb belts.

More Details:

<http://www.janes.com/article/77001/al-hashd-al-shaabi-reports-capturing-an-islamic-state-weapons-cache-in-iraq-s-kirkuk>

- **Australia joins others in providing financial support to Iraq for reconstruction**

Australia has joined the United States in announcing the provision of financial aid to support displaced persons in Iraq and promote stability in the country, the Australian Ambassador to Iraq said on Wednesday. Following a meeting in Baghdad with Iraqi Planning Minister Salman Jumaili,

Australian Ambassador Christopher Langman said his country would provide USD 100 million “over the next three years to support displaced people and provide stability.”

More Details:

<http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/b84d95df-1bd8-4011-b96f-01383e71f3c2>

- **Armed Kurdish groups want disputed territory back in Iraq**

The myriad armed groups in Iraq are constantly emerging, merging and dividing. The list is as mutable as everything else in the country. Get ready to add some more names. Iraqi security sources told Al-Hayat on Dec. 18 that a new group has formed called Khawbakhsh, which is Kurdish for “volunteers.” The group calls for the “liberation” of Kirkuk and Tuz Khormato from the Iraqi army and the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), which recaptured those areas from Kurdish forces in October. Khawbakhsh has been accused of shelling houses Dec. 5 and targeting federal forces.

More Details:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/01/khawbakhsh-kirkuk-kurdistan-iraq-tuz-khurmatu.html>

- **Funds that Pence promised might finally be flowing to Iraq’s Christians**

In a speech at an international conference on the persecution of Christians last October, Vice President Michael R. Pence promised that the U.S. would “stop funding ineffective relief efforts at the United Nations” and “provide support directly to persecuted communities” through the U.S. Agency for International Development.

More Details:

<https://aleteia.org/2018/01/12/funds-that-pence-promised-might-finally-be-flowing-to-iraqs-christians/>

- **U.S. to withdraw more troops from Iraq in coming months**

The U.S. ambassador to Iraq Wednesday said that there would be a new decrease of U.S. troops in Iraq in the upcoming months. In a press conference for some local media at the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, Ambassador Douglas Silliman said “the presence of U.S. forces in Iraq has been decreased, especially in Anbar province in coordination with the Iraqi forces,” according to al-Sumaria News Agency.

More Details:

http://www.infosurhoy.com/cocoon/saii/xhtml/en_GB/topstories/u-s-to-withdraw-more-troops-from-iraq-in-coming-months/

- **Iraq says 26 companies allowed to bid for oil, gas blocks in border areas**

The Iraqi oil ministry said on Friday 26 companies have qualified to bid for oil and gas blocks in border areas. Five companies qualified recently to take part in the bidding round, alongside 21 others already selected, the ministry said in a statement.

More Details:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-oil/iraq-says-26-companies-allowed-to-bid-for-oil-gas-blocks-in-border-areas-idUSKBN1F10NB>

- **'Social reconstruction' is vital for long-term stability in Iraq**

Parts of Iraq, including the once ethnically diverse city of Mosul, remain unsafe for Christians and other minority groups, more than a month after the government declared victory over Daesh. Speaking during a debate in the House of Lords on Thursday discussing the rights of religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq, Christopher Cocksworth, Lord Bishop of Coventry, described the “terrible tears in the fabric of Iraqi society” and emphasised the importance of “social reconstruction” in ensuring the stability and success of post-conflict Iraq.

More Details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1224086/middle-east>

2. SYRIA

- **Lavrov, Zarif discuss ways to solve crisis in Syria politically**

Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, discussed with his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif, the situation in Syria and ways to solve crisis in it politically. “Lavrov and Zarif, in their telephone conversation on Friday, exchanged views on the situation in Syria as the date of holding Syrian National Dialogue Conference scheduled for in Russia’s Sochi, approaches” Russian Foreign Ministry statement said.

More Details:

<https://sana.sy/en/?p=124133>

- **Moscow: US De-facto Occupies Part of Syria, Hinders Humanitarian Aid**

All limitations on the access of humanitarian convoys to the Rukban refugee camp in the Al-Tanf area in Southern Syria – which is de-facto occupied by US forces – must be lifted, the Russian Foreign Ministry said. Moscow has firmly emphasized the need to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity

and independence of Syria in the implementation of humanitarian deliveries and the observance of international humanitarian law, RT reported.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961022000263>

- **Syria opposition launch new offensive against regime in Idlib**

Opposition groups in Syria's north-western Idlib province launched a new counteroffensive against Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's forces yesterday, with many observing the usage of Turkish military equipment by militant factions. The largest opposition-held area, Idlib has been under attack for many months with Syrian and Iranian forces escalating airstrikes and ground assaults in the past three weeks, resulting in a string of villages being won by the regime.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180112-syria-opposition-launch-new-offensive-against-regime-in-idlib/>

- **Syria: UN concerned as government attacks intensify**

Civilians continue to die, victims of the Syrian government's intensified attacks on rebel-held areas in the Damascus suburb. More than 85 civilians have been killed in the past 12 days.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/syria-concerned-government-attacks-intensify-180112094226161.html>

- **Regime forces kill 400 in Syria's Eastern Ghouta, Idlib**

At least 400 civilians were killed over the past two months as regime forces intensified attacks on Syria's besieged Eastern Ghouta district and the northern province of Idlib, according to the Syrian group, White Helmets. Since Nov. 14 last year, Eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus, which is a part of a de-escalation zone, has remained the target of fierce attacks by Bashar al-Assad regime.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/regime-forces-kill-400-in-syrias-eastern-ghouta-idlib/1028082>

- **Putin slams drone attacks on Russian military facilities in Syria**

The recent attempted attacks by drones on Russian military bases in Syria was a provocation aimed at destroying previous agreements and damaging relations between Russia, Turkey and Iran, Russian

President Vladimir Putin said Thursday. "We know who they are, who paid who for this provocation and what the actual sum was...This kind of incidents...are provocations aimed at destroying previous agreements," Putin said at a meeting with heads of Russian printed media and news agencies.

More Details:

http://www.china.org.cn/world/2018-01/12/content_50218315.htm

- **UN official: Iran's cooperation in Syria valuable**

UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs has acknowledged Iran's cooperation in Syria in a meeting with Iranian ambassador to Damascus. At the meeting held at Iran's Embassy in Syria, Mark Lowcock described his meeting with Syrian officials as positive and said that Iran has been playing a valuable role with regard to Syria.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82793132>

3. IRAN

- **Islamic unity effective measure to confront US plots: Iran**

The press attaché at the Iranian Embassy in Pakistan strongly believes unity and solidarity in the Islamic World are the effective measures to confront US conspiracies and interventions. Speaking to daily The Nation, Abbas Badrifar said that the US is not ending its enmity and hostility towards countries of the region and Iran is not immune from that.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82793539>

- **No revolution in sight**

Forty years after the start of the Islamic Revolution, Iran is once again convulsed with protests. Many of the economic problems facing the country today resemble those in the 1970s, and the regime appears to be scarcely less repressive and ossified than it was back then. Nevertheless, the current protests are unlikely to be the beginning of a new revolution, says Ulrich von Schwerin While Iran is still busy debating how to interpret the protests of the past few weeks, the fortieth anniversary of the Islamic Revolution is upon us. On 8 January 1978, thousands of students took to the streets of Qom, Iran's theological centre, to protest against an article that sharply attacked Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

More Details:

<https://en.qantara.de/content/protests-in-iran-no-revolution-in-sight>

- **Italy signs EU's biggest ever credit deal with Iran**

Italy and Iran on Thursday signed a framework credit agreement to fund investments worth up to 5 billion euros (\$6.02 billion) in Iran, Italy's Economy Ministry said. The deal was signed in Rome between Bank of Industry and Mine and Middle East Bank of Iran, and the investment arm of Italian state-owned holding Invitalia, the ministry said, Reuters reported.

More Details:

<http://iran-daily.com/News/208008.html>

- **Trump decided to extend sanction relief for Iran – report**

President Donald Trump has reportedly decided to extend sanctions relief to Iran, upholding Washington's end of the P5+1 nuclear deal, but it is likely that new sanctions targeting Iranian businesses will also be implemented. Trump's Friday announcement will "reflect frustration at European allies and at Congress" for dragging their feet over proposed legislative changes that would call for stricter enforcement of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), according to Bloomberg News foreign policy reporter in Washington.

More Details:

<https://www.rt.com/usa/415715-trump-iran-sanctions-relief/>

- **Senior MP: Advocates of Human Rights Supporting MKO Terrorists**

A senior Iranian lawmaker blasted certain western countries that claim to be advocates of human rights for supporting the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO, also known as the MEK, PMOI and NCRI), a terrorist group that has killed over 17,000 Iranians. "The MKO that has received asylum from France is today supported by the upholders of human rights although it massacred thousands of people in Iran," Naqavi Hosseini said.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961022000557>

- **EU State Signs Biggest Credit Deal with Iran as US Decision on Sanctions Looms**

Despite the United States' criticism of the Iran nuclear deal, the European Union is sticking to the agreement, confirming that it is working. Iran and Italy have signed a credit agreement, providing financing to industrial and development projects in the Islamic country, including those in infrastructure, construction, oil and gas, electrical energy, and the chemical, petrochemical, and

metallurgical industries, Italy's Economy Ministry stated, adding that Iran will provide a government guarantee to the contract.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/business/201801121060706311-italy-eu-iran-nuclear-deal/>

- **US words have no weight with anybody: Zarif**

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif late on Wednesday slammed US House of Representatives for its anti-Iran resolution in support of recent unrests in the country, reiterating “US words have no weight with anybody including the Iranian nation.” Talking to reporters in Moscow, he said the Iranian nation has shown that it is pursuing its rights and the government insists on upholding public rights including their rights to election and criticism.

More Details:

http://en.abna24.com/news/iran/us-words-have-no-weight-with-anybody-zarif_876892.html

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Palestine minister: US responsible for Israel settlement expansion**

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Maliki criticised the US government for “giving the greenlight” to Israel to do “whatever it wants with Palestinian land”, in regards to Israeli announcements of plans to build over 1,000 new illegal settlement units in the occupied West Bank. Israel’s announcement of its plans to build 1,122 new settlement units in the occupied West Bank was “one outcome of US President Donald Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital”.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180112-palestine-minister-us-responsible-for-israel-settlement-expansion/>

- **Irish Foreign Minister visits Gaza Strip**

The Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney, arrived on Thursday to Gaza Strip and visited a number of projects funded by his country. The Irish Minister entered Gaza Strip via the Israeli-controlled Beit Hanoun crossing for a few hours visit. During the visit, Coveney met with officials of a number of international organizations working in the besieged Strip.

More Details:

<https://english.palinfo.com/news/2018/1/11/Irish-Foreign-Minister-visits-Gaza-Strip/>

- **Teenage Palestinian protesters shot dead by Israeli soldiers**

Two Palestinian teenagers were shot dead in clashes with Israel's military Thursday, Palestinian officials said, amid tensions over US President Donald Trump's recent Jerusalem declaration and a deadly gun attack. Amir Abu Musaid, 16, was shot in the chest near the border fence east of Al-Bureij camp in central Gaza, the health ministry in the strip announced, following protests against Trump's controversial recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86739>

- **France condemns Israeli government approval of over 1,000 new settlement units**

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement on Thursday condemning Israel's approval of the construction of over 1,100 new illegal settlement units in the occupied West Bank. On January 10, Israel's Civil Administration's Higher Planning Committee met and approved a total of 1,122 new housing units in 20 settlements and outposts throughout occupied Palestinian territory, while on Thursday, January 11, additional tenders for 651 units were published, according to settlement watchdog Peace Now.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=779745>

- **Israel razes land south of Nablus in revenge of shooting**

Israeli bulldozers Friday razed Palestinian lands near the Israeli settlement outpost of Havat Gilad, south of Nablus in the northern West Bank, said a local government source. Ghassan Daghlas, who monitors settlement construction in the northern West Bank, said six Israeli bulldozers began razing a large tract of land near the spot where an Israeli Jewish settler was killed in a drive-by shooting on Tuesday.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=4hkf3Ja96012842640a4hkf3J>

- **Israel Arrests Ahed Tamimi's Teen Cousin, Ramps up Bullying of Activist Family**

During a dawn raid on the Nabi Saleh village near the Palestinian city of Ramallah Thursday, Israeli forces arrested Palestinian teen Mohammed Bilal Tamimi, a cousin of the iconic anti-occupation activist Ahed Tamimi who is facing up to 12 years in prison over charges of assaulting Israeli soldiers and throwing rocks.

More Details:

<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/israel-arrests-ahed-tamimis-teen-cousin-ramps-bullying-activist-family/>

- **Palestine not to work with Trump: PA minister**

Palestine will not change its position to demand an alternative to US in the negotiations and working with the US President Donald Trump's administration, the Planning Minister for the Palestinian National Authority said. 'Despite of the US persistence in staying as a mediator to the negotiations with Israel [the Zionist regime], Palestinian National Authority will not change its stance,' Nabil Shaath told the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) on Friday.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82793484>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Syria, Lebanon discuss boosting economic relations**

Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade Mohammad Samer al-Khalil said that Syrian-Lebanese economic relations are built on solid foundations and the next stage will witness further development of commercial activity between the two countries. Meeting the Lebanese Ambassador in Damascus, Saad Zakhia, al-Khalil hoped that the Syrian-Lebanese cooperation will regain its momentum after eradicating terrorism and re-opening border crossings thanks to the heroism and sacrifices of the Syrian army and its allies.

More Details:

<https://sana.sy/en/?p=124130>

- **Lebanese PM Lauds Hezbollah, wants best of relations with Iran**

Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri has called for his county to be kept out of regional conflicts, lauding the Hezbollah resistance movement for doing its part to de-escalate the tensions. In an interview with The Wall Street Journal on Wednesday, Hariri said he was open to Hezbollah continuing to participate in the government following the elections slated for May.

More Details:

http://en.abna24.com/news/middle-east/lebanese-pm-lauds-hezbollah-wants-best-of-relations-with-iran_877036.html

- **US to probe Hezbollah 'narcoterrorism'**

The US Justice Department announced Thursday creation of a special task force to investigate what it called "narcoterrorism" by the powerful Lebanese movement Hezbollah. The unit will comprise specialists on money-laundering, drug trafficking, terrorism and organized crime, targeting Iran ally Hezbollah's sprawling network, whose reach extends across Africa and into Central and South America, the department said.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86736>

- **Lebanon, Jordan extradite ex-Iraq ministers to Baghdad**

Lebanon and Jordan have agreed to hand over two former Iraqi officials who were convicted of "embezzling state funds", Iraq's Commission of Integrity (COI) announced yesterday. "The Lebanese Presidency issued a decree No. 2097 on 27 December 2017, announcing the extradition of the convicted former minister of trade, Abdel Falah Al-Sudani, to the judicial authorities in the Republic of Iraq," COI said in a statement.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180112-lebanon-jordan-extradite-ex-iraq-ministers-to-baghdad/>

- **UNRWA must continue serving refugee communities — FM**

Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Thursday stressed that UNRWA must continue providing full services to refugees in the educational, health and relief fields. Meeting UNRWA Commissioner General Pierre Krahenbuhl, the minister emphasised that empowering UNRWA to help it continue its services to refugees is an international responsibility, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/unrwa-must-continue-serving-refugee-communities-%E2%80%94-fm>

- **Khatib: Decentralization to Be Adopted in Implementation of Waste Plan**

Minister of Environment Tarek al-Khatib said on Friday that administrative decentralization will be adopted while implementing the solid waste plan agreed during the Cabinet meeting on Thursday. "Administrative decentralization will be adopted and local administrations will be responsible for the treatment of waste," said Khatib at a press conference.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/240794-khatib-decentralization-to-be-adopted-in-implementation-of-waste-plan>

- **Aoun: no protection for anyone concerning scourge of drugs**

President of the Republic Michel Aoun on Friday underlined that "there is no protection for anyone concerning the scourge of drugs," stressing that punishment shall entail all perpetrators, whether drug dealers or their protectors. President Aoun was speaking in front of a delegation of the "J.A.D-Youth against Drugs" Association, led by Joseph Al-Hawat, who called on the President this morning at the Baabda palace.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/87178/Aoun-No-protection-for-anyone-concerning-scourge-of-drugs>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **UN: Saudi-led coalition is undermining Yemen government**

A 79-page undisclosed UN report accuses Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of undermining the Yemen government, the Washington Post reported yesterday. The publication claims that both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have supported armed forces to fragment the authority of the Yemeni government led by the internationally recognised President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi which has bolstered the fragmentation of the country.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180112-un-saudi-led-coalition-is-undermining-yemen-government/>

- **Qatar complains to UNSC after UAE violates airspace**

Qatar has complained to the UN Security Council after the United Arab Emirates violated its airspace. In a letter to the secretary-general of the United Nations, the Qatari delegation said a UAE fighter jet entering Qatar's airspace was a flagrant violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/qatar-files-complaint-UNSC-uae-violates-airspace-180112084554125.html>

- **Egyptian intelligence seeks to promote conflict between Qatar and Kuwait**

A new leak, revealed by Mekameleen TV suggests that an Egyptian intelligence officer has directed a media experts to sue discontent between Kuwait and Qatar. The leaked tape received the voice of Captain Ashraf Al-Kholy, an Egyptian intelligence officer, directing media expert Azmi Mujahid to work on creating conflict between Kuwait and Qatar.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180112-leaked-audio-egyptian-intelligence-seeks-to-promote-conflict-between-qatar-and-kuwait/>

- **Saudi Arabia to receive 17 Blackhawk helicopters from Sikorsky**

The U.S. Army has awarded Sikorsky a contract worth nearly \$200 million for 17 unique UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters for Saudi Arabia. The terms of the deal were announced Thursday by the Department of Defense. The agreement reached between the Army and Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, is worth more than \$193.8 million under the terms of a firm-fixed-price foreign military sale.

More Details:

<https://www.upi.com/Defense-News/2018/01/12/Saudi-Arabia-to-receive-17-Blackhawk-helicopters-from-Sikorsky/5671515765546/>

- **Saudi Arabia Takes Corruption Crackdown Global**

Saudi Arabia is to seek the extradition of nationals abroad believed to have been involved in corruption, as the kingdom continues its unique anti-graft purge, Sabq reported on Thursday. Attorney General, Sheikh Saud Al Mujab, said that suspects who have fled the country would be indicted and international arrest warrants sought once enough evidence is collected.

More Details:

<https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/7488-saudi-arabia-takes-corruption-crackdown-global>

- **Landmine explosion leaves 3 soldiers dead in Saudi Arabia's Najran**

At least three Saudi soldiers have been killed when a powerful landmine explosion ripped through their military vehicle in the kingdom's southwestern border region of Najran. An informed source, requesting anonymity, told Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network that the incident occurred on Friday afternoon, identifying the deceased as Mohammed al-Fatih, Hazam al-Farwan and Hayef al-Qahtani.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/12/548685/Landmine-explosion-leaves-3-soldiers-dead-in-Saudi-Arabias-Najran>

- **UAE Press: Qatar cannot deceive the world any longer**

A local newspaper today commented editorially on the comments made by Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani on a television programme on a Doha channel Wednesday evening, saying, "Qatar's foreign minister managed to mislead, misinform and misspeak in a display of verbal dexterity that defied and defiled truthfulness."

More Details:

<http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302659580>

7. EGYPT

- **Egypt: Notorious former security chief cleared by court**

Egypt's feared former interior minister was acquitted on corruption charges on Thursday and will be released from detention pending a retrial. Habib el-Adly was sentenced to seven years in prison for embezzling \$110m of public funds after being convicted in April 2017.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/egypt-notorious-security-chief-cleared-court-180111162657174.html>

- **President Sisi appoints Egypt's ambassador to Saudi Arabia as non-resident ambassador to Yemen**

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi has appointed the Egyptian ambassador to Saudi Arabia as non-resident ambassador to Yemen, Egypt's official gazette said on Thursday. Nasser Zaghoul Hamdy has served as the Egyptian ambassador to Saudi Arabia since 2015. El-Sisi also ordered the transfer of Egypt's current ambassador to the Libyan government Mohamed Abu Bakr Saleh to serve at the Foreign Ministry's General Office.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/287934/Egypt/Politics-/President-Sisi-appoints-Egypt-ambassador-to-Saudi.aspx>

- **Egypt Central Bank opens account to collect spare change**

The Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) said yesterday it had opened a bank account to collect “spare change” to support developmental projects in the country. The Central Bank said in a statement that it will deduct spare change from cheques and bank remittance after obtaining written approval from customers.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180112-egypt-central-bank-opens-account-to-collect-spare-change/>

- **Former army Chief of Staff Sami Anan to run for presidency**

Secretary General of the Egypt Arab Party, Samy Balah, reported that the party had officially announced the presidential candidacy of the former Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Sami Anan, for the election scheduled in March. He emphasized that it was Anan’s decision to run for president.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/breaking-former-army-chief-of-staff-sami-anan-to-run-for-presidency/>

- **Ex-army chief to contest Egypt elections: Party member**

Egypt’s former military chief of staff Sami Anan, will run in Egypt’s upcoming presidential election, the former military general’s party said. Speaking to Anadolu Agency by phone, Sami Balah, Sec-Gen. of Arabism Egypt Party, said that the supreme committee of the party approved a decision of choosing Anan - founder of the party- to run in presidential election.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/ex-army-chief-to-contest-egypt-elections-party-member/1029168>

- **Egypt overturns sentence of Mubarak-era minister**

An Egyptian court yesterday quashed the conviction and prison sentence for alleged corruption against former interior minister, Habib Al-Adly, and ordered a retrial, Reuters reported quoting official judicial sources. In April, a criminal court sentenced Al-Adly, who served under ousted president Hosni Mubarak before his fall following a popular uprising in 2011, to seven years in prison after convicting him on charges of abusing public funds and embezzlement.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180112-egypt-overturns-sentence-of-mubarak-era-minister/>

- **Israel said to complain to Egypt over exclusion from diplomatic briefings**

Israel has reportedly lodged a formal complaint with Egypt for regularly excluding it from diplomatic events and briefings. A recent missive from Ambassador to Egypt David Govrin said “Israel’s embassy in Cairo wishes to express its chagrin over the fact that it has never been invited” to briefings held by the Egyptian Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Kan public broadcaster reported Thursday.

More Details:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-said-to-complain-to-egypt-over-exclusion-from-diplomatic-briefings/>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Sporadic unrest continues in Tunisia**

Sporadic unrest continued to shake parts of Tunisia Thursday, as authorities said more than 600 people had been arrested in a week of protest as anger at austerity measures boils over on the streets. Tunisia, whose 2011 revolt sparked the Arab Spring, has been convulsed with sometimes violent demonstrations since late Monday that have seen protesters clash with security forces and left dozens injured.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86740>

- **Unrest in Iran & Tunisia caused by economic downturn – so why is Western spotlight on Tehran?**

At least one person has been killed and several more injured as protests in Tunisia rage over the country’s economic situation. But why has the West not paid as close attention to them as it has to similar grievances in Iran? The protests, which have seen police use tear gas to disperse stone-throwing crowds, first erupted around the New Year period in the capital Tunis and other cities. As with the recent demonstrations in Iran, the reason behind the unrest is economic. Many people are angry at the new budget plan introduced by the Tunisian government on January 1, which includes a rise in fuel prices and tax hikes.

More Details:

<http://tdailynews.net/story-z9694090>

- **Morocco and South Africa Bolster Cooperation in Africa**

Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, met with Maite Nkoana-Mashabane the South African Minister for International relations and Cooperation on Tuesday in Rabat. They were both attending the Ministerial Conference for an African Agenda on Migration. After the meeting, Bourita explained the importance of Morocco-South Africa collaboration on the basis of a win-win strategic partnership. "The role of Morocco and South Africa remains pivotal regarding issues related to peace, development and migration," Bourita said.

More Details:

<http://marocgazette.com/story-z2908254>

- **HNEC reports 484,717 new voters registered up to 11 January**

Libya's High National Elections Commission (HNEC) has announced that up to 11 January, new voter registration had reached 484,717 voters since registration opened on 6 December 2017. When added to those already registered, it brings the total of those registered to 1,994,008. This compares to the grand total of 2,865,937 registered for the 2012 General National Congress (GNC) elections – the first Libyan elections to be held since the pre-1969 kingdom era. The 2018 figure surpasses the voter registration of 1,509,291 for the 2014 House of Representatives (HoR) elections.

More Details:

<https://www.libyaherald.com/2018/01/12/hnec-reports-484717-new-voters-registered-up-to-11-january/>

- **Caid Essebsi/Chahed talk: Development of security and social situation at focus**

President Beji Caid Essebsi discussed on Friday with Prime Minister Youssef Chahed the general situation in the country, according to a Presidency of the Republic press release. The meeting also focused on "the development of the security and social situation that is now moving towards appeasement and stability, following the recent events in some regions of the country," the same source specified.

More Details:

<https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/9748147-caid-essebsi-chahed>

- **IS suicide attack failed near Libya's Sirte**

Security forces at Abu Grein checkpoint near Sirte failed an IS suicide attack as they arrested a man with a car filled with an explosive material ready for detonation. According to local media, the man was apprehended Thursday before he arrived at the checkpoint and upon investigation he said he was not part of IS but they used him and his car for the suicide mission.

More Details:

<http://www.libyanexpress.com/is-suicide-attack-failed-near-libyas-sirte/>

- **Gunmen attack Tripoli house of Defense Minister Al-Mihdi Al-Baraghati**

Unknown gunmen launched a pre-dawn attack on the house of Defense Minister of Presidential Council, Al-Mihdi Al-Baraghati, in Janzour district, Tripoli, on Friday, causing some material damage. Sources said the attackers sprayed the house with machine guns and fired an RPG rocket before escaping. A CCTV footage released by Al-Baraghati's guards showed the moment of the attack and the damage caused to the house.

More Details:

<https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/video-gunmen-attack-tripoli-house-defense-minister-al-mihdi-al-baraghati>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Punjab govt makes headway in Zainab case**

The Punjab government on Friday claimed to have made progress in the investigation in the rape and murder case of eight years old Zainab. Speaking at a press conference, Malik Ahmed Khan, a spokesman for the provincial government, said looking at the evidence collected by investigators so far he can say the culprits would be taken to logical end.

More Details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/267653-punjab-govt-says-headway-made-in-zainab-case>

- **Ziae spurns claims of new Balkh governor introduction at Shaheen Corps**

Shaheen Military Corps in northern Balkh province rejected rumours regarding the introduction of new governor at the military facility. Hassan Ziae, spokesman for the Shaheen Military Corps, said the new Balkh governor was not brought to the facility for introduction and the government had no programme of this nature.

More Details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/01/12/ziae-spurns-claims-new-balkh-governor-introduction-shaheen-corps>

- **MQM, PML-F among 284 political parties de-listed by ECP for not complying with new regulations**

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday de-listed 284 political parties — including PML-Functional, MQM-Pakistan, Sunni Tehreek and JUI-Sami — for not complying with the new rules set for political parties under the Elections Act 2017. The action was taken against political parties which failed to submit "a list of at least two thousand members with their signatures or thumb impressions along with copies of their national identity cards" and Rs200,000 as enlistment fee according to Section 202 (2) of the Elections Act 2017 within the stipulated time.

More Details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1382477/mqm-pml-f-among-284-political-parties-de-listed-by-ecp-for-not-complying-with-new-regulations>

- **Merit prevails when institutions are strong: Imran Khan**

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan said on Friday that the state of merit prevails when the institutions are strong in a country. The PTI chief was addressing a ceremony in Peshawar, where he said that the Sharif brothers have been ruling Punjab since 19 years but one can take a look at the state of Punjab police.

More Details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/176544-merit-is-present-when-institutions-strong-imran-khan>

- **Kabul police intervene, rescue trader as kidnappers demanded \$3m in ransom**

The Kabul police forces have rescued a local trader who was kidnapped by a gang of dangerous kidnappers and were demanding a ransom of \$3 million in exchange for his release. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officials said Friday that a group of at least twelve people have been arrested in connection to the kidnapping case.

More Details:

<https://www.khaama.com/kabul-police-intervene-rescue-trader-as-kidnappers-demanded-3m-in-ransom-04250>

- **US To Send In More Combat Advisers To Afghanistan**

The US military officials have said the United States will send in at least 1,000 new combat advisers to Afghanistan as part of its efforts to boost US training commitment to the country. Besides the combat advisers, the US Defense Department is planning to reallocate drones and other hardware, the Wall Street Journal quoted US military officials in a report on Thursday.

More Details:

<http://www.tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan/us-send-more-combat-advisers-afghanistan>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Russian and Turkish foreign ministers discuss Syria by phone - Russia**

Russia's foreign ministry said on Friday that Minister Sergei Lavrov had spoken over the phone with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu about preparations for the Syrian Congress of National Dialogue. The congress is expected to be held in Russia's resort Sochi in late January.

More Details:

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-russia/russian-and-turkish-foreign-ministers-discuss-syria-by-phone-russia-idUKKBN1F112L?rpc=401&>

- **Turkish PM says increased attacks on Syria's Idlib to cause new migration wave**

The Syrian regime's intensifying attacks on the rebel-held Idlib province will spark a new migration wave, Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım said on Jan. 1, calling on Russia and Iran to warn Syrian authorities over the attacks. Speaking to reporters after Friday prayers, Yıldırım also said the attacks would only damage the peace process in Syria.

More Details:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-pm-says-increased-attacks-on-syrias-idlib-to-cause-new-migration-wave-125634>

- **160 Syrians held in western Turkey**

At least 160 Syrians were held in the Aegean province of Izmir when they attempted to cross into Greece using an illegal route on Friday, according to a security official. The detentions were made after gendarmerie teams in Izmir carried out five operations in Cesme and Dikili districts of the city.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/197759/160-syrians-held-in-western-turkey>

- **Turkey condemns Israeli approval of new settlements**

Turkey on Friday "strongly" condemned Israel's approval of thousands of new housing units for Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank. "We strongly condemn the Israeli authorities' continuing

the progress of the construction of more than 1,000 houses in the occupied West Bank as part of illegal settlements," said a Foreign Ministry statement.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkey-condemns-israeli-approval-of-new-settlements/1029353>

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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