



# MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

## GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

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## 1. IRAQ

- **MP Rejects Foreign Interference In The Iraqi Political Affairs, Especially In The Upcoming Elections**

A member of the parliamentary committee on foreign relations, Khalid al-Asadi expressed his rejection to foreign interference in the Iraqi political affairs, especially in the upcoming parliamentary elections. "The sovereignty of Iraq is a red line and no one can encroach it," he said in a statement, and the Iraqis, after their cohesion in combating and defeating terrorism, have overcome the stage of sectarian strife, which established by regimes that did not live up the political process that followed the fall of the former regime. .

More Details:

[http://www.ninanews.com/News\\_Details.aspx?07k0jxMMWvKlpJir7vlf0w%253d%253d](http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?07k0jxMMWvKlpJir7vlf0w%253d%253d)

- **Iraq: 38 Dead, 105 Wounded in Baghdad Twin Suicide Attack**

The Interior Ministry said two suicide bombers blew themselves up at a busy street market in central Baghdad on Monday, in back-to-back explosions that killed at least 38 people, while another 105 people sustained injuries. The attackers struck during the rush-hour at the city's Tayran Square on Monday morning. Ambulances rushed to the scene as security forces sealed off the area with yellow tape, World News reported.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961025000806>

- **Jabouri urges maintaining Iraq's unity following Baghdad bomb attack**

Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Salim al-Jabouri condemned on Monday a double suicide bombing that took place in Baghdad earlier in the day. During a parliament session, Jabouri urged "maintaining national unity in Iraq and making the utmost use of the great victory achieved over terrorism."

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/jabouri-urges-maintaining-iraqs-unity-following-baghdad-bomb-attack/>

- **Iraqi PM Abadi announces candidacy for May elections**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced plans Sunday to run for re-election in May at the head of a new coalition separate from key rival and Dawa party co-member Nuri al-Maliki. Abadi said

in a statement he set up the "Victory Alliance" coalition as a "cross-sectarian" list aimed at overcoming divisions and battling inequalities in the country.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86764>

- **Ammar al-Hakim Joins Abadi's Alliance Ahead of Elections**

Iraqi influential Shi'ite cleric and head of Hikma Movement announced on Sunday that his political faction has joined Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi for the upcoming election. Ammar al-Hakim's movement is now officially part of Abadi's alliance previously formed with Badr Brigade of Iranian-affiliated militia groups of Hashd al-Shaabi.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/407183>

- **Progress in First High-Level Talks between Baghdad, Erbil**

A delegation from the Kurdistan Regional Government, who visited Baghdad on Saturday, said that talks with the federal government were positive, noting that representatives from Baghdad would visit Erbil on Monday to discuss the resumption of international flights at Kurdistan airports and controversial issues between the two sides. Iraqi Interior Minister Qassem al-Araji reiterated the need to discuss solving problems of the international entry points, customs, airports, and dams "on the basis of the constitution and federal laws," a statement published by the Kurdish delegation said, as reported by Rudaw news agency.

More Details:

[http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN\\_Direje.aspx?Jimare=42548](http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=42548)

- **Abadi orders hunt of sleeper terrorist cells after Baghdad attacks**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Monday ordered the hunt of sleeper terrorist cells following the recent attack in Baghdad on Monday morning. Abadi made the remarks after a meeting with intelligence leaders in Baghdad operations on Monday.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/22414/Abadi-orders-hunt-of-sleeper-terrorist-cells-after-Baghdad-attacks>

- **‘We want our homes cleared’ – Iraqi IDPs face lethal hazards as govt. calls for ‘voluntary returns’**

Displaced people from the Iraqi city of Fallujah living in a camp in Khalidiya, al-Anbar Province, shared their stories of trying and failing to return to their homes on Tuesday, a day before Iraq’s Ministry of Displacement and Migration Spokesperson said the Iraqi government would encourage the voluntary return of willing displaced people to areas liberated from the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL).

More Details:

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/want-homes-cleared-iraqi-idps-face-lethal-hazards-govt-calls-voluntary-returns/>

- **Iraq’s Hakim urges dialog to solve regional tensions**

Head of Iraqi National Alliance Ammar Hakim called for Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt to enter negotiations to settle regional differences. “Iraq has changed a lot in post-Daesh era since the country has left behind many crises,” Hakim said Sunday in a meeting with Saudi envoy to Iraq Abdulaziz Al-Shammari.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82796068>

- **Iraq’s Abadi-Maliki Differences Manifest in Party-List Representation**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and his predecessor, Nouri al-Maliki, will run in the upcoming elections on two separate rosters, despite both taking part in the Islamic Dawa Party. Dawa Party neutralists say that this separation offers diversity will benefit the party and for the State of Law Coalition, because there are those who support Abadi and do not back Maliki, and vice versa.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1142221/iraq%E2%80%99s-abadi-maliki-differences-manifest-party-list-representation>

- **USAID Shifts on Aid to Christians, Yazidis in Iraq**

USAID, responding to pressure late last year from Vice President Mike Pence, announced today that it is altering its policies in order to ensure that millions of dollars in U.S. aid appropriated by Congress reaches Iraqi religious minorities. Pence, during an October speech at a dinner highlighting the plight of persecuted Christians, Yazidis, and other religious minorities in the Middle East and elsewhere, promised that the Trump administration would stop the State Department's "ineffective" relief

efforts that directed all the funds to United Nations, which has a religious-blind policy of disbursing the funds to all refugees in Iraq.

More Details:

<http://freebeacon.com/issues/usaid-shifts-on-aid-to-christians-yazidis-in-iraq/>

- **Iraq's Anbar eyes political battle as displaced return**

Two months after government forces retook Iraq's last major city from the Islamic State (IS), the country is preparing for parliamentary elections slated for May. Anbar, its largest and westernmost region, is where IS took control of its first Iraqi city in January 2014. Fighters from the international terrorist group are reportedly still hiding in parts of its vast desert.

More Details:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/01/anbar-iraq-election-sunni.html>

- **Iraq's PM Abadi to represent 'diverse coalition' against Nouri al-Maliki in election**

Iraq's prime minister said on Saturday he will lead a "cross-sectarian" list in national elections proposed for May, hoping to build off last year's victory against the Islamic State group. Haider al-Abadi, who comes from Iraq's Shia majority, assumed office in 2014, weeks after IS stormed across northern and central Iraq.

More Details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/1/14/iraqs-pm-abadi-to-run-against-maliki-in-election>

- **Iraq's Prime Minister Creates Electoral Bloc to Take Part in Parliamentary Vote**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Abadi announced on Sunday the creation of an electoral bloc dubbed "Victory Alliance" to participate in the forthcoming parliamentary election, a statement released by Abadi's press service said. "The 'Victory Alliance' will work for the benefit of all Iraqis, will strengthen unity and sovereignty of the state. The 'Victory Alliance' will move forward protecting the victory [over the Daesh terrorist group, outlawed in Russia] and the memory about the fallen, as well as fighting against corruption," the statement said.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201801141060742978-iraq-electoral-bloc/>

- **Ayatollah al-Modarresi called for formation of cultural and moral movement in Iraq**

In his weekly message to the people of Iraq, Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad-Taqi al-Modarresi called on the people of this country to overcome the existing problems and crises by trusting in God Almighty and said, “People who have been able to put living through a very difficult time during the former dictatorship [of Saddam] and the destructive wars behind them can now end their political and economic problems with resolute determination.”

More Details:

[http://en.abna24.com/news/middle-east/ayatollah-al-modarresi-called-for-formation-of-cultural-and-moral-movement-in-iraq\\_877330.html](http://en.abna24.com/news/middle-east/ayatollah-al-modarresi-called-for-formation-of-cultural-and-moral-movement-in-iraq_877330.html)

- **Iraq nears oil output capacity of 5 million bpd**

Iraqi Oil Minister Jabar al-Luaibi said on Saturday that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) member's oil output capacity is nearing 5 million barrels per day (bpd), but the country will remain in full compliance with its output target under a global pact to cut supplies. Luaibi said the supply cut agreement between OPEC and non-OPEC producers should continue despite a rise in oil prices.

More Details:

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1084702.shtml>

- **Bombers Return to Baghdad; 19 Killed in Iraq**

Iraqi troops announced the clearance of Islamic State militants from 360 villages in the Hawija area. The maneuvers allowed for the reopening of a highway between Kirkuk and Tikrit. Operations in Diyala province are ongoing. Belgian Defense Minister Steven Vandeput is complaining about being kept from visiting troops in Kurdistan and has asked Belgium to respond to Baghdad diplomatically.

More Details:

<https://original.antiwar.com/updates/2018/01/13/bombers-return-baghdad-19-killed-iraq/>

- **Iran, Iraq ink air transport agreement**

In a bid to ease the travel of pilgrims and expand transportation cooperation, Iran and Iraq signed an air transportation agreement on Saturday. The Civil Aviation Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran (CAOIRI) announced that an air transportation agreement was signed by Iraq's Transport Minister Kazem Finjan and Iranian Deputy Road Minister and the Head of CAOIRI Ali Abedzadeh on Saturday.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/131212/Iran-Iraq-ink-air-transport-agreement>

- **Iraq's top Shiite cleric criticises Abadi's alliance with militias**

Iraq's top Shiite cleric denounced on Sunday prime minister Haider Al Abadi's announcement to join forces with Iran-backed militias in the upcoming parliamentary elections. Moqtada Al Sadr said he was "surprised" by Mr Al Abadi's "Victory Alliance" with Al Fatih coalition, a group of powerful Shiite militias that includes Al Badr Organisation, Asaib Ahl Al Haq, Harakat Hizbollah Al Nujaba and others.

More Details:

<https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/iraq-s-top-shiite-cleric-criticises-abadi-s-alliance-with-militias-1.695519>

- **Iraq Sunni tribes: Postpone elections until displaced return**

Sunni tribes in northern Iraq yesterday called for parliamentary elections to be postponed until hundreds of thousands of displaced people return to areas liberated from Daesh. "A majority of the residents of Sunni areas are still displaced after Iran, Daesh and their agents destroyed their towns," the spokesperson for the alliance of Arab tribes in Ninevah, Sheikh, Muzahim Al-Hawyeet, said in a statement.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180115-iraq-sunni-tribes-postpone-elections-until-displaced-return/>

- **Deputy FM confirms broad int'l participation in Iraq's reconstruction conf.**

Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said on Monday that the forthcoming conference on reconstruction of Iraq will have broad international participation and a significant contribution. This came in a statement to reporters after the opening of the Embassy of Ghana to Kuwait, in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Ghana's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration Shirley Botchway.

More Details:

<https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2684044&Language=en>

## 2. SYRIA

- **U.S.-Led Coalition Helps To Build Border Force in Syria**

The U.S.-led coalition fighting the extremist group Islamic State (IS) says it is working to create a 30,000-strong border-security force in Syria. The coalition said on January 14 that the force will be deployed at the borders of the area controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance of Arab and Kurdish militias dominated by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia.

More Details:

<https://en.radiofarda.com/a/syria-us-coalition-helps-build-border-force-sdf-kurds/28975060.html>

- **Russia May 'Undertake Measures' After US Decision on Border Force in Syria**

Russia and its partners will undertake measures as a response to the US-led coalition's decision to create the so-called "Border Security Force" on the Syrian territory controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces militia, Chairman of the Defense Committee of Russia's State Duma Vladimir Shamanov told Sputnik on Sunday. On Saturday, the Defense Post news website published an article, in which the spokesman of the US-led coalition fighting against the Islamic State (Daesh) terrorist group said that the coalition was engaged in a training of a 30,000-strong force on the territory within Syria currently controlled by SDF to maintain security in controlled area along the Syrian border.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201801151060753205-russia-measures-usa-syria-security/>

- **Syria and Russia's latest offensive has killed 177 civilians in 2 weeks**

The Syrian regime and Russia began a new air and land offensive on December 31 to take back the rebel-held rural Eastern Ghouta region outside of Damascus. New figures show how the offensive has devastated the local population. 177 civilians, including 51 children, have been killed in the last two weeks, and 811 more have been wounded, according to a statement released on Sunday by the White Helmets, a Syrian volunteer rescue group.

More Details:

<http://uk.businessinsider.com/syria-russia-offensive-eastern-ghouta-kills-civilians-2018-1>

- **Syria army seizes dozens of villages in advance on key base — monitor**

Syrian troops have recaptured dozens of towns and villages from extremist fighters, a monitor said Sunday, bringing them closer to a key military airport in the country's northwest. "In the past 24

hours, regime forces have taken at least 79 villages in the southern parts of Aleppo province, an area near the Abu Duhur military airport,” said Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/region/syria-army-seizes-dozens-villages-advance-key-base-%E2%80%94-monitor>

- **A bloody start to 2018 in Syria; Over 30 children killed in two weeks – UNICEF**

Only in the first 14 days of the year, more than 30 children have been killed in escalating violence in Syria's East Ghouta, where an estimated 200,000 children have been trapped under siege since 2013, the top United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) official in the Middle Eastern country said Sunday.

More Details:

[http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=58419#.WlyeLK5l\\_cs](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=58419#.WlyeLK5l_cs)

- **Did Assad gain what he wanted in Syria?**

Syria's social fabric has dramatically changed, having experienced more than six years of civil war. Almost 500,000 people have been killed and more than 10 million have been displaced since 2011. At the very beginning of the war, people were demanding reforms, but by refusing to pay heed to their demands and quenching peaceful protests, Bashar Assad created a vacuum in the country that was filled by Daesh, al-Qaida and other radical groups. Assad said the economic siege imposed by the West is making the humanitarian crisis worse, but what about the humanitarian crisis caused by Assad, while regime powers were using chemical weapons on innocent civilians more than two dozen times?

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2018/01/15/did-assad-gain-what-he-wanted-in-syria>

- **Syria: Manbij shops close in protest against PKK/PYD**

Shopkeepers in Syria's northern Manbij city kept their businesses closed on Sunday in protest against the recent killing of two civilians by the PKK/PYD terrorist group. The move came after Syrian activists' call on social media the previous day after Hannan Al-Jarivah, 25, and Abbud Al-Minkhan, 23, were tortured to death by terrorists on Friday.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/syria-manbij-shops-close-in-protest-against-pkk-pyd/1030758>

- **Opposition accuses Syria of Damascus 'assassination'**

Syria's leading opposition body on Saturday blamed the government for the mysterious death of one of its members after a car accident in the capital Damascus. Munir Darwish, 80, was a writer and founder of a Cairo-based opposition group seen as "tolerated" by President Bashar Al Assad's government.

More Details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/d44fb795-7795-43d7-8063-ad5a1cb39298.aspx>

- **Head of Syria regime prison killed in mysterious circumstances**

The director of Sednaya Prison, the most notorious jail run by the Syrian regime, Brigadier General Mahmoud Ahmad Maatouq has been killed in what are being described as mysterious circumstances, the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper reported. Websites loyal to the Syrian regime said Maatouq died while on "duty" without specifying where he was killed, but other webpages said he was probably killed in the town of Harasta in Eastern Ghouta in December.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180115-head-of-syria-regime-prison-killed-in-mysterious-circumstances/>

- **We will continue counter-terrorism efforts in Syria**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, said we will continue counter-terrorism efforts in Syria in parallel with preparation for the Syrian National Dialogue Congress in Sochi. During a press conference on Monday, Lavrov hoped that the Syrian National Dialogue Congress will contribute to finding a solution to the crisis in Syria.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/131274/We-will-continue-counter-terrorism-efforts-in-Syria>

- **Russia warns against unilateral US border force plan in Syria**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says US plans to establish 30,000-strong new border security force led by YPG militants could jeopardise Syria's territorial integrity. Russia's foreign minister on Monday slammed the US plan to form an army led by the YPG militants, warning that it could jeopardise Syria's territorial integrity.

More Details:

<https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/russia-warns-against-unilateral-us-border-force-plan-in-syria-14259>

### 3. IRAN

- **Trump issues stay of execution for Iran deal, but warns 'last time'**

US President Donald Trump announced Friday he would not reimpose nuclear sanctions on Iran, keeping a landmark 2015 deal alive... for now. The Republican leader grudgingly agreed to sign sanctions waivers, ensuring Washington will live up to its commitments for another 120 days, but he cautioned it would be "for the last time."

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86756>

- **Iran's Larijani: No further injustice should be allowed against Palestinians**

Iran's Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani told a major Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) parliamentary gathering that no more unfairness should be allowed against Palestinians. Larijani made the statement in his opening address to the 13th Session of OIC Member States Parliamentary Union (PUIC) in Tehran Monday.

More Details:

<https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2684077&Language=en>

- **Trump's racial slur prelude to era of modern savagery: Iran**

Iran's Parliament (Majlis) Speaker Ali Larijani says recent derogatory remarks made by United States President Donald Trump to refer to Haiti and African countries may be ushering in an era of "modern savagery." "I was deeply sorrowed to hear that America's president the other day used humiliating language to speak about certain countries," Larijani said on Monday.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/15/548987/Iran-Trump-shithole-racial-slur-Ali-Larijani-era-of-modern-savagery>

- **Russia Does Not Support Trump Push to Alter Iran Nuclear Deal**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Monday that Russia does not support U.S. President Donald Trump's calls to renegotiate the international agreement limiting Iran's nuclear program. Trump said Friday he was waiving for the last time sanctions the U.S. agreed to lift under the 2015

deal, and that Congress and European partners had 120 days to come up with ways to fix what he called "disastrous flaws" in the agreement.

More Details:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/russia-does-not-support-trump-push-to-alter-iran-nuclear-deal/4208183.html>

- **Iran to develop onshore section of gas pipeline to Oman, interested in Gazprom's participation**

In February 2017, Tehran and Muscat signed a preliminary agreement on the pipeline project that is estimated to cost \$1.2 billion. But the venture is still at an embryonic stage. Based on an earlier agreement in 2013, Oman would take in 28 mcm/d of gas from Iran for 15 years. The 2 nations hope the gas flow will begin by 2020.

More Details:

<https://neftgaz.ru/en/news/view/168322-Iran-to-develop-onshore-section-of-gas-pipeline-to-Oman-interested-in-Gazprom-s-participation>

- **Iranian FM: US ruled by a man using vulgar, unacceptable words against nations**

A man who has taken power in the United States is unfortunately addressing the world nations with 'vulgar and unacceptable words,' Iranian foreign minister said here on Saturday. The US president's vulgar words against the nations are unacceptable and unbelievable, and show his lack of understanding, Zarif said at the opening of the first Asian Cultural Dialogue Conference.

More Details:

[http://en.abna24.com/news/iran/iranian-fm-us-ruled-by-a-man-using-vulgar-unacceptable-words-against-nations\\_877187.html](http://en.abna24.com/news/iran/iranian-fm-us-ruled-by-a-man-using-vulgar-unacceptable-words-against-nations_877187.html)

- **Pro-government protest in front of Iranian embassy in London**

Pro Iranian-government demonstrators on Sunday gathered in front of the Iranian embassy in London to condemn counter revolutionary groups activities and show their support for the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Dozens of protesters carrying Iranian flag and images of the Iranian Leader, expressed their anger at a few supporters of the terrorist group "Mujahedeen Khalq Organization" (MKO) who had gathered in front of the Iranian embassy in London a couple of days ago.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82796058>

- **Iran Downplays US Madman Tactic as Worn-Out Strategy**

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani underlined that US President Donald Trump's exercise of the mad man tactic to horror the world is a worn-out and ineffective strategy. "The tactic of scaring the international community from the decisions of a madman is tired and ineffective and the US ruling system has become internationally isolated due to unwise decisions and repeated mistakes," Shamkhani said at a meeting with Syrian Parliament Speaker Hammoudeh Sabbagh in Tehran on Monday.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961025001176>

- **Iran Caught in "Missile Trap" After UN Report**

Iran's missile program has been the target of criticism by the US and the European Union for quite some time. When Yemeni Houthi rebels launched a missile toward Saudi Arabia on November 5, 2017, Iran was accused of having supplied it to them, a charge Iranian officials categorically denied. But on Friday, January 12, a United Nations panel concluded that the Islamic Republic had violated a UN arms embargo by directly or indirectly providing missiles and drones to the Shi'ite rebels in Yemen.

More Details:

<https://iranwire.com/en/features/5101>

- **Iran Parliament Speaker Rejects Any Changes to Nuclear Deal**

A top Iranian parliamentarian has ruled out the possibility of making any changes to the Iran nuclear deal. Iran's Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani says the country's legislature does not accept any changes in the structure of the nuclear deal that Tehran signed with six world powers in 2015, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

More Details:

<http://ifpnews.com/exclusive/iran-parliament-speaker-rejects-changes-nuclear-deal/>

## 4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Palestinians meet to respond to Trump's 'slap of the century'**

Palestinian leaders met Monday to plan a response to what they see as US President Donald Trump's attack on their long bid for statehood, after Mahmud Abbas denounced White House peace efforts as the "slap of the century". The rare meeting of the Palestinian Central Council -- a high-ranking arm

of the Palestine Liberation Organisation -- was called after Trump's controversial December 6 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86783>

- **Gaza economy 'on verge of collapse': Israeli officials**

The economy of the Gaza Strip is on the verge of total collapse, Israeli security officials have warned. According to Israeli daily Haaretz on Monday, security officials and military officers have voiced concern about the deteriorating situation in the Palestinian territory.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/gaza-economy-on-verge-of-collapse-israeli-officials/1031212>

- **Car bomb blast in Lebanon's Sidon wounds Hamas member**

A car bomb explosion in the southern Lebanese city of Sidon has slightly wounded a member of Hamas, according to the Palestinian group, which blamed Israel for the assassination attempt. Mohammed Hamdan suffered a leg injury on Sunday after a bomb planted in his car detonated, Hamas' media group said in a statement.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/car-bomb-blast-lebanon-sidon-wounds-hamas-member-180114154420846.html>

- **'Economics not politics': How India built its relations with Israel**

In 1960, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had just flown into Gaza to meet Indian troops, stationed there with the UN. Fresh from the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London, Nehru was running on a high after he stood alongside Malaysia in its condemnation of the Commonwealth's support for apartheid South Africa.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/how-india-built-relations-with-israel>

- **Posters in Jerusalem declare city the 'capital of Palestine'**

"Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Palestine" appears in Arabic on Palestinian flags placed on several city streets • "Any incitement in the public sphere in Jerusalem must be met with a strong hand,"

says head of Jerusalem advocacy group. Posters reading, "Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Palestine" in Arabic were placed on several of the city's streets on Saturday.

More Details:

<http://www.israelhayom.com/2018/01/14/posters-in-jerusalem-declare-city-the-capital-of-palestine/>

- **Palestine Central Council meeting faces tough choices**

Eighty members of the Palestine Central Council (PCC) will meet on Sunday in the temporary Palestinian political capital of Ramallah to review and recommend the direction of the Palestinian struggle. The PCC, a medium body between the Palestine National Council (PNC, Palestine's Parliament in exile) and the PLO Executive Committee, last met in March 2015.

More Details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1224661/middle-east>

- **Top Iranian MP calls for holding referendum in Palestine**

Senior Iranian lawmaker called for holding referendum in the Occupied Palestinian Lands to determine destiny of the region. Alaeddin Boroujerdi, president of the eighth session of the Palestinian permanent committee in Tehran said on Saturday that Iran pursues resolution of the Palestinian issue based on democratic ways and international norms.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82794735>

- **There will be no one-state solution in Israel-Palestine**

The latest trend in the debate on Israeli-Palestinian peace is to trumpet the inevitability of a one-state solution. The recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by the administration of US President Donald Trump has depressed many involved in the peace process. Saeb Erekat, the main Palestinian negotiator, responded that it was time to "struggle for one state with equal rights for everyone living in historic Palestine, from the river to the sea." Several veteran participants in the peace process agree that a one-state solution is increasingly likely.

More Details:

<http://www.atimes.com/article/will-no-one-state-solution-israel-palestine/>

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Hezbollah's popular support jeopardises Lebanon's alliances**

Lebanon enters 2018 enjoying a period of relative unaccustomed stability over the past year that has allowed the government to act normally, a parliament to function unhindered and long-awaited legislation to be passed. The reason for this rare harmony among Lebanon's traditionally fractious politicians is, paradoxically, down to Hezbollah and its allies having triumphed over a rival Sunni, Christian and Druze parliamentary bloc, known as the March 14 coalition.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86782>

- **Germany delivers military aid to JAF to help protect borders**

German Federal Minister of Defence Ursula von der Leyen on Sunday voiced her country's commitment to helping, through aid, Jordan maintain its security and stability. "Jordan is a reliable and strong partner in a troubled region ... a partner with whom we seek close and sustainable cooperation," the minister said during a ceremony on Sunday that saw the delivery of military equipment to the Jordan Armed Forces/Arab Army (JAF).

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/germany-delivers-military-aid-jaf-help-protect-borders>

- **House delegation underscores Hashemite custodianship on Jerusalem shrines**

The 13 session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) kicked off in the Iranian capital with participation of 54 Islamic nations. The Arab delegations taking part in the Tehran deliberations picked Jordan as a member of the permanent inter-faith panel.

More Details:

[http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=36974#.Wlysf5I\\_cs](http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=36974#.Wlysf5I_cs)

- **Senate starts debating general budget**

The Senate started on Monday debating the 2018 draft laws for the state budget and the budgets of independent government units. During the session, which was chaired by Senate President Faisal Al Fayez and attended by Prime Minister Hani Al Mulki and cabinet members, Rapporteurs of the Senate's Financial and Economic Committee Senator Umayya Toukan read the committee's report in addition to 18 recommendations on the 2018 state budget.

More Details:

[http://petra.gov.jo/Public\\_News/Nws\\_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site\\_id=1&NewsID=336116&CatID=13](http://petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site_id=1&NewsID=336116&CatID=13)

- **Bassil from Berqayel: our unity in facing challenges protected our country despite our political differences**

Foreign and Expatriates Minister Gebran Bassil indicated that the unity of the Lebanese in confronting challenges served to protect their nation despite their political differences. Speaking from Berqayel, another leg in his Akkar region tour on Sunday, Bassil stressed that "the State is our salvation and is the one that unites us, and we aspire for a civil state."

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/87214/Bassil-from-Berqayel-Our-unity-in-facing-challenges-protected-our-country-despite-our-political-differences>

- **Lebanon's energy promise could be regional game changer**

Three interconnected developments that occurred in December 2017 will have a lasting impact on Lebanon. The Lebanese government made two long overdue decisions: launching the energy exploration process and setting the parliamentary elections date for next May. The third development is a breakthrough that has regional implications: a United Nations-sponsored meeting was held between Lebanon and Israel to discuss for the first time the demarcation of their maritime border, an official Lebanese source told Al-Monitor.

More Details:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/01/lebanon-energy-exploration-gas-sea-regional-game-changer.html>

- **Lebanon's Hariri Rules out Possibility of Postponing Parliamentary Polls**

Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri stressed on Thursday that the parliamentary elections scheduled for May 6 would be held on time, adding that there was "no room to discuss any postponement under any circumstances."

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1141126/lebanon%E2%80%99s-hariri-rules-out-possibility-postponing-parliamentary-polls>

## 6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **UN report on Yemen finds Iran in violation of arms embargo**

Iran has violated a UN arms embargo by failing to block supplies to Yemen's Huthi rebels of ballistic missiles that were fired at Saudi Arabia, a UN panel of experts says, bolstering US and Saudi claims of Tehran's military involvement in Yemen. The report does not identify the supplier but makes clear that missile debris inspected by the experts were of Iranian origin.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86757>

- **UAE says civilian plane 'intercepted' by Qatari jets**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday alleged that one of its civilian aircraft had been intercepted by Qatari fighter jets -- claims swiftly denied by Doha. The plane had been flying en route to Bahraini capital Manama when it was intercepted by Qatari warplanes, the UAE's General Authority for Civilian Aviation (GCAA) said in a statement carried by the official WAM news agency.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/uae-says-civilian-plane-intercepted-by-qatari-jets/1031316>

- **Qatar emir building palace in Oman's mountains as ties strengthen**

The emir of Qatar is building a new "palace" in the Jebel al-Akhdar mountains in Oman. Construction at the site, which overlooks a scenic canyon 2,000m above sea level, began in late 2017 and is due for completion in 2019, according to people connected to the project.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/emir-qatar-building-palace-oman-s-mountains-ties-strengthen-1268600232>

- **Oman, Saudi Arabia discuss regional, international issues**

On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al-Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers yesterday received Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef Al Saud, Minister of Interior in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). During the meeting, Prince Abdulaziz conveyed greetings of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of the KSA to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, along with his and Crown Prince's best wishes of permanent success to the country's leader and the government, and the Omani people further growth and prosperity.

More Details:

<http://timesofoman.com/article/126089/Oman/Sayyid-Fahd-reviews-relations-with-Saudi-minister>

- **Saudi accused of rights abuses in Yemen civilian deaths**

A UN report on human rights abuses related to foreign intervention in Yemen details the extensive civilian casualties inflicted by the Saudi-led coalition's air attacks. The United Nations panel examined 10 air attacks in 2017 that killed 157 people, and found that the targets included a migrant boat, a night market, five residential buildings, a motel, a vehicle and government forces, according to a copy of the report shown to Al Jazeera.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/steps-minimize-civilian-death-yemen-ineffective-180112174259352.html>

- **Yemen: Ports need to be reopened permanently before more people die**

On 19 January, the 30-day period set by the Saudi-led coalition in which blockade measures were eased, will expire. This is generating widespread uncertainty about what happens next, leaving millions of Yemeni people hanging in the balance. "What looked on paper to be a good policy for easing the blockade has done very little to lower prices of essential daily items like fuel and food," said the Norwegian Refugee Council's Country Director in Yemen, Mutasim Hamdan. "The instability caused by the coalition's arbitrary policies, closing ports one day and reopening them on another, is making problems worse for the Yemeni population. Shipping companies, importers and vendors are left without assurance that the port will remain open, and this is serving to sustain inflation that makes food unaffordable for most Yemeni people."

More Details:

<https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-ports-need-be-reopened-permanently-more-people-die>

- **Qatar Red Crescent Projects Assist More Than 7.2 Million in 2017**

More than 91,000 people in Qatar and 7.2mn internationally have benefited from Qatar Red Crescent Society's (QRCS) various projects in 2017, it was announced. QRCS' operations covered 25 countries in the fields of healthcare, shelter, water and sanitation, food security, training, and other relief aid. "QRCS' 2017 results further show a firm belief in its strategic mission of social development in Qatar, as well as relief of the vulnerable around the world," said QRCS president Dr Mohamed bin Ghanem al-Ali al-Maadheed, who chaired a recent board of directors' meeting aimed at mapping the organisation's strategy and action plan for the coming 12 months.

More Details:

<https://www.albawaba.com/business/pr/qatar-red-crescent-projects-assist-more-72-million-2017-1074398>

- **Amnesty urges Bahrain to quash latest death sentences, end crackdown on dissent**

Amnesty International has called upon Bahraini officials to overturn recent death sentences passed on six civilians over terror-related charges, and to put an immediate end to the violent crackdown on political dissidents and anti-regime protesters in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom. The London-based non-governmental organization announced in a statement on Saturday that the case must be transferred “to a competent ordinary court that meets international fair trial standards” and noted that confessions extracted under torture needed to cease.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/13/548794/Amnesty-urges-Bahrain-to-quash-latest-death-sentences-end-crackdown-on-dissent>

## 7. EGYPT

- **Egypt looks ahead to presidential election but little doubt about outcome**

Notaries in hundreds of offices in Egypt have started registering powers of attorney filed by citizens for potential presidential candidates as Egypt prepares for the start of the 2018 presidential election campaign. The vote will be March 26-28. In the event of an election run-off, the second round of the voting would be April 24.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86768>

- **'Politics is dead': Egyptians find little reason for optimism in new elections**

Looking back, Mohamed Hamdi, a taxi driver in his early 40s, now says he was "overzealous" in his support for the new president, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, when he secured a landslide win in Egypt's presidential elections little more than three years ago. "I had high hopes he would heavily improve this battered economy after many years of instability. Today, I just want him to lose and leave the presidency, but only God knows when this might happen," he told Middle East Eye during a ride in central Cairo.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/politics-dead-egyptians-find-little-reason-optimism-new-elections-54675057>

- **Cairo: Muslim Brotherhood's efforts to disrupt Egypt-Kuwait relations are known**

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry confirmed on Friday evening that Egypt highly values its relations with the sisterly state of Kuwait and its people, and that attempts by the Muslim Brotherhood group to disturb relations are quite known. In response to negative and false news perpetuated by the Muslim brotherhood media to create strife between Egypt and the state of Kuwait and other countries in the Gulf, Egyptian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ahmed Abu Zeid said that Egypt values the deep ties and profound relations with Kuwait and the neighboring Gulf states.

More Details:

<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2018/01/13/Cairo-Muslim-Brotherhood-s-efforts-to-disrupt-Egypt-Kuwait-relations-well-known.html>

- **Egypt's presidential candidates race against a ticking clock**

Egypt's presidential elections are less than two months away. With voting set to take place on 26, 27 and 28 March, presidential candidates are required to submit all necessary papers to Egypt's National Elections Authority (NEA) between 20 and 29th of January. Leftist human rights lawyer Khaled Ali announced on Thursday he will run for elections, calling "the sons of January 25th to make 25 thousand recommendations and submit them by the upcoming 25 January [the seventh anniversary of 2011 Egyptian revolution]."

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/287977/Egypt/Politics-/Egypys-presidential-candidates-race-against-a-tick.aspx>

- **MP Anwar al-Sadat backtracks on presidential bid**

Head of Egypt's Reform and Development Party Mohamed Anwar al-Sadat said that he is retracting his bid to run in the upcoming presidential elections scheduled for March. "This came after the opinion of the campaign, we decided not to participate in the elections, or continue in the electoral process. However we call on people to actively participate in the electoral process," Sadat said during a press conference held at the party headquarters on Monday.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/mp-anwar-al-sadat-backtracks-on-presidential-bid/>

- **El-Gendy appointed minister of local development in cabinet reshuffle**

The Egyptian Parliament announced Sunday appointing head of the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS) Abu Bakr El-Gendy as the new minister of local development as part of the cabinet reshuffle. El-Gendy was born on 20 January 1949. He graduated from the Egyptian

Military Academy in 1968, then earned a Master of Military Science in 1979, and was a fellow of the Higher War College in 1993.

More Details:

<https://dailynewsegypt.com/2018/01/14/el-gendy-appointed-minister-local-development-cabinet-reshuffle/>

- **Egypt's parliament approves cabinet reshuffle**

Egypt's House of Representatives has approved the new cabinet reshuffle on Sunday. In a plenary session, the Parliament voted on the reshuffle of the cabinet, which is still presided by Sherif Ismail. The reshuffle included four ministries: Head of Cairo Opera House Inas Abdel-Dayem was chosen for the Ministry of Culture, instead of Helmy el-Namnam, while Head of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) Abu Bakr al-Gendy was appointed as the Minister of Local Development, instead of Mohamed Zein el-Abidin.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptdailynews.com/detail/egypts-parliament-approves-cabinet-reshuffle>

- **'I Will Block Facebook': MP Mortada Mansour Announces Presidential Candidacy**

Egyptian Member of Parliament Mortada Mansour declared on Saturday his intention to run for president in the upcoming elections scheduled for March 26-28, saying that his first decision would be to block social networking site Facebook. In a phone interview with the Ala Mas'oliety late night talk show on TV channels Sada al-Balad, Mansour said that he will begin collecting the required endorsements on Sunday.

More Details:

<https://egyptianstreets.com/2018/01/14/i-will-block-facebook-mp-mortada-mansour-announces-presidential-candidacy/>

## 8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Protests held on Tunisia uprising anniversary**

Tunisians on Sunday marked seven years since the uprising that launched the Arab Spring, with fresh protests and some people expressing pride but others anger over persistent economic problems. The North African country is seen as having had a relatively smooth democratic transition since the January 14, 2011 toppling of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali after 23 years in power.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86776>

- **Tunisia protests: Reforms announced amid new rallies**

The Tunisian government has announced a wave of social reforms, reacting to days of demonstrations by anti-austerity protesters. There were fresh protests on Sunday, the seventh anniversary of the ousting of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali.

More Details:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42679328>

- **Libyan capital's airport shut as nine killed in fighting**

At least nine people have been reported killed in fierce fighting that has forced the closure of the Libyan capital's only civilian airport on Monday, officials said, after a militia in charge of security there said it had been attacked. The Facebook page of Mitiga airport, in eastern Tripoli, said "flights have been suspended because of fighting that broke out this morning".

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/libyan-capitals-airport-closes-militia-clashes-leave-10-dead-1838887656>

- **US Travel Advisory Lists Morocco as Safe, Algeria Requires 'increased precaution'**

Morocco has been described as one of the few safest countries in the globe for travelers by the US travel advisory issued by the US Department, while Algeria has been included in tier 2 danger requiring "increased precaution" due to the threat of terrorism. The contrast reflects the security gap in the Maghreb between oil-rich but insecure Algeria and Morocco's safe environment conducive for tourism and business. While the Moroccan Sahara remains one of the safest regions in Africa, the US state department goes as far as warning travelers from travelling to the Algerian desert due to terrorism activity.

More Details:

<http://northafricapost.com/21734-us-travel-advisory-lists-morocco-safe-algeria-requires-increased-precaution.html>

- **Tunisia's economy: tourism slumps as pm seeks to calm protests**

The Tunisian government is hoping a boost in aid to poorer families will help contain growing discontent over new austerity measures. It has pledged an extra \$70m after protests swept across

the country. Al Jazeera met Iskandar Zribi, an owner of an ecofriendly hotel in Zaghouan - a town south of the capital, Tunis.

More Details:

<http://tdailynews.net/story-z9703200>

- **Morocco's FM Meets with Head of MINURSO in Rabat**

Nasser Bourita, Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, received on Friday the Head of MINURSO and UNSG Special Representative Colin Stewart. During his Rabat visit, Stewart also met with Morocco's Minister of Interior, Abdelouafi Laftit, who reiterated Morocco's warning and formal protest over the Polisario's repeated illegal operations in the Guerguerat area buffer zone.

More Details:

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/01/238273/morocco-western-sahara/>

- **Armed group attack PC defence minister's house**

Unknown gunmen armed with an RPG attacked the home of the Presidency Council's (PC) defence minister Mahdi Al-Bargathi yesterday, though no one was hurt. The gunmen are reported to have also sprayed the house with bullets at around 4.30am and caused small amounts of material damage to Bargathi's home in Janzour, Tripoli. It is believed he was at home with his family.

More Details:

<https://www.libyaherald.com/2018/01/13/armed-group-attack-pc-defence-ministers-house/>

- **Violent clashes erupt in Libya's capital Tripoli as armed brigade attack Mitiga prison**

Violent clashes have erupted Monday morning in Libya's capital, Tripoli, as armed brigades attack Mitiga prison inside Mitiga Airport in Sooq Jumua area. According to social media, all schools returned the students to their homes, the roads surrounding the fight in the beach road and Sooq Jumua as well as Bab Tajura areas were shut down.

More Details:

<http://www.libyanexpress.com/violent-clashes-erupt-in-libyas-capital-tripoli-as-armed-brigade-attack-mitiga-prison/>

## 9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Our police system is obsolete, needs reforms: Bilawal**

Chairperson Pakistan People’s Party Bilawal Bhutto said that the police system in our country has gone obsolete and it needs to be reformed. He was addressing a press conference here on Monday. Bilawal Bhutto said that awareness and education are very important to fight the menace of child abuse.

More Details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/268770-our-police-system-is-obsolete-needs-reforms-bilawal>

- **Ghani, UN team discuss stepped-up pressure on Pakistan**

President Ashraf Ghani and members of a visiting UN Security Council have conferred on the increasingly volatile security situation in Afghanistan and the region at large. Efforts against terrorism, corruption, drugs-trafficking, acceleration of the peace process and preparations for parliamentary elections were also discussed, the Presidential Palace said on Monday.

More Details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/01/15/ghani-un-team-discuss-stepped-pressure-pakistan>

- **IHC declares transfer of FIR against ex-CIA station chief in 2009 drone case 'illegal'**

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday restored the First Information Report (FIR) against former CIA station chief Jonathan Banks and legal adviser John A. Rizzo, while declaring the transfer of the said FIR to the Fata Secretariat "illegal". Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui of the IHC presided over the hearing regarding the registering and subsequent handling of an FIR against the American nationals, who allegedly masterminded drone attacks in North Waziristan — one of which resulted in the death of petitioner Abdul Karim Khan's son and brother in December 2009.

More Details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1383089/ihc-declares-transfer-of-fir-against-ex-cia-station-chief-in-2009-drone-case-illegal>

- **Pak support critical for US to succeed in Afghanistan: Senior State Dept official**

US Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Ambassador Alice Wells said on Monday that Pakistan’s support was critical to the success of her country’s strategy in Afghanistan. Ambassador Wells called on Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua at the Foreign Office. Alice Wells was accompanied by senior officials from US National Security Council and Ambassador David Hale.

More Details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/176916-senior-state-department-official-arrives-in-pak-meets-foreign-secy>

- **US drones target ISIS gathering in East of Afghanistan**

The US unmanned aerial vehicles on Sunday targeted a gathering of the militants affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. According to the officials of the 201st Silab Corps of the Afghan army, the airstrikes were carried out in the vicinity of Deh Bala district.

More Details:

<https://www.khaama.com/us-drones-target-isis-gathering-in-east-of-afghanistan-04269>

- **FM Meets Russian Ambassador To Kabul**

Foreign Affairs Minister Salahuddin Rabbani met yesterday with Russian ambassador to Kabul Alexander Mantytskiy. In the meeting, the Russian ambassador to Kabul by recalling of his country's expanding cooperation with Afghanistan in various fields said that his country abided by its commitment to Afghanistan.

More Details:

<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/politics/item/31642-fm-meets-russian-ambassador-to-kabul.html>

- **Lawmakers Question Govt, Int'l Community's Efforts For Peace**

Some MPs said Afghanistan's problems are domestic and that they should be addressed by the National Unity Government leaders. As the efforts for peace accelerate by government and the international community in recent months, the Wolesi Jirga, Lower House of Parliament, Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahimy said effective steps have not been made by Afghanistan's partners and other relevant local and international organizations to ensure peace in the war-ravaged country.

More Details:

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/lawmakers-question-govt-int%E2%80%99l-community%E2%80%99s-efforts-peace>

## 10. TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkish army engages in northern Iraq for first time in nine years**

The Turkish military has launched a land operation against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq, stating that its aim is to "prevent PKK militants from threatening border security." The operation is the first time in nine years that Turkish land forces have engaged in Iraq.

More Details:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-army-engages-in-northern-iraq-for-first-time-in-nine-years-121032>

- **Erdogan: US trying to form a 'terror army' in Syria**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that the US was working to form a "terror army" on his country's southern border by training a new force in Syria that includes Kurdish fighters. "What we are supposed to do is to drown this terror army before it comes into being," he said in an address in the capital Ankara on Monday, calling the Kurdish fighters "backstabbers" who will point their weapons to the US in the future.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/turkey-slams-plan-kurds-syria-force-180115065210843.html>

- **US 'playing with fire' with PKK/PYD-led plan in Syria**

The U.S. is "playing with fire" with its PKK/PYD-led army plan in Syria, Turkish deputy prime minister said on Monday. "Letting the PYD/YPG -- PKK's branch in Syria -- by the U.S. to establish a so-called terror army for creating a terror corridor in the region on the pretext of combating Daesh, is not a fight against Daesh and terrorist organizations, rather a support to terrorism and terrorist organizations," Bekir Bozdogan wrote on his Twitter account.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/americas/us-playing-with-fire-with-pkk-pyd-led-plan-in-syria/1031243>

- **Turkey condemns US' YPG army plan in Syria**

Turkey has strongly reacted against the United States decision to build a new force with the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in order to secure Turkish and Iraqi borders with Syria. The Foreign Ministry slammed media reports that the U.S.-led international coalition against Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) would establish a 30,000-strong new border security force with the

Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—the U.S.-backed group that is largely controlled and manned by the People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria.

More Details:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-condemns-us-ypg-army-plan-in-syria-125730>

- **Turkish president, Qatari Emir to meet on Monday**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani will meet on Monday in the capital Ankara. "All aspects of bilateral relations will be discussed and views will be exchanged regarding bilateral matters," the Turkish presidency said in a statement.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/197865/turkish-president-qatari-emir-to-meet-on-monday>

- **Turkish military will soon start operation to clear Afrin of terrorists, Erdoğan says**

Turkish military will soon start an operation to clear northern Syria's Afrin and Manbij of terrorists, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Monday. "The Turkish Armed Forces will take care of the issues at Afrin and Manbij, the preparations are complete. The operation could start any moment," Erdoğan warned, adding that the military operation will continue until not a single terrorist is left at Turkish borders.

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/01/15/turkish-military-will-soon-start-operation-to-clear-afrin-of-terrorists-erdogan-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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