



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procces of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

Energy Security

Enerji Güvenliđi

Economy News

Ekonomi Haberleri

Peace Process

Barış Süreci

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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16 MARCH 2017

NO: 2339

1. IRAQ.....	4
• US-Led Coalition Strikes Engage Daesh Sniper Team near Mosul.....	4
• Sahwa militant killed in armed attack north of Baghdad	4
• Iraqi Army Says 60% of Western Mosul under Government Troops Control	4
• While All Eyes On Mosul, Extremists Return To Other Iraqi Provinces	4
• Iraqi forces to attack Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi once location provided	5
• 100,000 flee as Iraqi forces advance in west Mosul	5
• Freed from Islamic State, Yazidi women remain trapped by trauma	5
• PM Abadi and Kurdistan Region Representative to Meet US President.....	5
• Islamic State 'foreign fighters' mass grave uncovered near Fallujah	6
• Car bomb kills 8 in Iraq's Tikrit city.....	6
• Kurdistan Region of Iraq: 32 Arrested at Peaceful Protest	6
• Turkish PM invites Iraqi counterpart to Turkey	7
• Iraq receives 1st batch of Korean fighter jets	7
• Arab League chief in Baghdad for talks with Iraqi leaders, ahead of Arab Summit.....	7
• KDP condemns suppression of opposition in Rojava	7
• Kirkuk governor decrees Kurdish language, flag to be used in official business.....	8
• Mosul's growing humanitarian crisis as bad as feared.....	8
• ISIS executes nine people, including children, in Kirkuk	8
2. SYRIA.....	8
• 25 killed in second bombing in Damascus.....	8
• Syria bombers aimed to ruin peace talks: UN	9
• Syrian woman shares incredibly moving post about what she'd tell her younger self at the start of the war in Syria	9
• Safe Zones and the Armed Conflict in Syria	9
• Condemnations pour in following deadly bomb attacks in Damascus	9
• Syria conflict: Unravelling the puzzle	10
• Syria talks close as opposition continue boycott	10
• Syria's war: Dozens killed in Idlib air strikes.....	10
• Guterres: Peace in Syria is a 'Moral and Political Imperative'	10
• Lebanon moves forward on policy addressing Syrian refugees.....	11
3. IRAN.....	11
• Iran Keen on Mending Arab Ties	11
• Iran's Natural Gas Rush Won't Bring Export Riches	11
• Chabahar port is an unlikely litmus test for the US in Iran	11
• Pakistan's Sindh governor invites Iranian investors.....	12
• Iran: 1500 Arrested in the Fire Festivities	12
• Exporters aim to revive lucrative Iran sheepmeat trade	12
• The Iran Nuclear Deal has been a success for everyone involved	12
• Hizbullah Enduring a Financial Crisis	13

• Astana 3 Talks on Syria Flop ... Iran a Guarantor.....	13
• Iranian Gov't Set to Build Resilient Economy.....	13
4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE.....	13
• IDF Strikes Gaza Targets Overnight in Response to Rocket Fire.....	13
• Palestinian girl shot, injured at Gush Etzion junction after alleged vehicular attack.....	14
• Israeli Soldiers Abduct a Young Woman, And A Young Man, In Jerusalem And Jenin.....	14
• UN West Asia Commission Says Israel Imposed 'Apartheid Regime' on Palestinians.....	14
• Turkish aid agency revives development in Palestine.....	14
• Trump envoy welcomes idea of coexistence during Israel visit	14
• Israeli authorities destroy Bedouin crops in Negev	15
• Netanyahu Defies International Law by Holding Official Meeting in Occupied Zone	15
• Canada complicit in crafting colonial policies for Palestine	15
• Netanyahu asks Italy to oppose further UNESCO Jerusalem Resolutions	15
5. JORDAN and LEBANON.....	16
• Jordan's king meets with Trump adviser on Mideast peace push	16
• Jordan's back is against the wall	16
• IMF says conflicts in Syria and Iraq continue to weigh on Jordan's economy	16
• HRW commends Jordan proposed justice reforms.....	16
• Lebanon moves forward on policy addressing Syrian refugees.....	17
• Lebanese Hezbollah Describes as 'Appalling' Damascus Terrorist Blasts	17
• Israel to target people over Hezbollah status in Lebanon	17
• Gemayel: Taxes will inflate living expenses and strike economy.....	17
• Hizbullah Says Damascus Blasts 'Mark 2011 Conspiracy'.....	17
6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA.....	18
• Expo to save consumers from fake spare parts	18
• Qatari and Omani lenders benefit the most from easing funding pressures: Moody's	18
• Turkmenistan, Qatar sign energy, aviation, metrology, environmental protection cooperation deals	18
• French President Francois Hollande, Qatar's emir congratulate PM for BJP win	18
• China, Saudi Arabia eye \$65 billion in deals as king visits.....	19
• Soldier killed by Shia 'terrorist elements' in Saudi Arabia	19
• Russian humanitarian aid arrives in Yemen	19
• Yemeni President Hails Russian Role in Reconciliation Process.....	19
• Yemen hit by worst hunger crisis: UN study	19
• Saudi soldier killed in Yemen's retaliatory attack	20
7. EGYPT.....	20
• US: Moscow deployed forces to Egypt.....	20
• Saudi Aramco to Restart Shipments to Egypt after 6-Month Hiatus	20
• Egypt's official gazette publishes classification of prisoners pardoned by Sisi	20
• CAF senior official linked to marketing rights scam	21
• Egypt eyes mega construction businesses in five-year plan: minister.....	21
• Egypt among the three Arab countries most affected by hunger	21
• Egypt under Pressure Not to Engage With Iran	21
• Christianity and Judaism Create Terrorism no less than Islam?.....	21



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•	Cairo training 'Libyan forces': Egypt security official	22
•	Former Egyptian governor arrested for bribery over land in Maadi's Road 9	22
8.	NORTH AFRICA.....	22
•	Sellal in Niamey to co-chair 1st Algeria-Niger High Joint Commission.....	22
•	Algeria focuses on port training	22
•	Prices Will Not Be Enough to Revive Algeria's Energy Sector	23
•	Moroccan king sacks PM to unblock impasse	23
•	The Implications of Morocco's Membership of ECOWAS	23
•	Morocco-Madagascar economic forum opens in Casablanca	23
•	Tunisia trade deficit expands 86 pct in January-February vs last year.....	23
•	Sheikha Moza concludes visit to Tunisia	24
•	One of Libya's Rival Governments Asks Russia for Military Assistance	24
•	Libya govt forces overrun Tripoli militia headquarters	24
9.	AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN	24
•	Construction of CASA 1000 project on territory of Afghanistan to reportedly start in 2018 ...	24
•	Taliban leaders among 36 killed in latest airstrikes in Helmand	25
•	Islamabad, Kabul discuss issue of Afghan-based militants attacking Pak	25
•	Chinese primary school children visit Pakistan Embassy in Beijing.....	25
•	52 countries want to be part of CPEC: Nawaz Sharif	25
•	PM cautions against speculation about Panamagate case verdict	26
•	Pakistani Delegation Planning to Visit Iran for More Peace Pipeline Talks.....	26
•	Khalifa Ghwell's National Salvation Government loses its Rixos HQ	26
•	Afghan authorities reject 'insider' speculations	26
•	Pakistan committed to women empowerment across all development sectors: Khawar Mumtaz	27
10.	TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST.....	27
•	Nearly 3 million Syrians registered in Turkey.....	27
•	Number of Israeli tourists to Turkey up by over 60%.....	27

1. IRAQ

- **US-Led Coalition Strikes Engage Daesh Sniper Team near Mosul**

The US-led coalition conducted 25 strikes consisting of 81 engagements against Daesh in Iraq and Syria on Tuesday, including five strikes that engaged a sniper team near Mosul, the Central Command said in a press release. The Mosul strikes also damaged 18 supply routes and suppressed 11 mortar teams and six tactical units, according to the Central Command.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201703151051606394-coalition-sniper-team-mosul/>

- **Sahwa militant killed in armed attack north of Baghdad**

A police source revealed that a member of Sahwa militia (Sunni Awakening Movement) was killed, while another one was wounded in an armed attack, north of Baghdad, Alsumaria News reported on Wednesday. The source said, "Today, unidentified gunmen fired indiscriminately on a checkpoint belonging to Sahwa militia in al-Raoud area, north of Baghdad, killing one members and wounding another."

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/sahwa-militant-killed-armed-attack-north-baghdad/>

- **Iraqi Army Says 60% of Western Mosul under Government Troops Control**

Spokesperson of the Counter-Terrorism Forces, Sabah al-Nuaman, said 60 percent of Western Mosul has become under Iraqi security forces' control, Iraqi News reported. "Operations are underway in the Eastern axis of operations and are not affected by inclement weather," Nuaman said.

More details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13951225001327>

- **While All Eyes On Mosul, Extremists Return To Other Iraqi Provinces**

In the town of Baiji in central-northern Iraq, a senior police commander has been recording attacks by extremists – almost every day. "Before, extremist attacks were more rare," the police chief, Saad al-Azzawi, told NIQASH. "But over the past few weeks, the numbers have increased in a very frightening way. Our city was cleared of extremists from the Islamic State two years ago and they rarely came back. But things have changed recently. The extremists keep carrying out these hit-and-run attacks. Last month we recorded 40 of them."

More details:

<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/ghosts-of-the-islamic-state-while-all-eyes-on-mosul-extremists-returns-to-other-iraqi-provinces>

- **Iraqi forces to attack Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi once location provided**

Iraqi government forces will attack the leader of the ISIS terrorist group, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as soon as his exact location is uncovered by intelligence, a spokesman for the Iraqi Joint Special Operations Command said on Wednesday. According to the United States, the ISIS leader is alive but his whereabouts remain unknown.

More details:

http://en.abna24.com/news/middle-east/iraqi-forces-to-attack-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-once-location-provided_817941.html

- **100,000 flee as Iraqi forces advance in west Mosul**

Iraqi government forces battling ISIL for Mosul took control of a main bridge over the Tigris River on Wednesday and advanced towards the mosque where the group's leader declared a caliphate in 2014. The seizure of the Iron Bridge, linking eastern Mosul with ISIL-held Old City on the west side, means the government holds three of the five bridges over the Tigris - and bolsters Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi's assertion that the battle is reaching its final stages.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/03/100000-flee-iraqi-forces-advance-west-mosul-170315140908426.html>

- **Freed from Islamic State, Yazidi women remain trapped by trauma**

Last January, Skye Wheeler, women's rights emergencies researcher at Human Rights Watch, arrived at the Dohuk camp for displaced people near the Kurdish region of Iraq. Wheeler was there to interview Yazidi women and girls who had been kidnapped from their homes in Sinjar and held as sex slaves by the terror group known as the Islamic State.

More details:

http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Voices/2017/03/15/Freed-from-Islamic-State-Yazidi-women-remain-trapped-by-trauma/1001489590804/?utm_source=sec&utm_campaign=sl&utm_medium=1

- **PM Abadi and Kurdistan Region Representative to Meet US President**

The US President Donald Trump will meet with the Iraqi delegation consisting of Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi and Kurdistan Region representative next week. A senior official source in Kurdistan

Region confirmed to BasNews that PM Abadi and a representative of Kurdistan Region, who are set to take part in the global coalition's meeting, will also meet the US President in Washington.

More details:

<http://www.iraqnews.com/baghdad-politics/pm-abadi-kurdistan-region-representative-meet-us-president/>

- **Islamic State 'foreign fighters' mass grave uncovered near Fallujah**

A mass graveyard containing 500 gravestones believed to belong to Islamic State [IS] militants killed in clashes with Iraq armed forces was uncovered on Tuesday. The graveyard was found by Iraqi forces sweeping through the area near the town of al-Saqlawiya, northwest of Fallujah in Anbar province, the Iraqi ministry of defence said.

More details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/3/15/islamic-state-foreign-fighters-mass-grave-uncovered-near-fallujah>

- **Car bomb kills 8 in Iraq's Tikrit city**

Eight people were killed and more than 50 wounded when a car bomb exploded in a crowded street in the Iraqi city of Tikrit today, a local official said. The car was parked in Al-Atibaa Street in downtown Tikrit, which is often crowded as it has many clinics. The government imposed a curfew following the attack.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170315-car-bomb-kills-8-in-iraqs-tikrit-city/>

- **Kurdistan Region of Iraq: 32 Arrested at Peaceful Protest**

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) security forces and local police detained 32 unarmed protesters in Erbil on March 4, 2017, at a peaceful demonstration against recent clashes in Sinjar. According to three protesters who were arrested, 23 were released that same day, and three more within four days, but six, all foreign nationals, are still being held. A police chief ordered one protester who was released to permanently leave Erbil, where he was living.

More details:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/16/kurdistan-region-iraq-32-arrested-peaceful-protest>

- **Turkish PM invites Iraqi counterpart to Turkey**

Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım invited his Iraqi counterpart, Haider al-Abadi, to Turkey during a phone conversation between the two leaders on March 14, Iraqi Ambassador to Turkey Hisham al-Alawi told a group of journalists a day later. The visit is likely to occur after the end of the Mosul offensive against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) which Iraqi officials hope to complete by the end of March, the ambassador said.

More details:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=110857&NewsCatID=510>

- **Iraq receives 1st batch of Korean fighter jets**

Iraq received on Thursday a first batch of 24 South Korea-made T50 fighter jets, said the commander of the air forces. Anwar Hama did not mention the number of fighters included in the delivery, but said they were accompanied with all supplementary equipment as well as the a first batch of Iraqi pilots and maintenance technicians trained in Korea on conducting and maintaining the fighters.

More details:

<http://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/iraq-receives-1st-batch-korean-fighter-jets/>

- **Arab League chief in Baghdad for talks with Iraqi leaders, ahead of Arab Summit**

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit on Wednesday arrived in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on official visit for talks with Iraqi top officials ahead of the 28th Arab Summit, to be held in Amman on March 29. Aboul-Gheit was received by the Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, and the two officials discussed the development in the Arab arena and the agenda of the upcoming Arab summit, as well as the battles against Islamic State (IS) extremist group in Mosul.

More details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/16/c_136131984.htm

- **KDP condemns suppression of opposition in Rojava**

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) has condemned what it calls the Kurdistan Workers Party's (PKK) conduct against "all political parties and organizations" present in western Kurdistan or Rojava, northern Syria, particularly in the wake of armed clashes in Shingal region earlier this month. "Deeply concerned, we are hearing of rows created at the hands of the PKK offshoot in western Kurdistan as it behaves in a dictatorship way and has imposed itself through the use of weapons and intimidation and has put all the political parties and organizations under a terror and political ideology, running after their members and supporters and filling its prisons with Kurdish activists," read the KDP statement, referring to the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the ruling party in Rojava.

More details:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/150320174>

- **Kirkuk governor decrees Kurdish language, flag to be used in official business**

Kirkuk province has officially decided that alongside Arabic language, Kurdish should also be used in letters being issued by the city's apparatus and the Kurdish flag has to be flown across the city's governmental institutions. Kirkuk governor Najmadeen Karim, has decreed in a written statement to the city's institutions that they "decided for the usage of Kurdish and Arabic languages in all written letters as this section has been stated in the Iraqi constitution."

More Details:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/16032017>

- **Mosul's growing humanitarian crisis as bad as feared**

The flight of tens of thousands of Iraqis from the besieged city of Mosul would create a humanitarian crisis, the United Nations predicted. Now that stark warning has turned out to be cruelly accurate. Thousands are sleeping on the ground outside an overflowing refugee camp in this town near Mosul, and a thousand more arrive every few hours to wait for spaces. Food, water and medicine are increasingly scarce, refugees said.

More Details:

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/03/15/mosul-refugees-iraq-camps/99137150/>

- **ISIS executes nine people, including children, in Kirkuk**

Nine civilians, including children, were burned alive by ISIS on charges of "abandoning the land of the Caliphate". A security sources quoted by Al-Sumaria News claimed the civilians were attempting to escape to al-Alam in Salahuddin province from areas in Kirkuk province.

More Details:

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/isis-executes-nine-people-including-children-kirkuk/>

2. SYRIA

- **25 killed in second bombing in Damascus**

A second bomb has struck in Damascus hours after a suicide attacker struck at the Justice Palace in Al-Hamidiyeh.

More Details

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170315-25-killed-in-second-bombing-in-damascus/>

- **Syria bombers aimed to ruin peace talks: UN**

The UN special envoy for Syria has condemned the latest "terrorist attacks" in Damascus on the sixth anniversary of the Syrian conflict, saying they are "plainly designed to spoil attempts to sustain political talks".

More Details

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/03/16/syria-bombers-aimed-ruin-peace-talksun>

- **Syrian woman shares incredibly moving post about what she'd tell her younger self at the start of the war in Syria**

A Syrian woman has shared an emotional Facebook post describing what she would tell her younger self on the day the Syrian war started. March 15, 2011 is the date when anti-government activists began their uprising and so is widely regarded as the beginning of the unrest.

More Details

<http://www.breakingnews.ie/world/syrian-woman-shares-incredibly-moving-post-about-what-shed-tell-her-younger-self-at-the-start-of-the-war-in-syria-781776.html>

- **Safe Zones and the Armed Conflict in Syria**

Recent statements by leaders and governments in the United States, Turkey, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan indicate an interest in creating so-called safe zones in Syria. While no detailed plans for creating and managing such zones have been put forward, officials have suggested that establishing areas in Syria along its border with Turkey, and possibly with Lebanon and Jordan, would allow civilians fleeing conflict to be safe from attacks and receive humanitarian assistance while limiting the need for cross-border displacements and facilitating refugee returns.

More Details

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/16/q-safe-zones-and-armed-conflict-syria>

- **Condemnations pour in following deadly bomb attacks in Damascus**

Condemnations continue to pour in following bloody terrorist attacks that hit the Syrian capital, Damascus, with the Arab country's Foreign Ministry calling on the global community to unite against terror groups and their supporters.

More Details

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/03/16/514526/Middle-East-Syria-United-Nations-Bombing-Reactions>

- **Syria conflict: Unravelling the puzzle**

With Iraqi forces gradually gaining the upper hand against so-called Islamic State in Mosul, the focus is gradually turning to the assault upon the organisation's de facto capital in Syria - Raqqa. Units are being moved into position. The US has deployed a small contingent of artillery to ensure that firepower is available on tap, irrespective of any bad weather that might hamper air operations.

More Details

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39284722>

- **Syria talks close as opposition continue boycott**

Syrian peace talks in Kazakhstan closed today without any substantive negotiations taking place, after the anti-Assad regime opposition boycotted the meeting that took place as a deadly double suicide bombing marked the start of the civil war's seventh year.

More Details

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170315-syria-talks-close-as-opposition-continue-boycott/>

- **Syria's war: Dozens killed in Idlib air strikes**

Syria's government has hit rebel-held areas in the northwestern city of Idlib after a bombing in the capital Damascus. At least 25 people were killed, including 16 children, in the government raids.

More Details

<http://www.aljazeera.com/video/news/2017/03/syrias-war-dozens-killed-idlib-air-strikes-170316060500481.html>

- **Guterres: Peace in Syria is a 'Moral and Political Imperative'**

Peace "is a moral and political imperative both for the Syrian people and for the world," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Wednesday, urging the conflict parties to fully back a fragile ceasefire and ensure aid access, as well as to support UN-mediated talks, which are expected to resume later this month. "For six years now, the Syria people have been victims of one of the worst conflicts of our time," Guterres said in a statement on the crisis in Syria.

More Details

<http://english.aawsat.com/jordan-dakamseh/news-middle-east/guterres-peace-syria-moral-political-imperative>

- **Lebanon moves forward on policy addressing Syrian refugees**

A ministerial committee for refugee affairs Wednesday reached an agreement on 80 percent of the government's policy toward Syrian refugees in Lebanon. "The meeting was fruitful," Minister of State for Refugee Affairs Mouin Merehbi told reporters after the meeting, which was chaired by Prime Minister Saad Hariri at the Grands Serail.

More Details

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/lebanon-moves-forward-policy-addressing-syrian-refugees-950542>

3. IRAN

- **Iran Keen on Mending Arab Ties**

Government Spokesman Mohammad Baqer Nobakht said since the Arab states of the region appear to seek improvement of relations with Iran, the Islamic Republic is also willing to mend ties with them, especially with neighboring countries, so as to help restore peace and stability to the region.

More Details

<https://financialtribune.com/articles/national/61570/iran-keen-on-mending-arab-ties>

- **Iran's Natural Gas Rush Won't Bring Export Riches**

Iran is on track to out-produce Qatar, the world's biggest LNG exporter, at the vast natural gas deposit they share in the Persian Gulf. But as much as they might want, the Iranians won't have much gas to export because they are likely to use most of the new production themselves.

More Details

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-03-15/iran-s-natural-gas-rush-won-t-bring-export-riches-for-now>

- **Chabahar port is an unlikely litmus test for the US in Iran**

More than a dozen years ago, India began to explore the possibility of expanding and upgrading the Iranian port of Chabahar.

More Details

<http://www.atimes.com/article/chabahar-port-unlikely-litmus-test-us-iran/>

- **Pakistan's Sindh governor invites Iranian investors**

"Ample opportunities are available for investments in Sindh," the governor said in a meeting with newly appointed Consul General of Iran Ahmad Mohammadi who called on him at the Governor House in Karachi. Zubair said Karachi, an attractive destination for national and international investors due to its geographical location, provides ample investment opportunities to Iran too.

More Details

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82466585/>

- **Iran: 1500 Arrested in the Fire Festivities**

Mohammad Sharafi, one of Iran's Security Forces' commanders declared that the suppressive forces arrested almost 1500 people during the Fire Festivities (State news agency of ISNA, March 15). These arrests indicate the authorities' fearful reaction to Iranian youth who despite all the regime's threatening warnings turned the Fire Festivities into a scene of their confrontation with the despotic regime as well as an opportunity for expressing their revulsion of the regime.

More Details

<http://www.ncr-iran.org/en/ncri-statements/human-rights/22377-iran-1500-arrested-in-the-fire-festivities>

- **Exporters aim to revive lucrative Iran sheepmeat trade**

"Iran was a very important market for New Zealand in the 1980s. We were selling a quarter of our sheepmeat there before red tape and bureaucracy put a halt to the trade in the 1990s," he said.

More Details

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/90512636/.html>

- **The Iran Nuclear Deal has been a success for everyone involved**

The beginning of April will mark two years since the announcement of the Iran Nuclear Deal between the P5+1 (the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, China and Germany) and Iran. The deal, now known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, promised to lift sanctions on Iran in exchange for the dismantling of its nuclear weapons program. The deal was unanimously rejected by all the major Republican presidential candidates, and welcomed by all the Democratic presidential candidates, despite significant opposition to the deal from top senate Democrats like Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer.

More Details

<http://www.dbknews.com/2017/03/16/iran-nuclear-success-israel-united-states/>

- **Hizbullah Enduring a Financial Crisis**

Hizbullah is passing through a financial crisis and is calling on its supporters for financial contributions after Iran shrank down financial aid it provides for the party, the Kuwaiti al-Anbaa daily reported on Thursday.

More Details

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/227032-report-hizbullah-enduring-a-financial-crisis>

- **Astana 3 Talks on Syria Flop ... Iran a Guarantor**

Beirut-The “Astana 3” intra-Syrian talks held for two days in the Kazakh capital ended with no progress on Wednesday. A statement first announced that the meetings will conclude on Wednesday morning, but later Russian officials asserted that the talks would be extended for one more day, saying opposition factions were expected to arrive in Astana on Wednesday.

More Details

<http://english.aawsat.com/carolinepaula/news-middle-east/astana-3-talks-syria-flop-iran-guarantor>

- **Iranian Gov't Set to Build Resilient Economy**

President Hassan Rouhani said his administration has taken “very positive” steps to realize Resistance Economy’s goals, stressing that efforts should be continued until the objectives are fully accomplished.

More Details

<https://financialtribune.com/articles/national/61569/iranian-gov-t-set-to-build-resilient-economy>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **IDF Strikes Gaza Targets Overnight in Response to Rocket Fire**

IDT Jets struck two Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip in the early hours of Thursday morning in retaliation for a rocket that landed in the Negev on Wednesday night, the army confirmed on Thursday.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/IDF-strikes-two-Hamas-targets-in-retaliation-for-rocket-attack-484308>

- **Palestinian girl shot, injured at Gush Etzion junction after alleged vehicular attack**

A teenaged Palestinian girl was shot and injured by Israeli forces at an intersection in the southern occupied West Bank district of Bethlehem on Wednesday afternoon after allegedly attempting to carry out a vehicular attack.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=775964>

- **Israeli Soldiers Abduct a Young Woman, And A Young Man, In Jerusalem And Jenin**

Israeli soldiers abducted, on Wednesday evening, a young Palestinian woman, in Silwan town, in occupied Jerusalem, and a young man from the al-Fandaqumiya village, south of the northern West Bank city of Jenin.

More Details:

<http://imemc.org/article/israeli-soldiers-abduct-a-young-woman-and-a-young-man-in-jerusalem-a/>

- **UN West Asia Commission Says Israel Imposed 'Apartheid Regime' on Palestinians**

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) accused Israel on Wednesday of applying "apartheid regime" policies regarding the Palestinians.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/us/201703161051630137-un-west-asia-israel/>

- **Turkish aid agency revives development in Palestine**

Turkey, one of the main donors to the Palestinian territories and the most vocal defender of the rights of Palestinians who have long suffered from an Israeli blockade, is extending a helping hand to the region through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA).

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2017/03/16/turkish-aid-agency-revives-development-in-palestine>

- **Trump envoy welcomes idea of coexistence during Israel visit**

A top adviser to US President Donald Trump held further talks on the Middle East conflict Wednesday, meeting Israeli President Reuven Rivlin as he seeks to restart negotiations with the Palestinians.

More Details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1068901/middle-east>

- **Israeli authorities destroy Bedouin crops in Negev**

For the second day in a row, the Israeli Land Authority (ILA) destroyed crops planted by Palestinian Bedouins in the Negev desert of southern Israel on Wednesday morning, according to locals.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?ID=775959>

- **Netanyahu Defies International Law by Holding Official Meeting in Occupied Zone**

The National Bureau for Defending of Land and Resisting Settlements has warned against Israeli PM Netanyahu's maneuvers to hold a celebratory cabinet meetings in the illegal settlements built in the West Bank, on the occasion of what he named "the Silver Jubilee of liberating the West Bank," adding that holding such a meeting in any settlement in the West Bank sends a clear message to the world on the Israeli position about the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan.

More Details:

<http://imemc.org/article/netanyahu-defies-international-law-by-holding-official-meeting-in-occupied-settlements/>

- **Canada complicit in crafting colonial policies for Palestine**

The year 2017 marks the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, a crass expression of colonial thought that Canada helped realize.

More Details:

<https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/canada-complicit-in-crafting-colonial-policies-for-palestine>

- **Netanyahu asks Italy to oppose further UNESCO Jerusalem Resolutions**

Italy on Wednesday renewed its pledge to Israel to oppose any resolutions at UNESCO that ignore Jewish ties to Jerusalem's Temple Mount.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Netanyahu-asks-Italy-to-oppose-further-UNESCO-Jerusalem-resolutions-484246>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Jordan's king meets with Trump adviser on Mideast peace push**

Jordan's King Abdullah II and an envoy for President Donald Trump have held talks about reviving long-stalled efforts to reach an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal.

More Details:

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4936182,00.html>

- **Jordan's back is against the wall**

Israeli ambassador to Jordan, Einat Schlein was right when Haaretz quoted her last week saying that the political and economic situation in Jordan was difficult and worrying. Despite the fact that Jordan responded by saying that it did not need such a diagnosis and that its situation is stable, the truth is that the Jordanian monarchy is going through a very difficult and sensitive time economically and politically due to a contentious relationship between the economy and politics.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170315-jordans-back-is-against-the-wall/>

- **IMF says conflicts in Syria and Iraq continue to weigh on Jordan's economy**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Wednesday said conflicts in Syria and Iraq continue to weigh on Jordan's economy, with growth expected at around 2 percent in 2016 and unemployment increasing to 15.3 percent.

More Details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/16/c_136132134.htm

- **HRW commends Jordan proposed justice reforms**

Human Rights Watch (HRW) [advocacy website] on Tuesday commended [press release] the government of Jordan for taking an important step to reform the country's justice system and urged swift implementation of the proposals.

More Details:

<http://www.jurist.org/paperchase/2017/03/hrw-commends-jordan-proposed-justice-reforms.php>

- **Lebanon moves forward on policy addressing Syrian refugees**

A ministerial committee for refugee affairs Wednesday reached an agreement on 80 percent of the government's policy toward Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/lebanon-moves-forward-policy-addressing-syrian-refugees-950542>

- **Lebanese Hezbollah Describes as 'Appalling' Damascus Terrorist Blasts**

The Lebanese Hezbollah Resistance Movement strongly condemned Wednesday's terrorist bombings in the Syrian capital of Damascus.

More Details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2017/03/16/1356922/lebanese-hezbollah-describes-as-appalling-damascus-terrorist-blasts>

- **Israel to target people over Hezbollah status in Lebanon**

A far-right Israeli minister said Lebanese civilians must be direct targets in a future war over Hezbollah's rising political sway in Lebanon.

More Details:

http://en.abna24.com/news/middle-east/israel-to-target-people-over-hezbollah-status-in-lebanon_817966.html

- **Gemayel: Taxes will inflate living expenses and strike economy**

Kataeb Party Leader, MP Sami Gemayel, on Wednesday sounded the alarm on the Parliament's endorsement of a 1% VAT increase, saying that this would eventually increase the living expenses, hit the national economy, and impoverish middle class and poor people.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/76659/Gemayel-Taxes-will-inflate-living-expenses-and-strike-economy>

- **Hizbullah Says Damascus Blasts 'Mark 2011 Conspiracy'**

Hizbullah on Wednesday condemned the twin suicide bombings that rocked Syria's capital Damascus, describing them as "a terrorist crime that comes on the anniversary of the conspiracy that started targeting Syria and its State and people in 2011."

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/227015-hizbullah-says-damascus-blasts-mark-2011-conspiracy>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Expo to save consumers from fake spare parts**

The Consumer Protection Directorate, under the patronage of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce & Tourism, launched yesterday 'Genuine and Counterfeit Spare Parts Expo' at Bahrain City Centre.

More details:

<http://www.newsofbahrain.com/viewNews.php?ppId=31350&TYPE=Posts&pid=21&MNU=2&SUB=>

- **Qatari and Omani lenders benefit the most from easing funding pressures: Moody's**

Qatari and Omani lenders benefit the most from easing funding pressures due to stabilising oil prices, large international sovereign debt issuances and lower credit growth, according to global credit rating agency Moody's.

More details:

<http://www.gulf-times.com/story/537623/Qatari-and-Omani-lenders-benefit-the-most-from-eas>

- **Turkmenistan, Qatar sign energy, aviation, metrology, environmental protection cooperation deals**

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and Emir of the State of Qatar Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani signed a number of cooperation deals on March 15 on the sidelines of the Turkmen – Qatar high-level negotiations held in Doha, reports the press service of the Turkmen leader.

More details:

<http://akipress.com/news:590134/>

- **French President Francois Hollande, Qatar's emir congratulate PM for BJP win**

BJP's resounding victory in the recent state elections has had a global impact. At least two world leaders have called Prime Minister Narendra Modi to congratulate him on the results, marking an unusual international interest.

More details:

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/elections/news/french-president-francois-hollande-qatars-emir-congratulate-pm-for-bjp-win/articleshow/57660559.cms>

- **China, Saudi Arabia eye \$65 billion in deals as king visits**

Saudi Arabia's King Salman oversaw the signing of deals worth potentially \$65 billion as he began a visit to Beijing on Thursday, as the world's largest oil producer looks to cement ties with the world's second-largest economy.

More details:

<http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCAKBN16N0G9-OCATP?rpc=401&feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews&rpc=401>

- **Soldier killed by Shia 'terrorist elements' in Saudi Arabia**

A Saudi soldier was killed by gunmen late last night in the Eastern province's city of Qatif, in an incident the interior ministry said was carried out by "terrorist elements".

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170315-soldier-killed-by-shia-terrorist-elements-in-saudi-arabia/>

- **Russian humanitarian aid arrives in Yemen**

A Russian NGO has delivered lifesaving aid to the desperate population of war-torn Yemen, where over 18 million people now urgently require some form of humanitarian assistance.

More details:

<https://www.rt.com/news/380929-yemen-russian-aid-arrives/>

- **Yemeni President Hails Russian Role in Reconciliation Process**

Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi met on Wednesday with Russian Ambassador to Yemen Vladimir Dedushkin and praised during the meeting the Russian role in the intra-Yemeni reconciliation process, local media reported.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201703161051626569-yemeni-president-hails-russia/>

- **Yemen hit by worst hunger crisis: UN study**

An estimated 17 million people in Yemen are hungry, according to analysis released Wednesday by the United Nations and humanitarian partners, up more than 20 percent in the past nine months.

More details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/16/c_136131994.htm

- **Saudi soldier killed in Yemen's retaliatory attack**

Yemeni fighters and allies in the army have launched another attack on Saudi military positions in the south of the kingdom, killing a soldier and inflicting losses on its military infrastructure.

More details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/03/15/514469/Saudi-soldier-killed-in-Yemens-retaliatory-attack>

7. EGYPT

- **US: Moscow deployed forces to Egypt**

The Russian Defence Ministry confirmed yesterday it did not have Special Forces in Egypt after a US official and Egyptian diplomatic sources told Reuters Moscow appeared to have deployed forces to an Egyptian airbase, according to the Interfax news agency.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170315-us-moscow-deployed-forces-to-egypt/>

- **Saudi Aramco to Restart Shipments to Egypt after 6-Month Hiatus**

Saudi Aramco will restart oil and refined product shipments to Egypt after a sudden halt nearly six months ago, according to an announcement by the Egyptian Petroleum Ministry on Wednesday.

More details:

<http://oilprice.com/Latest-Energy-News/World-News/Saudi-Aramco-To-Restart-Shipments-To-Egypt-After-6-Month-Hiatus.html>

- **Egypt's official gazette publishes classification of prisoners pardoned by Sisi**

Egypt's official gazette published on Wednesday a detailed account of President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi's decision to pardon 203 prisoners, which included for the first time a classification for each prisoner.

More details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/260988/-.aspx>

- **CAF senior official linked to marketing rights scam**

The Egyptian Competition Authority (ECA) continues to press forward with allegations against Confederation of African Football President Issa Hayatou and General Secretary Hicham El Amrani with claims of failing to open up the tender for the media rights of the main regional football competitions in Africa for the next 12 years up to 2028 – a deal reported to be worth \$1 billion.

More details:

<http://saudigazette.com.sa/business/caf-senior-official-linked-marketing-rights-scam/>

- **Egypt eyes mega construction businesses in five-year plan: minister**

Egypt seeks to lure business volume of more than 1 trillion Egyptian pounds (\$55.4 billion) in construction, building materials, and investment sectors in the next five years, the country's minister of housing said Wednesday.

More details:

<http://en.amwalalghad.com/business/real-estate/55689-egypt-eyes-mega-construction-businesses-in-five-year-plan-minister.html>

- **Egypt among the three Arab countries most affected by hunger**

A study by CAPMAS on the economics of food security in Egypt pointed to the rising deficit rate of the wheat crop from 6.4 million tons to 10 million tons during the period from 2006 to 2015, marking a 55.7 percent increase in the deficit.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/egypt-among-three-arab-countries-most-affected-hunger-950572>

- **Egypt under Pressure Not to Engage With Iran**

The former head of Iran's Interests Section in Egypt said the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia exert great pressure on Egypt not to engage in any kind of cooperation or interaction with Iran.

More details:

<https://financialtribune.com/articles/national/61567/egypt-under-pressure-not-to-engage-with-iran>

- **Christianity and Judaism Create Terrorism no less than Islam?**

Egypt's top Muslim cleric and head of Al Azhar, Dr. Ahmed al-Tayeb, recently spoke before the religious representatives of some 50 nations during a Cairo-based conference. The sheikh demonstrated once again that he is a master of exhibiting one face to fellow Muslims—one that

supports the death penalty for “apostates,” calls for the totality of Sharia-rule, and refuses to denounce ISIS of being un-Islamic—and another face to non-Muslims, Jews and Christians in particular.

More details:

<http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/266119/christianity-and-judaism-create-terrorism-no-less-raymond-ibrahim>

- **Cairo training ‘Libyan forces’: Egypt security official**

Egypt is training Libyan forces with a view to “safeguarding the country’s security and stability”, Khaled al-Bakly, secretary-general of Egypt’s National Security Council, said Wednesday.

More details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/cairo-training-libyan-forces-egypt-security-official/772410>

- **Former Egyptian governor arrested for bribery over land in Maadi's Road 9**

A former Egyptian governor has been arrested and ordered detained for receiving a bribe to illegally transfer government-owned land in the affluent Cairo suburb of Maadi to a private company, state news agency MENA reported on Wednesday.

More details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/260993/-.aspx>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Sellal in Niamey to co-chair 1st Algeria-Niger High Joint Commission**

Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal arrived Wednesday afternoon in Niamey to co-chair with his counterpart of Niger Brigi Rafini the works of the 1st Algeria-Niger High Joint Commission.

More Details:

<http://en.aps.dz/algeria/17319-sellal-in-niamey-to-co-chair-11th-algeria-niger-high-joint-commission>

- **Algeria focuses on port training**

Algeria’s Serport has signed an agreement with the Belgian centre for maritime and port training to bolster the skills of Algerians working in the country’s ports

More Details:

<http://www.fruitnet.com/eurofruit/article/171673/algeria-focuses-on-port-training>

- **Prices Will Not Be Enough to Revive Algeria's Energy Sector**

Algeria, an OPEC member nation and one of Africa's top exporters of oil and gas, is in dire straits. The steep decline in oil prices beginning in the summer of 2014 devastated Algeria's export-based economy, with oil and gas making up 95 percent of the nation's exports.

More Details:

<http://energyfuse.org/opec-cuts-higher-prices-will-not-enough-revive-algerias-energy-sector/>

- **Moroccan king sacks PM to unblock impasse**

The king of Morocco has sacked his PM after months of impasse that undermined Morocco's reputation for political stability. The unusual move may indicate a strengthening of the monarch's role in the fledgling democracy.

More Details:

<http://www.dw.com/en/moroccan-king-sacks-pm-to-unblock-impasse/a-37957130>

- **The Implications of Morocco's Membership of ECOWAS**

During the visit of King Mohammed VI of Morocco to Nigeria in December 2016, the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for collaboration on fertilizer to boost agriculture in Nigeria. The phosphate Morocco is using is from Western Sahara territory.

More Details:

<http://leadership.ng/columns/577538/the-implications-of-moroccos-membership-of-ecowas>

- **Morocco-Madagascar economic forum opens in Casablanca**

The second edition of Morocco-Madagascar Economic Forum has opened in the Moroccan city of Casablanca with the aim of strengthening ties between economic actors in the two countries.

More Details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/16/c_136132012.htm

- **Tunisia trade deficit expands 86 pct in January-February vs last year**

Tunisia's trade deficit expanded by 86 percent in the first two months of this year compared with the same period last year, official data showed on Wednesday.

More Details:

http://af.reuters.com/article/tunisiaNews/idAFL5N1GS3JN?feedType=RSS&feedName=tunisiaNews&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FAfricaTunisiaNews+%28News+%2F+Africa+%2F+Tunisia+News%29&&rpc=401

- **Sheikha Moza concludes visit to Tunisia**

H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Advocate for the UN Sustainable Development Goals, yesterday concluded her visit to Tunisia by visiting Vermeg Company.

More Details:

<http://thepeninsulagatar.com/article/16/03/2017/Sheikha-Moza-concludes-visit-to-Tunisia>

- **One of Libya's Rival Governments Asks Russia for Military Assistance**

An interview in Russian state media Tuesday indicates that one of Libya's rival governments is looking increasingly to Moscow as a patron, a move that's concerning U.S. military commanders in the region.

More Details:

<http://www.voanews.com/a/libya-rival-government-asks-russia-for-military-assistance/3767870.html>

- **Libya govt forces overrun Tripoli militia headquarters**

Forces loyal to Libya's UN-backed unity government seized the headquarters of a rival militia on Wednesday in a third day of intense fighting for control of Tripoli.

More Details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1068906/middle-east>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Construction of CASA 1000 project on territory of Afghanistan to reportedly start in 2018**

The Ministry of Water and Energy of Afghanistan said on March 12 that the construction of the Central Asian-South Asian (CASA) electricity project will begin after the procurement processes, reported the Tolo news.

More details:

<http://akipress.com/news:590142/>

- **Taliban leaders among 36 killed in latest airstrikes in Helmand**

At least thirty six Taliban insurgents were killed in the latest airstrikes conducted in the restive Helmand province in South of Afghanistan.

More details:

<http://www.khaama.com/taliban-leaders-among-36-killed-in-latest-airstrikes-in-helmand-02407>

- **Islamabad, Kabul discuss issue of Afghan-based militants attacking Pak**

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Advisor on Foreign Affairs, Sartaj Aziz, and Afghanistan's National Security Advisor Hanif Atmar discussed the issue of Afghan-based militants carrying out attacks on Pakistani soil during their meeting in London.

More details:

<http://www.aninews.in/newsdetail-NA/MzA0Mzk2/islamabad-kabul-discuss-issue-of-afghan-based-militants-attacking-pak.html>

- **Chinese primary school children visit Pakistan Embassy in Beijing**

Around 34 children from the Chaoyang Elementary School of Beijing visited the Embassy of Pakistan on March 14. The children were also accompanied by some teachers, parent representatives and Party Secretary of the School.

More details:

http://www.china.org.cn/china/2017-03/16/content_40464723.htm

- **52 countries want to be part of CPEC: Nawaz Sharif**

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday said that 52 countries want to be part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), adding that Rs 25 billion have been approved for the mega plan.

More details:

<http://paktribune.com/news/52-countries-want-to-be-part-of-CPEC-Nawaz-Sharif-278445.html>

- **PM cautions against speculation about Panamagate case verdict**

In rare remarks about the Panama Papers leaks case whose verdict was reserved by the Supreme Court late last month, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif emphasised on Wednesday the sensitivity of the matter and the effect that speculation could possibly cause to the imminent judgement.

More details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1320757/pm-cautions-against-speculation-about-panamagate-case-verdict>

- **Pakistani Delegation Planning to Visit Iran for More Peace Pipeline Talks**

A Pakistani delegation is planning to visit Iran to discuss issues related to the Gas Sales Purchase Agreement (GSPA) for the much awaited Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project, informed sources disclosed.

More details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13951225000599>

- **Khalifa Ghwell's National Salvation Government loses its Rixos HQ**

Pro-Presidency Council militias have ousted fighters backing Khalifa Ghwell, leader of the resurrected National Salvation Government from their base in Tripoli's Rixos hotel and its surrounding buildings early this morning.

More details:

<https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/03/15/khalifa-ghwells-national-salvation-government-loses-it-rixos-hq/>

- **Afghan authorities reject 'insider' speculations**

Afghanistan's defence ministry Wednesday shrugged off allegations that insiders were involved in a catastrophic insurgent attack on the country's largest military hospital, as it faces scathing public criticism over the assault.

More details:

<http://news.iafrica.com/worldnews/1046437.html>

- **Pakistan committed to women empowerment across all development sectors: Khawar Mumtaz**

"The Government of Pakistan is committed to alleviate and improve the situation of Pakistani women," Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson of the National Commission of Women and leader of Pakistani delegation, told the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at UN Headquarters in New York on Wednesday. Pakistan's Constitution, she said, guaranteed equal rights for all its citizens without discrimination and ensures full participation of women in all spheres of national life.

More details:

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/03/16/339389/pakistan-committed-to-women-empowerment-across-all-development-sectors-khawar-mumtaz/>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Nearly 3 million Syrians registered in Turkey**

The biometric data of nearly 3 million Syrian refugees has been registered, the Turkish migration authority said Wednesday. The Directorate General of Migration Management tweeted that 2,957,454 Syrians living in Turkey had been registered, giving them the right to work in Turkey.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/186333/nearly-3-million-syrians-registered-in-turkey>

- **Number of Israeli tourists to Turkey up by over 60%**

Turkey has seen a boost in the number of Israeli tourists following the normalization of ties last summer, according to the owner of a tour company in the southwestern province of Mugla, which is home to popular holiday resorts such as Bodrum and Marmaris. "We were planning to bring 2,500 Israeli tourists in March and April, but the number has already exceeded 4,000," Kaan Yardacilar told Anadolu Agency on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/number-of-israeli-tourists-to-turkey-up-by-over-60-/772233>

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*

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