



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

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Peace Process

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Ethnic and Secterian Groups

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

Non State Actors

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Batı'yla İlişkiler

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17 MARCH 2017

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1. IRAQ

- **Over 150,000 People Have Fled Mosul; 85 Killed in Iraq**

The Ministry of Migration estimates that 152,857 people have fled western Mosul since February 19, when operations against the Islamic State militants were launched there.

More details:

<http://original.antiwar.com/updates/2017/03/16/over-150000-people-have-fled-mosul-85-killed-in-iraq/>

- **Iraqi minorities move forward with autonomy plan**

On March 5, three bodies representing Iraqi minorities issued a joint statement calling for a semi-autonomous region in the country's north. The idea was proposed by the Yazidi Independent Supreme Council, the Turkmen Rescue Foundation and Al Rafidain Organization, representing Iraq's Assyrian Christians. The canton would comprise three contiguous regions: Sinjar, Tal Afar and the Ninevah plain.

More details:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/03/rafedin-minorities-iraq-nineveh-plain-autonomy.html>

- **ISIS-held Mosul Old City under Iraqi siege**

US-backed Iraqi forces on Thursday imposed a siege on the ISIS-held Mosul Old City, in Iraq's northwestern Nineveh Governorate, officials reported. Mosul, where the Islamic State's (ISIS) extremists declared their so-called Caliphate in June 2014, has recently witnessed heavy fighting between the advancing Iraqi forces and ISIS militants.

More details:

<http://aranews.net/2017/03/isis-held-mosul-old-city-iraqi-siege/>

- **Iraqi Kurds urge PKK terrorists to leave northern Iraq**

Iraqi Kurds have called on PKK terrorists to leave northern Iraq, particularly the Sinjar province, and expressed that the PKK has been causing instability in the region, including the invasion of more than 500 villages and restricting the government to provide services to the locals.

More details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/03/17/iraqi-kurds-urge-pkk-terrorists-to-leave-northern-iraq>

- **Iraqi forces adopt Daesh technique, use small drones**

Inside an armoured vehicle in Mosul, a colonel scans live footage from a drone flying above the Iraqi city, hunting targets for a new weapon deployed against militants. The Daesh group has used small commercial drones to drop explosives on advancing Iraqi forces since they launched the offensive to retake Iraq's second city in October.

More details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/6a302794-1ada-48e6-acd3-10e0285f0943.aspx>

- **Rain hampers Iraqi soldiers' push on Mosul's Old City**

Heavy rain slowed Iraqi government forces battling Daesh on Thursday around Mosul's Old City, where militants holed up in narrow alleyways and homes resisted with sniper fire, suicide attacks and car bombs.

More details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1069501/middle-east>

- **Mass Exodus from Western Mosul Possible**

The United Nations said Thursday it is preparing for a "mass exodus" from the western part of the Iraqi city of Mosul, as military operations intensify to dislodge Islamic State terrorists.

More details:

<http://www.voanews.com/a/un-mass-exodus-western-mosul-possible/3769435.html>

- **Iran-Supported Militia Groups Intensify anti-U.S. Propaganda in Iraq**

With the Islamic State on the verge of losing Mosul, Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (I.R.G.C.) and its Iraqi militia proxies have recently launched a vicious propaganda campaign against the U.S. and its regional allies – posing security risks to U.S. military advisers that are helping the Iraqi security forces in the country.

More details:

<http://www.mei.edu/content/article/io/iran-supported-militia-groups-intensify-anti-us-propaganda-iraq>

- **HRW calls on Kurdish government to release opposition activists detained in Erbil**

Human Rights Watch (HRW) on Thursday called on the Kurdish government to release six protestors who were arrested on 4 March after protesting against the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Erbil, capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, after tensions erupted between Kurdish parties in Sinjar.

More details:

<http://aranews.net/2017/03/hrw-calls-on-kurdish-government-to-release-opposition-activists-detained-in-erbil/>

- **UN agencies step up efforts to help people displaced due to military offensive in Mosul**

As a result of the military offensive in the north Iraqi city of Mosul, there are now more than 50,000 people in the Qayarra and Jadaa camps, where the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) is helping to run a 24-hour delivery room and providing psycho-social support to victims of gender-based violence, a UN spokesman told reporters here Thursday.

More details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/17/c_136134966.htm

- **Czech NGO establishes branch in Iraq to help people in Mosul**

The Caritas CR humanitarian organisation has established its first branch in Iraq aimed to provide urgent aid for the inhabitants of Mosul, from where IS militants have been gradually ousted by the Iraqi military, Caritas CR spokeswoman Anna Matyskova told CTK on Thursday.

More details:

<http://www.praguemonitor.com/2017/03/17/czech-ngo-establishes-branch-iraq-help-people-mosul>

- **Iraq War False Claims Lawyer Declared Bankrupt**

Disgraced lawyer Phil Shiner who brought false claims against Iraq War veterans has been declared bankrupt. The solicitor was struck off in February after being found to have acted dishonestly in bringing murder and torture claims against British Iraq War veterans.

More details:

<http://www.forces.net/news/iraq-war-false-claims-lawyer-declared-bankrupt>

- **Iraqi MP behind controversial polygamy bill claims colleagues backing**

A female Iraqi parliamentarian has claimed a parliament majority support for her controversial bill encouraging polygamy as means to protect women.

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/features/iraqi-mp-behind-controversial-polygamy-bill-claims-colleagues-backing/>

- **In Raqqa, Pentagon looking to make up for setbacks in Aleppo, Mosul**

Commenting on the recent surge in US military activity in Syria, RIA Novosti political analyst Vladimir Lepekhn says that new president or not, strategists at the Pentagon continue to have designs on the country, hence their plans for an all-out offensive on the Daesh (ISIL) capital of Raqqa.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201703161051664099-us-operation-raqqa-analysis/>

- **PKK Sends Around 70 Guerrillas to Kirkuk and Makhmour**

Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) over the last two days has moved around 70 guerrillas from Raniya city, north of Sulaymaniyah province, to Kirkuk province. A confidential source told BasNews that PKK has deployed about 70 guerrillas to Kirkuk over the past two days. The source noted that a number of those guerrillas may have been sent to Makhmour, southeast of Erbil where PKK has established a military camp.

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/pkk-sends-70-guerrillas-kirkuk-makhmour/>

- **More than 150,000 Iraqis flee west Mosul fighting**

Iraqi authorities said Thursday that more than 150,000 people have fled fighting in and around west Mosul since security forces launched an operation to retake it from jihadists last month.

More details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/3/17/more-than-150-000-iraqis-fled-west-mosul-fighting>

- **Head of Kurdish Islamic party voices support for independence referendum**

The leader of the Kurdistan Islamic Party (KIU) showed solid support for referendum on further Kurdish independence from Iraq and called on holding the public vote "without more ado." Speaking at a meeting in Soran township on Thursday, Salahaddin Bahaudin said the right to self-determination is an "undisputed right of the people" who should make their voice heard about the issue in a public vote.

More details:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/17032017>

2. SYRIA

- **Airstrike on mosque near Aleppo leaves 42 dead, mostly civilians**

At least 42 people died after planes attacked a mosque in the western countryside of Aleppo, Syria, late Thursday, activists and a monitoring group said. "The planes, whose identity is not known yet, targeted a mosque during night prayer in the village of al Jinneh, south-west of Atrab," Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights told dpa.

More Details

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/airstrike-mosque-near-aleppo-leaves-42-dead-mostly-civilians-951194>

- **Israel intercepts Syrian missile fired at its air force**

Israel's army confirmed that it intercepted one of several anti-aircraft missiles that were launched at its air force as it was bombing "targets" in Syria. As a result, sirens were heard in Jewish settlements in the Jordan Valley in the occupied West Bank. The blasts were heard as far as Jerusalem, tens of kilometers away. No injuries or damage were reported.

More Details

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/17/c_136136781.htm

- **Russia, Israel and Iran braced for the endgame in Syria**

There are many indications that the war in Syria is entering a new and less vicious phase in the uneasy reconstitution of a "New Syria". Around al-Quneitra, only 60km southeast of Damascus, however, and particularly along the nearby Golan frontier, contesting parties are escalating efforts to control the agenda on the ground and at the negotiating table.

More Details

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/03/russia-israel-iran-braced-endgame-syria-170316080152634.html>

- **Trump, Syria and the Muslim Brotherhood**

In 2012, then-US secretary of State Hillary Clinton was quoted as saying: “We believe... that it is in the interests of the United States to engage with all parties that are peaceful and committed to non-violence and we welcome, therefore, dialogue with those Muslim Brotherhood members who wish to talk with us.”

More Details

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=82113>

- **Israel intercepts missile fired at its air force in Syria**

The Israeli military said it shot down one of numerous anti-aircraft missiles launched on Friday at its air force which was operating in Syria. Rocket sirens had sounded in Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley in the occupied West Bank and two Reuters witnesses heard an explosion a few minutes later.

More Details

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-rockets-idUSKBN16O052>

- **Syria sees ‘looming dam catastrophe’ amid US-led airstrikes**

The Syrian government has warned against an imminent disaster in the wake of airstrikes by the US-led military coalition against purported Daesh-held areas close to the Euphrates and Tishrin dams, urging UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to compel the coalition to stop the raids.

More Details

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/03/17/514636/Syria-Security-Council-US-strikes-Euphrates-dam-Tishrin-dam>

- **Syria May Be a No-Win Situation for U.S. Troops**

The Washington Post reported on Wednesday that the Pentagon is recommending up to one thousand additional U.S. troops be sent to join the fight in Raqqa to help defeat the Islamic State (ISIS). Before one more American boot is sent to fight on the ground in Syria, however, the administration owes it to the American people to make the case on how it is in America’s interest. If the administration can’t do that, then the proposed deployment must be annulled.

More Details

<http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/syria-may-be-no-win-situation-us-troops-19804>

- **US claims deadly north Syria strike, denies targeting mosque: Military**

The US military said on March 16 it carried out a deadly air strike on an Al-Qaeda meeting in northern Syria and would investigate reports that more than 40 civilians were killed when a mosque was struck in the raid.

More Details

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=110919&NewsCatID=352>

- **US claims deadly north Syria strike but denies targeting mosque**

The US said it carried out an air strike in Syria against an Al-Qaeda meeting but denied deliberately targeting a mosque where a monitor said on Friday 46 people were killed. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said most of the dead in the Thursday evening raid on Al-Jineh, in the northern province of Aleppo, were civilians.

More Details:

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/03/17/us-claims-deadly-north-syria-strike-denies-targeting-mosque>

3. IRAN

- **Iranian MP threatens to impeach intelligence minister**

In anticipation of the May 19 presidential elections, Iranian security agencies have reportedly gone on an arrest spree, rounding up activists who use the Telegram app, prompting one Iranian parliamentarian to demand answers. Outspoken Ali Motahari, also deputy speaker of the parliament, told the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA) that 12 activists with Telegram accounts have been arrested. According to him, those detained were either Reformists or supporters of President Hassan Rouhani's administration. The activists' Telegram accounts were reportedly shut down after their detention.

More Details

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/03/iran-ali-motahari-telegram-arrest-intelligence-minister.html>

- **Iran, Trump and Bannon's war in the Middle East?**

Ever since September 11, 2001, security concerns have played a central role in the United States' migration policy — but never more aggressively so than now. Americans, anaesthetized by the War on Terror that just drones on, may have forgotten, but a tough and exhaustive vetting process has

been in place for admitting refugees and migrants, and even visitors, from Muslim majority countries to the United States for the past 15 plus years.

More Details

http://www.salon.com/2017/03/16/iran-trump-and-bannons-war-in-the-middle-east_partner/

- **Rouhani nominated for second term**

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani was officially chosen by the country's Reformist Association on 12 March as its candidate for the presidential race taking place on 19 May. It called Rouhani the best candidate to stand on behalf of the parties and movements wanting to see further reform in Iran.

More Details

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/19898.aspx>

- **Iran set to out-produce Qatar at world's biggest gas field**

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

<http://www.worldoil.com/news/2017/3/16/iran-set-to-out-produce-qatar-at-worlds-biggest-gas-field>

- **Israel poses biggest nuclear threat to world: Iran FM**

Speaking in an interview with Lebanon-based and Arabic-language al-Mayadeen news network on Thursday evening, Zarif described Israel's policies towards regional nations as vicious, stressing that Israeli authorities seek to conceal truth and advance their aggressive plots through the language of threats.

More Details

<http://iran-daily.com/News/189508.html>

- **Kuwait-Iranian re-approachment: Emir receives response from Tehran**

A message from Iran was delivered by its ambassador to Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah and it represents a new episode in the series of enhancing intentions carried out by Iranian government to normalize its relations with Gulf States, according to a prominent Kuwaiti official.

More Details

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/kuwait-iranian-re-approachment-emir-receives-response-tehran-951050>

- **Iran delays in renewable power boost**

Iran's renewable power projects progress slowly, Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian said. According to him, Iran has planned to increase renewables volume by 5 gigawatts (GW) during next five years, Mehr reported Mar.16.

More Details

<http://en.trend.az/iran/business/2733036.html>

- **FM: Iran can have good ties with S. Arabia**

Zarif made the remarks in an interview with Lebanon-based and Arabic-language al-Mayadeen news network on Thursday.

More Details

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82467404/>

- **How Iran will out-produce Qatar in gas**

Iran is on track to out-produce Qatar, the world's biggest LNG exporter, at the vast natural gas deposit they share in the Arabian 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

<http://gulfnews.com/business/sectors/energy/how-iran-will-out-produce-qatar-in-gas-1.1995316>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Israel intercepts missile fired at IAF jets in Syria**

IDF reported on Friday that it has shot down one of numerous anti-aircraft missiles launched Thursday night at its Israeli Air Force jets that have been operating in Syria. Israeli Arrow anti-aircraft missiles were used to intercept two the Syrian missiles.

More Details:

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4936732,00.html>

- **Progress on Israel-US Joint Policy on Settlement Construction**

Israel and the United States moved closer to creating a joint policy on settlement construction Thursday as right-wing politicians pressured Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to freeze such building.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Progress-on-Israel-US-joint-policy-on-settlement-construction-484453>

- **Damning ESCWA report says Israel guilty 'beyond a reasonable doubt' of apartheid**

A damning United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) report published on Wednesday concluded that Israel was guilty “beyond a reasonable doubt” of imposing apartheid policies against Palestinians, urging the international community to abide by its “legal obligation” to punish such discriminatory measures.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=775942>

- **President welcomes efforts to advance just peace between Palestinians, Israelis**

President Mahmoud Abbas Thursday welcomed current international and Arab efforts to advance comprehensive and just peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=ByXzE3a60079408125aByXzE3>

- **Palestinians fear US will block financial assistance**

Even before the arrival March 12 to Jerusalem and Ramallah of Jason Greenblatt, President Donald Trump’s representative for international negotiations, the Palestinians were concerned. They were already aware of the voices in Washington calling for a halt of American aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA) until payments to families of shahids (martyrs) are halted.

More Details:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/03/israel-us-palestinians-mahmoud-abbas-trump-greenblatt-shahid.html>

- **Israel brands Palestinian fund 'terrorist' organisation**

Israel's Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman on Thursday labelled the Palestinian National Fund, which provides assistance to Palestinians held in Israeli jails, a "terrorist organisation", his office said.

More Details:

<http://www.france24.com/en/20170316-israel-brands-palestinian-fund-terrorist-organisation>

- **Netanyahu promises to build settlement**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday he would honour his commitment to build a new settlement in the occupied West Bank, the first in two decades.

More Details:

<http://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/world/middle-east/2017-03-17-netanyahu-promises-to-build-settlement/>

- **Israel detains then departs South African human rights activist**

The Israeli occupation authorities have prevented a South African activist from entering the occupied West Bank, Quds Press reported on Wednesday. Mpho Masemola was held for nine hours at the King Hussein Bridge between Jordan and occupied Palestine before he was sent back to Amman.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170316-israel-detains-then-deports-south-african-human-rights-activist/>

- **Netanyahu's office: Prime minister and Greenblatt 'made progress' on settlements**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Jason Greenblatt, President Donald Trump's adviser on international relations, "made progress" on the issue of West Bank settlement construction, the Prime Minister's Office said.

More Details:

<http://www.jta.org/2017/03/16/news-opinion/israel-middle-east/netanyahus-office-prime-minister-and-greenblatt-made-progress-on-settlements>

- **Anti-draft haredi group threatens Jerusalem marathon**

The extremist haredi organization 'The Yerushalmi Faction' is threatening to disrupt the Jerusalem marathon tomorrow to protest the detention of a yeshiva student who was arrested this week for draft dodging.

More Details:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/226833>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Jordan Refuses to Extradite Palestinian Terrorist Who Killed Americans**

The kingdom of Jordan has rejected the United States' request to extradite a Palestinian terrorist who was involved in a 2001 Jerusalem suicide bombing that killed two American citizens, The Jerusalem Post reported Thursday, citing Jordanian media.

More Details:

<http://www.thetower.org/4735-jordan-refuses-to-extradite-palestinian-terrorist-who-killed-americans/>

- **All set for building oil shale-fired power plant**

Construction on a 554-megawatt, oil shale-fired power plant will start following securing necessary finance for the project, valued at \$2.1 billion, announced Attarat Power Company (APCO) on Thursday.

More Details:

<http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/all-set-building-oil-shale-fired-power-plant>

- **Jordan holds presidency of PERSGA**

Jordan, on Thursday received the presidency of the ministerial council of the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) .

More Details:

http://www.petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site_id=1&NewsID=293619&CatID=13

- **Hezbollah Develops Domestic Arms Industry with Iranian know-how**

Not many people have ever heard of Souk El Gharb, a sleepy Lebanese village perched on a mountain top overlooking Beirut but in 1983, this village was the scene of ferocious fighting between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and an assortment of Syrian-backed leftist and Muslim anti-government militias. For a while, the LAF, backed by the United States, was holding its own against the militias, beating back several coordinated attacks and even mounting offensives of their own.

More Details:

<http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/266127/hezbollah-develops-domestic-arms-industry-iranian-ari-lieberman>

- **Girl Power! Lebanese Women Seek Greater Role in Politics**

Lebanese women seek greater participation in the country's political life as high-ranking government officials are discussing the possibility of creating a quota for women in Lebanon's parliament.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201703161051662734-women-parliament-quota/>

- **Lebanon considers salary hikes for teachers, government employees**

The Lebanese Parliament Thursday resumed salary scale discussions, with lawmakers expected to endorse the new salary hike for civil servants and public and private teachers.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/business/lebanon-considers-salary-hikes-teachers-government-employees-951016>

- **Pope meets Lebanese president, promises a visit**

Pope Francis met on March 16 with Lebanon's President Michel Aoun, and reportedly promised to visit Lebanon. An official Vatican statement indicated that the Pope had expressed his satisfaction at the end of a long political deadlock that had left the Lebanese presidency vacant for months, and voiced his hope that cooperation among the country's different ethnic and religious groups would continue to improve.

More Details:

<http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=31034>

- **Machnoug: Elections will occur though not on time**

Interior and Municipalities Minister, Nouhad Machnoug, reassured that he would set communications with President Michel Aoun, Speaker Nabih Berri and PM Saad Hariri in order to take a decision regarding the date for upcoming parliamentary elections, confirming that there will be elections on a near time though not on the currently specified one.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/76693/Machnoug-Elections-will-occur-though-not-on-time>

- **'Safe Zone' on Lebanon Border Would Benefit Hezbollah, Iran**

On February 3, Lebanese president Michel Aoun called on the international community to establish a safe zone on the Syria-Lebanon border. A political ally of Hezbollah, Aoun said world powers must work with President Bashar al-Assad's regime to set up the proposed zone and facilitate the return of more than 1 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

More Details:

<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/analysis-safe-zone-on-lebanon-border-would-benefit-hezbollah-iran>

- **Hizbullah Enduring 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-financial-crisis>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Bahrain invites UN rights chief for unrestricted visit**

Bahrain's parliament has invited the UN human rights chief to visit and promised him unrestricted access to prisons and Shi'ite villages, local media said on Wednesday, following his criticism of the kingdom's record.

More details:

<http://www.arabianbusiness.com/bahrain-invites-un-rights-chief-for-unrestricted-visit-667207.html>

- **Arms sell to Saudi Arabia could make US responsible for war crimes, Amnesty warns**

A leading human rights group has called on the United States not to approve pending weapons sales to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, warning that such sales could implicate Washington in war crimes.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/arms-sell-saudi-arabia-could-make-us-responsible-war-crimes-amnesty-warns-951036>

- **Oman: The Middle East's Most Surprising Country**

Oman, where I have spent the past week, is an Arab country unlike any other. Count the ways.

More details:

<http://www.meforum.org/6596/oman-the-middle-east-most-surprising-country>

- **Qatar central bank raises policy rates, cuts reserve requirement –official**

Qatar's central bank said on Thursday that it raised its overnight lending rate by 25 basis points to 5.0 percent after the U.S. Federal Reserve tightened policy by a similar margin.

More details:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/qatar-rates-idUSL5N1GT4IZ?rpc=401&>

- **Minister honours research contest winners**

Minister of Education and Higher Education H E Dr Mohammed Abdul Wahed Ali Al Hammadi honoured winners of National Scientific Research Week contests held for school students and teachers in Qatar as part of Education Conference, which concluded yesterday.

More details:

<http://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/17/03/2017/Minister-honours-research-contest-winners>

- **Saudi King starts Asia tour in China**

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 is looking to cement its ties with the world's second-largest economy.

More details:

<http://www.iol.co.za/business-report/international/saudi-king-starts-asia-tour-in-china-8223970>

- **Saudi Deputy Crown Prince, US Secretary of Defense discuss counter-terrorism efforts**

Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Defense, has met here at the Pentagon with US Secretary of Defense James Mattis and US senior officials including Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Joseph Dunford, to discuss a number of issues of common interests.

More details:

<http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302603404>

- **Missile kills 26 Somali refugees in Yemen**

At least 26 Somali refugees have been killed, including women and children, and dozens others were injured as their boat was hit by a missile near the Mandeb Strait. Medical sources at the port of Al Hudaydah in the Red Sea say it is not known who launched the projectile.

More details:

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/03/17/missile-kills-26-somali-refugees-yemen>

- **Saudi airstrike leaves seven Yemeni fishermen dead**

At least seven people have lost their lives when Saudi fighter jets carried out an airstrike off the coast of Yemen's western province of Hudaydah as the Riyadh regime continues its atrocious aerial bombardment campaign against its beleaguered southern neighbor.

More details:

<http://www.prestv.com/Detail/2017/03/16/514630/Yemen-fishermen-killed-Saudi-airstrike-Hudaydah>

- **Yemen's Houthi rebels 'shoot down Apache helicopter in Hodeida'**

Yemen's Houthi rebels reported shooting down a Saudi Apache helicopter in Hodeidah province on Thursday.

More details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/3/16/yemens-houthi-rebels-shoot-down-apache-helicopter-in-hodeida>

7. EGYPT

- **Egyptian President Signs Decree on Establishment of Permanent Mission to NATO**

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Sisi on Thursday signed a decree on the establishment of the country's Permanent Mission to NATO, local media reported.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/world/201703161051642966-egypt-nato-president/>

- **Al-Sisi meets delegation from German Bundestag's Egypt Friendship Group**

President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi received Wednesday a delegation from German Bundestag's Egypt Friendship Group to discuss enhanced cooperation across various fields, in light of chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Egypt in March.

More details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/03/16/al-sisi-meets-delegation-german-bundestags-egypt-friendship-group/>

- **Egypt says ancient colossus pulled from slum likely not Ramses**

A massive eight-metre statue discovered in the ground water of a Cairo slum this month is likely not a depiction of the revered Pharaoh Ramses II as first believed, Antiquities Minister Khaled Al-Anani said on Thursday.

More details:

http://af.reuters.com/article/egyptNews/idAFL3N1GT5GJ?feedType=RSS&feedName=egyptNews&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FAfricaEgyptNews+%28News+%2F+Africa+%2F+Egypt+News%29&&rpc=401

- **Government considers applying new electricity tariff in July**

A committee formed by the Egyptian Electricity Holding Company (EEHC) is studying the suggestions presented to increase electricity tariffs in the fiscal year (FY) 2017/2018, according to the prices reconstruction programme announced in 2014.

More details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/03/16/government-considers-applying-new-electricity-tariff-july/>

- **.Egypt denounces Europe's human rights record in UN Human Rights Council meeting**

Egypt's United Nations Human Rights Council envoy denounced several European countries' human rights situations during a Wednesday council meeting, following comments made by the European Union, United States and Switzerland that were critical of Egypt's own rights record.

More details:

<http://www.madamasr.com/en/2017/03/16/news/u/egypt-denounces-europes-human-rights-record-in-un-human-rights-council-meeting/>

- **Egypt's Sisi calls for a committee to investigate 'school meal' disaster in Sohag**

Egypt's President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi ordered on Thursday the urgent formation of a committee to investigate a school meal poisoning incident that led to the food poisoning of hundreds of students in the Upper Egyptian governorate of Sohag.

More details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/261071/-.aspx>

- **The Heavy Civilian Toll in Sinai**

Egypt's increasingly heavy-handed tactics in Sinai have led to a dramatic rise in civilian casualties that is turning more residents against the military.

More details:

<http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=68296>

- **Analysis of key sectors of Egypt: Business opportunities and trends**

Egypt is one of the fastest growing and most promising economy in Africa. Egypt's high growth rate in recent years was driven by high international tourist inflow, growth in trade & logistics and ICT market. Egypt GDP is growing at a moderate rate of 4.3% in 2015.

More details:

<http://africabusinesscommunities.com/news/analysis-of-key-sectors-of-egypt-business-opportunities-and-trends/>

- **Egypt Detains ISIS Member for Recruiting Youth to Fight in Libya, Syria**

Egypt's General Prosecution detained on Thursday a member of ISIS pending investigation on charges of joining the terrorist organization and attempting to recruit Egyptian youths to its ranks of militants in Libya and Syria.

More details:

<http://english.aawsat.com/waleed-abdul-rahman/news-middle-east/egypt-detains-isis-member-recruiting-youth-fight-libya-syria>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Libya's oil output recovers slightly to 620,000 bpd**

Libya's oil production has increased to 620,000 barrels per day, a senior Libyan oil official said, after a pipeline briefly blocked by militants was reopened. On Tuesday, output at the Wafa gas and condensate field was shut after militants blocked an export pipeline.

More Details:

http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFKBN1600JF-OZABS?feedType=RSS&feedName=investingNews&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FAFRICAbusinessNews+%28News+%2F+AFRICA+%2F+Business+News%29&&rpc=401

- **Libya rivals sign ceasefire deal**

Armed groups in Tripoli have signed a ceasefire deal ending a four-day battle for control of the Libyan capital, the unity government said on Thursday. The city has been paralysed amid exchanges of rocket and artillery fire between pro-unity government forces and rival militias including groups allied with former Prime Minister Khalifa Ghweil.

More Details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/bbe339a5-ed94-4e1e-883a-7575f02ce0e2.aspx>

- **Political deadlock: Moroccan prime minister has to leave**

In a highly unusual move, Morocco's king ousted the designated prime minister in an effort to settle a five-month deadlock over forming a new government. A surprise palace statement late Wednesday announced that King Mohammed VI had removed Abdelilah Benkirane, the head of the Islamist party PJD that won last year's parliamentary elections, from his duties.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/political-deadlock-moroccan-prime-minister-has-leave-951068>

- **Sailing direct from Morocco to Russia**

The French carrier CMA CGM has adapted its Agax service in order to offer a direct, eight-day connection between Morocco and Russia. The shipping company and its subsidiaries OPDR and Comanav have thus improved the conditions for transporting perishables such as fruit and vegetables as seafreight. The important hubs on the southbound loop are still the ports of Rotterdam and Hamburg.

More Details:

<http://www.transportjournal.com/en/home/news/artikeldetail/sailing-direct-from-morocco-to-russia.html>

- **Morocco hosts 1st African, Ibero-American meeting on media regulating**

The first meeting between African and Ibero-American media regulating bodies opened Thursday in the Moroccan city of Fez with the aim to exchange expertise on areas of common interest.

More Details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/17/c_136134879.htm

- **Tunisia overturns one-year compulsory jail term for cannabis**

Tunisia has repealed a controversial law which gave out a mandatory jail sentence of one year for the use of narcotics. Law 52, which dates back to the Ben Ali regime, was overturned so that judges can issue pardons to first-time users to avoid jail terms.

More Details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/3/17/tunisia-overturns-one-year-compulsory-jail-term-for-cannabis>

- **Peace Heroes: Tunisia's Khedija Arfaoui**

On New Year's Eve, a suicide bombing in Istanbul left 40 dead. Among those who lost their loved ones is longtime Tunisian peace activist and academic Khedija Arfaoui. Although Arfaoui is still in disbelief that she will no longer see her son and daughter-in-law, she continues to raise her voice in the face of extremism and violence.

More Details:

<http://msmagazine.com/blog/2017/03/16/peace-heroes-tunisia-khedija-arfaoui/>

- **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. Sheikha Moza was welcomed by Dr Anouar Maarouf, Minister of Communication Technologies and Digital Economy, Badreddine Ouali, President of the Smart Tunisia programme and Chairman of Vermeg, and Elyes Jeribi, Executive Director of the Smart Tunisia Programme.

More Details:

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

- **HPR gives confidence to two new members of government**

The House of People's Representatives (HPR) voted Thursday evening confidence of the two newly appointed members of the government of Youssef Chahed. They are Ahmed Adhoum and Abdellatif Hmam Minister of Religious Affairs and Secretary of State for Trade, respectively.

More Details:

<https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/8821745-hpr-gives>

- **Russia's Intervention in Libya would realign the Eastern Mediterranean**

Following Russia's success in reestablishing its military presence in Syria and Egypt, Moscow now could be planning a military intervention in Libya. On March 13, press reports emerged that Russian special forces personnel and drones had been sighted in Egypt's coastal town Sidi Barrani, located only 100 km. from the eastern Libyan territory controlled by the Russian-backed Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar. If Moscow acts to change the balance of power in Libya, as it did in Syria, it would create a Russian ring around the southern half of the eastern Mediterranean, entirely overturning the strategic calculus of every actor in the region.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Russias-intervention-in-Libya-would-realign-the-eastern-Mediterranean-484419>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Taliban car bomb hits army base in eastern Afghanistan**

A suicide car bomb detonated near an army base in the eastern Afghan province of Khost on Friday, killing one soldier and wounding several before the army repelled at attack on the base by four gunmen, the district chief said. The blast, 50 metres (yards) from the base, was heard several miles away and damaged several shops, homes and a school, Akbar Zadran, the chief of Sabari district, told Reuters.

More Details:

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-afghanistan-blast-idUKKBN16O0KV?rpc=401&>

- **Afghanistan, Pakistan Agree On Joint Anti-Terror Mechanism**

At the meeting, Mark Lyall Grant asked both countries to ease tensions and work together to defeat the common challenges of security and terrorism. Afghan and Pakistani officials at a meeting in London on Thursday agreed to form a joint mechanism to fight the common threat of terrorism, media reports say

More Details:

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/afghanistan-pakistan-agree-joint-anti-terror-mechanism>

- **Palace Museum launches exhibit on ancient Afghan civilization**

Titled "Afghanistan: Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul," the exhibit showcases more than 200 precious items that demonstrate the development of the central Asian country between the third century BC and the first century. The period has been known as one of Renaissance in the Afghan history, as it also coincides with the beginning of the ancient Silk Road.

More Details:

http://www.china.org.cn/arts/2017-03/17/content_40468699.htm

- **Pakistan takes up issue of missing Nizamuddin shrine keepers**

Reacting to an Indian request to recover missing top clerics at the shrine of Hazrat Nizamuddin in New Delhi, Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson Nafees Zakaria said all concerned agencies are looking into the matter. The two Indian clerics, including the head keeper of New Delhi's Nizamuddin Dargah, went missing in Pakistan.

More Details:

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/03/17/pakistan-takes-up-issue-of-missing-nizamuddin-shrine-keepers/>

- **Pakistan now has the right partner for growth, says economist**

Today, Pakistan has the right partner to grow itself. The only need left now is to set the right table for the private sector of the country and provide them with more details of the projects of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Chief economist at Bank alFalah, Dr Mushtaq Ali Khan, said this while explaining the issues that private sector banks are facing regarding investments in CPEC.

More Details:

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1357246/pakistan-now-right-partner-growth-says-economist/>

- **Pakistan calls on Facebook and Twitter to help identify users suspected of blasphemy online**

Pakistan has called on Facebook and Twitter to help identify Pakistani users who post "blasphemous content" on their platforms. Facebook has agreed to send a delegation to Pakistan to address the country's concerns over blasphemous and objectionable content on its site, the Ministry of Interior said. Any person found guilty of insulting Islam or Prophet Muhammad can be sentenced to death under the country's stringent blasphemy laws.

More Details:

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/pakistan-calls-facebook-twitter-help-identify-users-suspected-blasphemy-online-1612130>

- **Pakistan, China agreed to increase military cooperation: ISPR**

China and Pakistan on Thursday agreed to continue and further increase military cooperation between the two countries, said a statement released by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The development came during Chief of Army Staff Qamar Javed Bajwa's three-day trip to China.

More Details:

<http://paktribune.com/news/PakistanChina-agreed-to-increase-military-cooperation-ISPR-278454.html>

- **Sequel to confession by Hussain Haqqani**

Hussain Haqqani, the former Pakistani Ambassador to US has finally confessed that he helped the CIA operatives and US Special Forces in getting stationed in Pakistan to ultimately hunt Osama Bin Laden (OBL) in Abbottabad on May 2, 2011. In his written confession to 'The Washington Post' Hussain Haqqani said with clarity that, he had the blessing of his political bosses in Pakistan; then President Asif Zardari and Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani.

More Details:

<http://pakobserver.net/sequel-to-confession-by-hussain-haqqani/>

- **Top female squash player evaded Taliban by dressing as boy**

When Pakistan's top female squash player Maria Toorpakai was a little girl she burnt all her dresses in the back yard and chopped her hair short. For the next decade she lived as a boy. Toorpakai grew up in Pakistan's South Waziristan, a rugged tribal region neighbouring Afghanistan, where the Taliban is deeply entrenched and girls' lives are highly restricted. At four years old Toorpakai could already see that boys had far greater freedoms and she wanted to play their games. But she quickly realised she would have to dress as a boy to do so.

More Details:

<http://nation.com.pk/sports/17-Mar-2017/top-female-squash-player-evaded-taliban-by-dressing-as-boy>

- **Afghan army suffer casualties in Khost car bombing**

The Afghan national army soldiers suffered casualties in an explosion triggered by a car bomb in southeastern Khost province of Afghanistan. According to the local security officials, the incident took place earlier today in the vicinity of Yaqoobi and Sabari district.

More Details:

<http://www.khaama.com/afghan-army-suffer-casualties-in-khost-car-bombing-02415>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkey and Egypt 'need to tap bioenergy potential'**

That's according to a new study by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The report suggests the combined biomass from the two countries could generate enough electricity to supply 700,000 homes and enough renewable fuels to replace more than two million tonnes of oil each year.

More Details:

<http://www.energylivenews.com/2017/03/17/turkey-and-egypt-need-to-tap-bioenergy-potential/>

- **Turkey's TAV to operate airport in Saudi Arabia**

Turkey's leading airport operator TAV signed an agreement with Saudi Arabia's civil aviation authority to expand and operate an airport in the western port city of Yanbu, the company announced Thursday. TAV Airports and its partner Al Rajhi Group will construct a new terminal at Yanbu Prince Abdul Mohsin bin Abdulaziz International Airport and operate the airport for 30 years, according to the statement.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/economy/turkeys-tav-to-operate-airport-in-saudi-arabia/773116>

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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