



# MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

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## 1. IRAQ

- **Iraqi forces Charge into Mosul airport in a bid to Eradicate ISIS militants**

Iraqi Security Forces have stormed Mosul airport in an attempt to force ISIS militants out of the country's second most populous city. It comes days after Iraqi prime minister Haider al-Abadi launched an offensive to retake the western part of Mosul from the jihadi militants.

More details:

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/771007/Iraqi-forces-police-charge-storm-Mosul-airport-eradicate-ISIS-militants-western-Mosul>

- **4 civilians killed in suicide bombing at Baghdad-Kirkuk road**

Four civilians were killed and nine others were wounded Thursday when attackers, presumably from the Islamic State, boarding booby-trapped cars, targeted checkpoints on the Kirkuk-Baghdad road in Diyala, an official has said.

More details:

<http://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/two-soldiers-wounded-suicide-bombing-baghdad-kirkuk-road/>

- **Security information director: Iran asked Al-Zarqawi to kill Iraqi Shiites**

Col. Fahd Abdul Aziz Al-Ghufeili, director of information management and online public administration for intellectual security, on Tuesday said new evidence has emerged of Iran's involvement to back Al-Qaeda and Daesh in an attempt to weaken Iraq's American invasion resistance after the Iraq war in 2003.

More details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1058546/saudi-arabia>

- **U.S. Military Official: U.S. Troops in Iraq 'Absolutely' in Combat**

The U.S. military on Wednesday said U.S. troops are "absolutely" in combat against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, a departure from rhetoric used under the Obama administration.

More details:

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/02/22/us-military-official-us-troops-iraq-absolutely-combat/>

- **Shia militias take on Daesh to recapture areas near Mosul, Iraq**

Iraq's powerful Shia militia launched a major attack Wednesday to recapture areas near the city of Mosul from Daesh, backing an ongoing government offensive against the radical Sunni group. The attack by the pro-government Popular Mobilization group is aimed at seizing areas west of Mosul, Daesh's last key stronghold in Iraq, militia spokesman Ahmed al-Asadi said.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/shia-militias-take-daesh-recapture-areas-near-mosul-iraq-941422>

- **ISIS training child jihadists and soldiers, including from Kyrgyzstan**

Daesh militant group, so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), is training child jihadists and soldiers, including from Kyrgyzstan, the Stabilisation Network project supervisor Gwen Lene told AKIpress.

More details:

<http://akipress.com/news:589275/>

- **Mosul offensive: Iraqi forces storm airport in bid to retake city**

Iraqi security forces have launched an attack on Mosul airport, a key part of the government's offensive to drive so-called Islamic State (IS) militants from the western half of the city.

More details:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39061811>

- **Islamic State May Soon Go Broke in Iraq and Syria**

The Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL) is plagued by financial troubles, with annual revenue falling by over 50 percent over the last two years, a study finds.

More details:

<http://www.breitbart.com/jihad/2017/02/22/study-islamic-state-business-model-iraq-syria-expected-soon-fail/>

- **Nine Iraqi asylum seekers from same family 'gang-raped German teacher for hours' on New Year's Eve in Vienna**

Nine Iraqi asylum seekers from the same family have appeared in court accused of gang raping a woman in a sickening New Year's Eve attack. Harrowing details were made public by prosecutors as the trial began this week in Vienna, Austria.

More details:

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/nine-iraqi-asylum-seekers-same-9901041>

- **Pentagon: conditions set for IS defeat in Iraq, vital leaders killed**

Conditions are set for the defeat of Islamic State militants in Iraq as Iraqi government troops successfully push in western Mosul, with senior extremist leaders killed, the Pentagon said late Wednesday.

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/pentagon-conditions-set-defeat-iraq-vital-leaders-killed/>

- **UN seeks to shelter 250,000 Iraqi civilians as anti-ISIS forces enter western Mosul**

The United Nations refugee agency is focusing efforts on camp construction in and around the Iraqi city of Mosul, where renewed fighting could displace up to 250,000 people.

More details:

<http://aranews.net/2017/02/un-seeks-to-shelter-250000-iraqi-civilians-as-anti-isis-forces-enter-western-mosul/>

- **Canada's military considering its next moves in Iraq, Ukraine and possibly Africa**

Canada's military is facing a critical few weeks as the federal government weighs renewed deployments to Iraq and Ukraine, ponders the fate of a long-awaited peace mission, lays out a new vision for the armed forces and decides the budget to pay for it all.

More details:

<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2017/02/22/canadas-military-considering-its-next-moves-in-iraq-ukraine-and-possibly-africa.html>

- **'The coming battle for west Mosul will be one of snipers'**

Akram Mahsen, a 25-year-old Iraqi federal police sniper, squinted through his scope at a black flag hanging limply a kilometre distant at the Mosul airport. Beyond that lay west Mosul, the last major urban stronghold in the country held by Isil.

More details:

<http://www.independent.ie/world-news/middle-east/the-coming-battle-for-west-mosul-will-be-one-of-snipers-35475076.html>

- **Radioactive Weapons Are Killing Innocent Civilians in Iraq—and It's the US Military's Fault**

US-led coalition fighter jets bombed al-Shefaa, a residential area in eastern Mosul (Iraq). Sources from a variety of perspectives say that several dozen civilians died in the raid and a large number were wounded. The highest numbers are being quoted by the Islamic State's Amaq News Agency, while the lower numbers come from al-Jazeera. The coalition commanders have not answered questions about the raids.

More details:

<http://www.alternet.org/world/us-killing-innocent-civilians-iraq>

- **Iraqi jets destroy 9 Islamic State vehicles bound to Syria from Mosul**

Iraqi fighter jets destroyed nine vehicles boarded by Islamic State members while attempting to flee western Mosul's town of Tal Afar to Syria, al-Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Units) media said Thursday.

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-jets-destroy-9-islamic-state-vehicles-bound-syria/>

- **Iraqi forces storm IS-held Mosul airport**

Iraqi forces backed by jets, drones and gunships have attacked Mosul airport, a key step in a renewed offensive against IS fighters defending their stronghold on the city's west bank.

More details:

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/02/23/iraqi-forces-storm-held-mosul-airport>

- **KRG Seeking \$0.5 Billion Loan to Boost Oil Sector**

To accelerate the efforts to overcome the economic crisis, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is trying to obtain 0.5 billion USD loan as it has also annulled the employment of 30,000 'illegal' positions in the public service, according to a lawmaker.

More details:

<http://www.iraqdailyjournal.com/story-z14838127>

- **Russian company discovers huge oil reserve in Iraq**

A large oil reserve has been discovered in the Iraqi province of Basra, a Russian company has revealed. In a statement, Russia's Lukoil said the well recorded daily flow rates of more than 1,000 cubic metres of oil from the Mishrif horizon.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170223-russian-company-discovers-huge-oil-reserve-in-iraq/>

- **Six Islamic State militants killed in coalition airstrikes in Anbar**

Six Islamic State militants were killed on Thursday in air strikes by fighter jets from the U.S.-led coalition that targeted group strongholds in western Anbar, a local military official said.

More details:

<http://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/six-islamic-state-militants-killed-coalition-airstrikes-anbar/>

- **Turkey wants to talk cooperation between Erbil, Ankara over 'border security'**

The president of the Kurdistan Region, Masoud Barzani, is going to discuss a "range of questions" with the president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, including the economy, "border security," cultural, and humanitarian issues.

More details:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/turkey/23022017>

## 2. SYRIA

- **US Senator McCain Visits Syria to Assess 'Dynamic Conditions' on Ground**

US Senator John McCain travelled to Syria this week to visit US forces present there and discuss the campaign against Daesh terror group, McCain's spokesperson said in a release.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201702231050962663-mccain-visit-syria/>

- **U.N. mediator not expecting quick breakthrough in Syria peace talks**

U.N. mediator Staffan de Mistura said on Wednesday he did not expect an immediate breakthrough when Syria peace talks restart on Thursday but wanted productive talks that relaunch the process towards a political solution to end the six-year war.

More details:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-un-idUSKBN16122B>

- **Syrian opposition asks for direct negotiations with Assad regime**

Syria's main opposition delegation on Wednesday asked for direct discussions with government representatives at the Geneva IV peace talks aimed at ending the six-year conflict by reaching a political solution.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/syrian-opposition-asks-direct-negotiations-assad-regime-941662>

- **Saudi Foreign Minister: We Are 'Ready to Send Ground Troops' to Syria**

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir told a German newspaper Tuesday that his government is "ready to send ground troops" to fight the Islamic State in Syria if necessary.

More details:

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/02/22/us-support-saudi-arabia-ready-send-special-forces-syria/>

- **Opposition Rules out Assad's Role in Syria's Future**

Head of the Geneva talks expected to start today, the Syrian opposition made it clear Tuesday that the negotiations should be focused on a political transition.

More details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2017/02/23/opposition-rules-out-assads-role-in-syrias-future>

- **Syria's warring sides brought together for Geneva talks**

UN-sponsored peace talks between the Syrian government and opposition are to get under way in Geneva for the first time in nearly a year.

More details:

[http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39037609?intlink\\_from\\_url=&link\\_location=live-reporting-story](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39037609?intlink_from_url=&link_location=live-reporting-story)

- **Syrian Migrant Who Killed 20 Pro-Assad Soldiers Goes On Trial in Austria**

A Syrian migrant, who reportedly bragged about shooting unarmed soldiers loyal to Syrian President Bashar Assad, went on trial in Austria Wednesday, charged with murder in the context of terrorism.

More details:

<http://www.ibtimes.com/syrian-migrant-who-killed-20-pro-assad-soldiers-goes-trial-austria-2496185>

- **New anti-Islamic State plan could change U.S. strategy in Syria**

President Trump's developing plan to defeat the Islamic State may lead to significant alterations in the Syria strategy that Trump inherited from Barack Obama, including a reduction or elimination of both long-standing U.S. support for moderate opposition forces fighting against the Syrian government and the use of Syrian Kurdish fighters as the main U.S. proxy force against the militants, according to U.S. officials.

More details:

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/new-anti-islamic-state-plan-could-change-us-strategy-in-syria/2017/02/22/268e153c-f84b-11e6-be05-1a3817ac21a5\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.141378d136bf](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/new-anti-islamic-state-plan-could-change-us-strategy-in-syria/2017/02/22/268e153c-f84b-11e6-be05-1a3817ac21a5_story.html?utm_term=.141378d136bf)

- **Russian Defense Chief Says New Weapons Tested In Syria Campaign**

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has expressed satisfaction with Moscow's military campaign in Syria and says it has been a good test of new weapons and special-forces units.

More details:

<http://www.rferl.org/a/russia-defense-shoigu-syria-weapons-tested/28325207.html>

### 3. IRAN

- **Iran to present terms of contracts for Russian oil and gas companies on March 27**

The Iranian delegation plans to arrive in Russia on March 27 to present terms of oil and gas contracts for Russian companies, Russia's Energy Minister Alexander Novak said after talks with Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zangeneh, TASS reported.

More details:

<http://en.trend.az/iran/business/2724600.html>

- **Border Security Commission of Iran, Pakistan to meet soon: Islamabad**

Iran and Pakistan have agreed that the Border Security Commission of the two countries will meet soon to further strengthen security along the border, said a statement by Pakistan's foreign ministry.

More details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82441489/>

- **Iran willing to assist in eradicating terrorism in region: Zarif**

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and PM's Adviser Sartaj Aziz discussed issues of mutual interest and the implementation of bilateral trade projects signed between the two countries.

More details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/188244-Iran-willing-to-assist-in-eradicating-terrorism-in-region-Zarif>

- **Iranian team visits Saudi Arabia for hajj talks**

Tehran on Wednesday sent a team for talks in Saudi Arabia on the next annual pilgrimage after missing the hajj in 2016 at a time of rising tensions between the two countries, Iran's culture minister said.

More details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/2/23/iranian-team-visits-saudi-arabia-for-hajj-talks>

- **Azeri president due in Tehran in weeks**

Visiting minister of economy and industry of Azerbaijan said that President Ilham Aliyev is slated to visit Tehran within the next two weeks to discuss issues of mutual interest with his Iranian counterpart President Rouhani.

More details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82441397/>

- **Iran: Ahvaz Protests a Prelude to Events Which Will Rattle the Mullahs' Entire Foundation**

The city of Ahvaz in southwest Iran has been the scene of continuous unrest. Tensions continue to rise between the new U.S. administration and Iran with a series of actions and reactions. Most recently, Iran has launched a new round of military drills, embarking on more provocative actions, while U.S. allies such as Saudi Arabia and Israel have joined in by issuing what is described as twin warnings to Iran. Wrote Heshmat Alavi in AL-Arabiya on February 22.

More details:

<http://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/society/22219-iran-ahvaz-protests-a-prelude-to-events-which-will-rattle-the-mullahs-entire-foundation>

- **Rouhani: We'll continue to support 'Palestine'**

Iranian President promises to continue to support Palestinian Arabs, urges Muslim nations to do so as well. "The Iranian nation has paid a heavy price for supporting the Palestinian nation and opposition to the Zionist regime's actions but it will continue its support with resolve and determination," Rouhani said in a meeting with Palestinian Authority (PA) politician Salim al-Zanoun in Tehran on Wednesday, according to the Fars news agency.

More details:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/225528>

- **Iran concludes war games despite Washington's threats**

The drills were launched despite U.S. President Donald Trump's threatening remarks late last month, when he said Iran "was playing with fire" and all U.S. options were on the table.

More details:

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/411371/Iran-concludes-war-games-despite-Washington-s-threats>

- **Pres. Rouhani arrives in Khuzestan province**

President Hassan Rouhani arrived in Ahwaz on Thursday morning to address the issue of dust and water pollution.

More details:

<http://en.mehrnews.com/news/123785/Pres-Rouhani-arrives-in-Khuzestan-province>

## 4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Israeli forces detain 23 Palestinians in predawn West Bank raids**

In predawn raids Wednesday across the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israeli forces detained at least 23 Palestinians and seized three vehicles, according to Palestinian and Israeli sources. Scores of Israeli forces raided Aida refugee camp in the southern occupied West Bank district of Bethlehem before dawn to detain one person, identified by locals as 20-year-old Muhammad Imad al-Azraq, after some 20 soldiers broke into and searched his family's home, seizing his mobile phone, while some 20 other soldiers were stationed on the roof of the house.

More details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?ID=775599>

- **Rouhani: Islamic World Should Pay Price of Supporting Palestine**

We believe that the Islamic world should stand firm for restoring the rights of the Palestinian nation and is duty-bound to pay the necessary price too," President Rouhani said at a meeting with Chairman of the Palestinian National Council Salim Zanoun in Tehran on Wednesday. Highlighting the heavy price that Iranian people have paid so far to support Palestine and oppose the Zionist regime of Israel, the president reaffirmed Tehran's commitment to keep supporting Palestinians.

More details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2017/02/22/1336189/rouhani-islamic-world-should-pay-price-of-supporting-palestine>

- **Palestinian deputy PM due in Azerbaijan**

Deputy Prime Minister of Palestine Ziad Abu Amr will take part in the 5th Global Baku Forum, to be held on March 16-17, Azerbaijan's State Committee on Work with Diaspora said in a message Feb. 22. The message says that during the forum, Ziad Abu Amr will deliver a speech on fight against terrorism.

More details:

<http://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/2724289.html>

- **Palestine Conference: against Israel's Inhuman Practices and Injustices That Disfigure Human History**

In an opening speech, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said all Muslim countries have a responsibility to support the Palestinian resistance, as the myriad of UN resolutions

that explicitly recognize the legitimacy of the people's struggle for liberation from foreign domination by all available means only strengthens the legal basis for the Palestinians' right to resist.

More details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13951204001700>

- **Palestinian flag flies in the heart of occupied Hebron**

Yesterday protesters who are part of the movement, Youth against Settlements, raised the Palestinian flag above their youth centre in Tel Rumeida in the heart of occupied Hebron, a significant act of resistance. The protest was part of an on going campaign to re-open the main street in occupied Hebron, Shuhada Street which has remained blockaded since 1994 when Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein opened fire in killed 29 Palestinians in worship at the Ibrahimi mosque.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170223-palestinian-flag-flies-in-the-heart-of-occupied-hebron/>

- **Encountering Peace: the Fatal Israeli Gaza Mistake**

Israel needs an intelligent policy on Gaza that takes into account the fact that the people of Gaza will always be our neighbors, they are not going into the sea and they are not going to disappear. Soon after the election of Hamas in 2006, Israel developed and implemented a policy it called "isolation" of Gaza to convince the Palestinian people that they had made a very bad choice. The basic idea was that Gaza would be cut off from the world under the guise of a military blockade, which was certainly justified, but moreover Gaza was essentially sealed off to the world.

More details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Encountering-Peace-The-fatal-Israeli-Gaza-mistake-482322>

- **The Trump-Netanyahu Circus: Now, No One Can Save Israel from Itself**

The President of the United States can hardly be taken seriously, saying much but doing little. His words, often offensive, carry no substance, and it is impossible to summarize his complex political outlook about important issues. This is precisely the type of American presidency that Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, prefers.

More details:

<http://original.antiwar.com/ramzy-baroud/2017/02/22/the-trump-netanyahu-circus-now-no-one-can-save-israel-from-itself/>

- **The strange route Benjamin Netanyahu took to get from Singapore to Sydney**

or many people flying from Singapore to Sydney, the flight can take as little as seven hours or so. But not if you are Benjamin Netanyahu. In the Israeli prime minister's case, it can take more than 11 hours. The Israeli leader took an unusual detour when traveling from Singapore to Australia overnight, a move that added several hours to his journey.

More details:

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2017/02/22/the-strange-route-benjamin-netanyahu-took-get-from-singapore-sydney/tJral0WKkkd0IsHxB6L03J/story.html>

- **Trump helped Netanyahu pave road for one-state**

The meeting with Trump loosened Netanyahu from the shackles of the two-state proposal. Netanyahu doesn't have to freeze settlement building, or face threats and reprimands from Washington. Most importantly, he no longer has to fake interest in a peace process based on two states.

More details:

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4926199,00.html>

- **Arab States of the Persian Gulf Must Choose Between Paths Proposed By Iran and Israel**

Two very different dialogue proposals are on the table for the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, one from a historic enemy, Israel, proposed in conjunction with a crucial partner, the United States. The other is from a historic rival, Iran, which shares the same neighborhood and faith. The choice the Arab countries ultimately make could determine the future peace and prosperity of the region.

More details:

<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iraninsight/arab-states-of-the-persian-gulf-must-choose-between-paths-proposed-by-iran-and-israel>

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Jordan to Participate in Syria Peace Talks in Geneva**

Jordan will not take part in the ministerial talks on Syria, but will participate in the meetings of the "Friends of Syria" group, the source said on Thursday. The next round of intra-Syrian talks, due to start on Thursday, is expected to bring together representatives of the Syrian government and opposition groups.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201702231050965899-jordan-participate-jeneva-syria-talks/>

- **Jordan's troubles in its own backyard**

King Abdullah II of Jordan has had every reason to be pleased with himself lately. Following the January inauguration of President Donald Trump, he was the first Arab leader invited to Washington to meet with the new administration. The visit was hailed a success by all involved—not only in terms of U.S.-Jordan relations, but also as an opportunity for the king to caution Trump against moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

More Details:

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/02/22/jordans-troubles-in-its-own-backyard/>

- **How the United States Should Help Protect Jordan from the Chaos Next Door**

The Middle East has been engulfed in chaos. Longstanding authoritarian regimes have been toppled; still other dictators have killed hundreds of thousands and displaced millions in an effort to retain power. Iran's Shiite proxy militias have spread throughout the region, fueling sectarianism and broadening the appeal of nihilistic Sunni Islamist jihadist groups. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia and Egypt—two longstanding pillars of Washington's strategic architecture in the Middle East—have been shaken by economic troubles.

More Details:

<https://www.lawfareblog.com/how-united-states-should-help-protect-jordan-chaos-next-door>

- **President: Iran-Jordan ties to serve national interests**

President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that promotion of Tehran-Amman relations will be to the benefit of the people of both Iran and Jordan as well as the region. President Rouhani made the remarks in a meeting with Jordan's House of Representatives Speaker Atef Tarawneh on the sidelines of the 6th International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada (Uprising) that is underway in Tehran. President Rouhani said Iran is ready for the expansion of ties and cooperation with Jordan in line with stability and security of the region.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82441024/>

- **Egypt, Jordan Reaffirm Commitment to ‘Two State Solution’**

The leaders of Egypt and Jordan reaffirmed their continued support on Tuesday for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after U.S. President Donald Trump suggested abandoning it. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Jordan’s King Abdullah discussed the issue and coordination of their positions on the Middle East peace process at a meeting in Cairo, a statement from Sisi’s office said.

More Details:

<http://www.breitbart.com/jerusalem/2017/02/22/egypt-jordan-reaffirm-commitment-two-state-solution/>

- **U.S. Military Delegation in Lebanon Next Week**

A U.S. military delegation is expected to arrive in Lebanon early next week to discuss with the Lebanese army the repercussions of the Syrian war on Lebanon and to weigh the developments on the Lebanese-Syrian where the army is facing militants, al-Joumhouria daily reported on Thursday. U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General Joseph L. Votel, is expected to make an “unusual” visit to Lebanon next week, well-informed sources told the daily on condition of anonymity.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/225879-u-s-military-delegation-in-lebanon-next-week>

- **In Lebanon Gyms, Playtime and Escape for Syrian Children**

Every Sunday, the gymnasium along Beirut's airport highway echoes with the shouting and laughter of dozens of Syrian children enjoying a rare escape from a grim and confined life in exile. The Sport 4 Development program, run by the U.N. children's agency, aims to bring 12,000 children, mostly Syrian refugees, to blacktops and turf pitches this year to teach the basics of soccer and basketball, and to ease the pain of war and displacement

More Details:

[http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML\\_LEBANON\\_REFUGEE\\_SPORTS?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-02-23-01-46-33](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_LEBANON_REFUGEE_SPORTS?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-02-23-01-46-33)

- **Joint statement of the International Support Group for Lebanon**

The Members of the International Support Group (ISG) reaffirm their commitment to the stability and security of Lebanon. The current political momentum has re-activated Lebanon's institutions of state. The ISG Members encourage all parties to arrive at an early compromise, which would present an appropriate electoral framework for Lebanon. The timely conduct of peaceful and transparent

parliamentary elections are an important step to preserve Lebanon's democratic tradition, and to meet the aspirations of the Lebanese people. The ISG Members stand ready to provide support.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/75664/Joint-statement-of-the-International-Support-Group-for-Lebanon>

- **Hezbollah denies that its convoy in Syria was attacked by Israel**

Lebanese media reported on Wednesday that Israeli jets had allegedly carried out air strikes against a weapons shipment to Hezbollah near the Syrian capital of Damascus. According to the reports , the targets that were hit around 3.00 am were affiliated with the Assad regime and were the regime army's 3rd Division in the al-Katif suburbs of the capital and Syrian media had reported witnesses hearing "sounds of loud explosions" in the early morning hours.

More Details:

<http://yalibnan.com/2017/02/22/hezbollah-denies-that-its-convoy-in-syria-was-attacked-by-israel/>

- **The Political Scene: Echo of Sayyed Nasrallah Speech**

Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah's speech at the ceremony of the martyred leaders, last week, has had a resonating effect and a strong message that echoed through the Arab and Islamic worlds as well as in the Israeli enemy circles. The message Sayyed Nasrallah delivered was a message of strength, readiness, steadfastness and support to the Umma's prime cause represented by Palestine.

More Details:

<http://english.almanar.com.lb/198581>

## 6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Saudi King to Visit Indonesia with 1,500 Strong Entourage in March**

Jakarta. King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia has confirmed he will visit Indonesia on March 1-9, kicking off with a state visit to meet President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo on March 1-3 and cap it off with a short trip to Bali on March 4-9. The king will have an entourage of around 1,500 men with him.

More Details:

<http://jakartaglobe.id/news/saudi-king-visit-indonesia-1500-strong-entourage-march/>

- **Yemen president says Saudi allocated \$10bn for reconstruction**

Yemen's President Abed Rabbou Mansour Hadi said Wednesday that Saudi Arabia has earmarked \$10 billion in aid for the reconstruction of provinces retaken from Houthi rebels.

More Details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/2/23/yemen-president-says-saudi-allocated-10bn-for-reconstruction>

- **PM's initiative to speed up The Pearl-Qatar project**

United Development Company (UDC) Chairman, Turki bin Mohammed Al-Khater has praised the new initiatives announced by Prime Minister and Interior Minister H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani, at his meeting last Sunday with representatives of the private and government sectors, aimed at boosting private sector investment and economic growth.

More Details:

<http://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/23/02/2017/PM%E2%80%99s-initiative-to-speed-up-The-Pearl-Qatar-project>

- **Qatari emir honors outgoing Turkish ambassador**

Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani on Wednesday presented outgoing Turkish Ambassador Ahmet Demirok with Qatar's prestigious Al-Wajbah medal in recognition of the diplomat's role in promoting bilateral cooperation, Qatar's official press agency reported.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/qatari-emir-honors-outgoing-turkish-ambassador/756265>

- **UK-UAE Task Force holds 16th meeting in Abu Dhabi**

The UK-UAE Task Force today held its 16th meeting in Abu Dhabi to discuss a range of issues of common interest, including conflict resolution, security, trade, investment, humanitarian action, education, culture and consular affairs.

More Details:

<http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302599351>

- **Bahrain: Proposed Military Trials of Civilians**

Bahrain's Council of Representatives on February 21, 2017, approved an amendment to Bahrain's Constitution that would enable military courts to try civilians, in violation of international fair trial

standards, Human Rights Watch said today. The amendment goes next to the upper house of parliament and then to King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa for his final approval.

More Details:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/23/bahrain-proposed-military-trials-civilians>

- **Iran Regime's IRGC – Related Terrorists Arrested in Bahrain**

Bahrain has arrested 20 terror suspects accused of plotting attacks in the small island Gulf kingdom Al-Arabiya reported on February 21, 2017.

More Details:

<http://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/terrorism-fundamentalism/22214-iran-regime-s-irgc-related-terrorists-arrested-in-bahrain>

- **Leading Bahrain banks back financial forum**

Some of the leading banks and financial institutions are supporting the 6th GCC Financial Forum to be held in Bahrain next week as charter sponsors.

More Details:

[http://www.tradearabia.com/news/BANK\\_321122.html](http://www.tradearabia.com/news/BANK_321122.html)

- **Oman Oil marketing Company sponsors the waqf forum on Islamic Economics and Social Investment**

Reflecting the importance of waqf and its role in supporting local communities, Oman Oil Marketing Company sponsored the forum on Islamic Economics and Social Investment, which was designed to highlight the connection waqf shares with corporate social responsibility (CSR) and supporting SMEs.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/business/pr/oman-oil-marketing-company-sponsors-waqf-forum-islamic-economics-and-social-investment-9>

## 7. EGYPT

- **Egypt's Al-Azhar, Vatican resume dialogue sessions after 7-year hiatus**

Egypt's Al-Azhar and the Vatican have resumed dialogue sessions in Cairo — focused in particular on combining efforts to combat religious extremism and terrorism — for the first time since the sessions were halted in 2010.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/258676/Egypt/Politics-/Egypts-AIAzhar,-Vatican-resume-dialogue-sessions-a.aspx>

- **Egyptian parliament says Merkel is to visit Egypt next week, no German confirmation yet**

The Egyptian parliament said in an official statement on Tuesday that German chancellor Angela Merkel will visit Egypt next week. There was, however, no confirmation from the German side so far.

More Details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/02/22/egyptian-parliament-says-merkel-visit-egypt-next-week-no-german-confirmation-yet/>

- **Egypt, Hungary defense ministers discuss military cooperation, migration crisis**

Egypt's defense minister Sedki Sobhi met on Wednesday with Hungarian counterpart István Simicskó in Hungary's Budapest, where both sides discussed means to boost military cooperation.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/258673/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt,-Hungary-defense-ministers-discuss-military-.aspx>

- **Egypt's Court of Cassation for 9 in Shia preacher Hassan Shehata killing**

The court rejected an appeal by the defendants, confirming 14 year jail sentences for them, Ahram reported.

More Details:

[http://en.abna24.com/news/africa/egypts-court-of-cassation-for-9-in-shia-preacher-hassan-shehata-killing\\_813480.html](http://en.abna24.com/news/africa/egypts-court-of-cassation-for-9-in-shia-preacher-hassan-shehata-killing_813480.html)

- **Egypt's Suez Canal revenues fall to \$395.2 million in January: website**

Egypt's Suez Canal revenues fell to \$395.2 million in January from \$414.4 million the previous month, according to a government information website.

More Details:

[http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFKBN161290?feedType=RSS&feedName=investingNews&utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FAFRICA+Business+News%29&&rpc=401](http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFKBN161290?feedType=RSS&feedName=investingNews&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FAFRICA+Business+News%29&&rpc=401)

- **Egypt MP calls for discussion over repeated deaths in prisons**

Egyptian Member of Parliament Haitham Hariri filed a request on Wednesday to discuss the repeated cases of killing and torture of prison inmates at the hands of police officers and low-ranking policemen.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170223-egypt-mp-calls-for-discussion-over-repeated-deaths-in-prisons/>

- **Armenian Ambassador to Egypt and Cairo Governor discuss cooperation**

Armenian Ambassador to Egypt Armen Melkonian on Tuesday met with the Governor of Cairo Abdel Hamid. The interlocutors discussed the prospects of deepening the ties between the capitals of the two friendly countries, as well as their cooperation in various fields

More Details:

<https://news.am/eng/news/374877.html>

- **Minister of Investment participates in Egyptian-Lebanese Business Forum in Lebanon**

Minister of Investment and International Cooperation Sahar Nasr is scheduled to fly to Lebanon on a two-day visit to participate in the Egyptian-Lebanese Business Forum, which is taking place in Beirut. The forum is scheduled to be opened by the prime minister of Lebanon, Saad El-Hariry, on Thursday.

More Details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/02/22/minister-investment-participates-egyptian-lebanese-business-forum-lebanon/>

- **Two Egyptian Copts killed by unknown gunmen in North Sinai's Al-Arish**

Two Egyptian Copts were killed on Wednesday by unknown assailants in North Sinai's Al-Arish, only two days after the Islamic State (IS) militant group in Egypt released a video vowing to carry out attacks against the Christian community in Egypt.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/258679/-.aspx>

## 8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Kobler meets Al-Swehly in Tripoli**

The United Nations Special Envoy to Libya, Martin Kobler, said, on Tuesday, that positive change would emerge soon in Libya. Following a meeting with the head of the State Council, Abdul-Rahman Al-Swehly, Kobler tweeted that in an interesting meeting with Al-Swehly in Tripoli, “we discussed the possible amendments to the Libyan Political Agreement (PA).”

More Details

<http://libyapropect.com/index.php/2017/02/22/kobler-meets-al-swehly-in-tripoli/>

- **Tunisian parliament passes anti-graft law**

Tunisia's parliament on Wednesday passed a law to fight widespread corruption that has plagued the country's economy since the 2011 revolution. One hundred and forty-five lawmakers out of 217 voted to pass the 36-article law, which criminalises any retribution against whistleblowers including any disciplinary measures against civil servants.

More Details

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/2/23/tunisian-parliament-passes-anti-graft-law>

- **Tunisia underestimates imminent North Africa refugee crisis**

Since 2011, hundreds of thousands of Tunisian and sub-Saharan Africans have used the Tunisian soil and shores to sail to Europe in one of modern history's most dreadful human tragedies. The numbers of the so-called “irregular migrants” vary from one month to another according to the political and security situations in Tunisia and Libya.

More Details

<http://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/opinion/tunisia-underestimates-imminent-north-africa-refugee-crisis/>

- **Cairo continues to mediate Libya conflict despite failures**

Egypt has repeatedly confirmed standing at equal distance from all parties in Libya to reach a political solution. Observers, however, believe the Egyptian position is contradictory. Cairo officially announced on Dec. 26, 2015, its recognition and support for the presidency council of the Government of National Accord (GNA), headed by Fayez al-Sarraj — which emanated from the Libyan Political Agreement signed on Dec. 17, 2015, under United Nations auspices in Skhirat, Morocco.

More Details

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/egyptian-mediation-fail-to-hold-meeting-with-sarraj-hifter.html>

- **Italian minister in Algiers, 'same approach on Libya'**

Algeria will collaborate "permanently" with Italy on various regional issues, starting with the crisis in Libya, said Abdelkader Messahel, Algerian Minister for Maghreb Affairs, the African Union and the Arab League. Messahel's comments came during the third meeting of the 'Strategic Bilateral Dialogue on Political Issues and Security Between Italy and Algeria', held Tuesday in Algiers with Italian Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Vincenzo Amendola.

More Details

[http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/politics/2017/02/22/italian-minister-in-algiers-same-approach-on-libya\\_15dd6006-091a-4730-bd62-d80adba762fc.html](http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/politics/2017/02/22/italian-minister-in-algiers-same-approach-on-libya_15dd6006-091a-4730-bd62-d80adba762fc.html)

- **Double anniversary of UGTA creation, hydrocarbons nationalization: Opportunity to make legislative elections successful**

The festivities commemorating the 61st anniversary of the creation of the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) and the 46th anniversary of the nationalization of hydrocarbons, to be held in Djelfa this year, will be an opportunity to mobilize citizens to "make the upcoming legislative elections on 4 Mai successful," said the National Secretary in charge of public relations within the UGTA Ahmed Guetiche told APS.

More Details

<http://en.aps.dz/algeria/16895-double-anniversary-of-ugta-establishment,-hydrocarbons-nationalization-an-opportunity-to-make-legislative-elections-successful>

- **Algeria arrests those 'peacefully criticising the government', Amnesty**

Algerian authorities regularly jail opposition figures and activist, even those who "peacefully" criticise the government, Amnesty International reported today.

More Details

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170222-algeria-arrests-those-peacefully-criticising-the-government-amnesty/>

- **Polisario Front Praises Strength of Political Prisoners in Morocco**

The Polisario Front (Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro) praised the brave attitude of the 24 political prisoners of Gdeim Izig, imprisoned in Morocco since 2010, said today the Sahara Press Service. 'The attitude kept by the prisoners, subjected to arbitrary judicial

processes, is heroic in the defense of the Sahraouian rights to have independence', said a statement posted on the website by the secretariat of the Polisario Front, armed and political body of the Democratic Sahraouian Arab Republic.

More Details

<http://www.plenglish.com/index.php?o=rn&id=9658&SEO=polisario-front-praises-strength-of-political-prisoners-in-morocco>

- **Morocco's Airport Security Systems Improve**

Over the past few years, Morocco has greatly improved its airport security systems, according to the statements of the Ministry of Interior on Tuesday at a meeting in Rabat following an evaluation of national airport security. The ministry noted that the improved level of security is due to the efforts of officials from various sectors to the upgrade of the national security systems to follow international standards.

More Details

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/02/209130/moroccos-airport-security-systems-improves/>

- **3 killed, 4 injured in Morocco house collapse**

Three family members were killed and four others injured Tuesday night after the partial collapse of their house in the city of Marrakech. A 46-year-old woman was killed on the spot, while two children aged 4 and 13 years died of their injuries at Marrakech's Mohammed VI University Hospital, medias24.com said citing medical source.

More Details

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/23/c\\_136077636.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/23/c_136077636.htm)

## 9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Community bids farewell to Pakistani Ambassador**

Prominent Pakistani businessmen Sheikh Saeed Ahmed and Chaudhary Sajjad Ali of PML(N) hosted a farewell dinner in honor of outgoing Pakistani Ambassador Manzoor ul Haq at Pak house restaurant recently. A number of prominent Pakistanis, embassy officials, ladies and gents were present at the largely attended farewell ceremony. President National Peace Committee for Interfaith Harmony and Vice President PML(N) Sheikh Saeed presided over the farewell ceremony.

More Details

<http://saudigazette.com.sa/saudi-arabia/community-bids-farewell-pakistani-ambassador/>

- **Does the China-Pakistan economic corridor worry India?**

The multibillion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is being called a "game-changer" in Pakistan, has raised apprehensions in neighbouring India. In June 2015, barely two months after Chinese President Xi Jinping announced plans to invest \$46bn to develop infrastructure and energy projects in Pakistan as part of the economic corridor, or CPEC, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi told China that it was "unacceptable".

More Details

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/02/china-pakistan-economic-corridor-worry-india-170208063418124.html>

- **Teachers announce boycott of classes over non-payment of salary**

The teachers working in various government education institutions of Islamabad on daily wages have not been paid salaries for the last four months, and have announced to boycott the classes if their demands are not met till Feb 27.

More Details

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/23-Feb-17/teachers-announce-boycott-of-classes-over-non-payment-of-salary>

- **At least 6 killed in bomb blast in Lahore's Defence area**

A powerful explosion rocked a building in Lahore's busy Defence Y block area, killing at least six people and leaving 35 injured. Another explosion has been heard near the Gulberg area 30 minutes later, but no details have emerged on the nature of the second blast.

More Details

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1316527/at-least-6-killed-in-bomb-blast-in-lahores-defence-area>

- **Coping with Afghan and Chechen syndrome**

Russian veterans of the Afghan and Chechen wars tell of the difficulties of returning to civilian life after the horrors of the battlefield. Psychologists describe it as post-traumatic stress disorder—when the human mind struggles to cope with the aftermath of war. Others simply call it Afghan or Chechen syndrome.

More Details

[http://rbth.com/multimedia/pictures/2017/02/23/coping-with-afghan-and-chechen-syndrome\\_707513](http://rbth.com/multimedia/pictures/2017/02/23/coping-with-afghan-and-chechen-syndrome_707513)

- **Germany Deports Third Planeload of Rejected Afghan Migrants**

This comes while 250 people were gathered at the airport to protest the deportations which also German opposition parties and rights groups have criticized. This comes while 250 people were gathered at the airport to protest the deportations which also German opposition parties and rights groups have criticized. They argue that most of Afghanistan is not safe for return.

More Details

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/germany-deports-third-planeload-rejected-afghan-migrants>

- **Afghan forces kill 12 IS militants, wounds 2 in eastern Nangarhar province**

A total of 12 militants loyal to the Islamic State (IS) group have been killed and two others injured in Haska Mina district of the eastern Nangarhar province over the past 24 hours, spokesman for provincial government Attaullah Khogiani said Thursday.

More Details

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/23/c\\_136079758.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/23/c_136079758.htm)

- **Germany deports 18 more rejected Afghan asylum seekers**

Germany has deported at least 18 more Afghan asylum seekers whose applications were rejected by the authorities of the country, it has been reported.

More Details

<http://www.khaama.com/germany-deports-18-more-rejected-afghan-asylum-seekers-02960>

- **4-year security plan discussed during Ghani's meeting with top NATO officials**

The 4-year security plan of the Afghan government was discussed along with the other issues of bilateral interest during President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani's meeting with a top NATO general. The Office of the President, ARG Palace, said President Ghani met with Gen. Salvatore Farina, the commander of NATO's Allied Joint Force Command in the presidential palace on Wednesday.

More Details

<http://www.khaama.com/4-year-security-plan-discussed-during-ghanis-meeting-with-top-nato-officials-02958>

## 10. TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Pakistani PM in Ankara to co-chair strategic council**

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will co-chair the fifth session of the Pakistan-Turkey High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council meeting alongside Turkish Premier Binali Yildirim in the capital Ankara on Thursday, a source in the Prime Ministry said. The high-level strategic meeting will discuss regional, economic and political issues, and a joint declaration was also expected in the end, the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to restrictions on talking to the media, said.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/185278/pakistani-pm-in-ankara-to-co-chair-strategic-council>

- **Turkish army: 56 terrorists killed in northern Syria**

At least 56 terrorists were killed in northern Syria over the last 24 hours by Turkish forces and the U.S.-led coalition, according to a Turkish General Staff statement on Thursday. Opposition special forces continued their operations to clear Al-Bab of Daesh terrorists, taking control of two more neighborhoods, according to the statement.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkish-army-56-terrorists-killed-in-northern-syria/756439>

*\*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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