



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procees of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

Energy Security

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Ethnic and Secterian Groups

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

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- Afrin operation targets only terrorists: European group 23
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1. IRAQ

- **Defense Minister Discusses Relations with Indonesian Ambassador To Iraq**

Iraqi Defense Minister Irfan Mahmood al-Hayali discussed with the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia in Baghdad Bambang Antarikso the relations between the two countries and means of enhancing them in all fields.

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?FJQ%252f8a84LoPfwjywoulc1g%253d%253d

- **Kurdistan PM Meets Iraqi Counterpart for Second Time in a Week**

Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and his Iraqi counterpart Haider al-Abadi met on Wednesday for the second time since the independence referendum. The meeting was held on the sideline of the World Economic Forum as both leaders are now in Davos to attend the annual event.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/kurdistan/409852>

- **Berlin to continue training Iraq army: Defense minister**

Germany will continue training members of the Iraqi armed forces, German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen reportedly told Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Wednesday. Von der Leyen spoke to al-Abadi on the sidelines of the Davos Economic Forum now underway in Switzerland, according to an Iraqi government statement.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/europe/berlin-to-continue-training-iraq-army-defense-minister/1041343>

- **Now defeated, Iraq's most feared jihadists await their fate**

Their names spread terror across the Islamic State group's cross-border "caliphate", but senior jihadists now languish in Iraqi prisons, subjects of mockery for the populace they ruled. Once boasting nicknames like the Black Box and the Butcher of Mosul, the defeated IS commanders now draw vitriol on social media while news outlets have published selfies taken by Iraqi soldiers of them being captured or marched handcuffed in prison uniforms.

More Details:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-5310149/Now-defeated-Iraqs-feared-jihadists-await-fate.html>

- **Anti-ISIS Operations in Mosul; 34 Killed in Iraq**

Iraqi P.M. Haider al-Abadi and Kurdish P.M. Nechirvan Barzani met for the second time in a week while the two are attending the World Economic Forum in Davos. At least 34 people were killed, and nine more were wounded.

More Details:

<https://original.antiwar.com/updates/2018/01/24/anti-isis-operations-mosul-34-killed-iraq/>

- **Over 70 Mass Graves Found in Northern Iraq**

The Iraqi forces unearthed over 70 mass graves containing the bodies of Iraqi civilians, mostly Izadi people, tortured and slain by the ISIL terrorists in three towns near the Northern city of Mosul, which was once the ISIL terrorists' main stronghold in the country, local sources reported on Wednesday. The sources said that over 70 mass graves have thus far been discovered in the towns of Sinjar, Tal Afar and al-Ba'aj in Nineveh province.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961104000961>

- **Iraqi forces kill 6 ISIS terrorists in southern Kirkuk**

The Iraqi Armed Forces killed six Islamic State (ISIS) terrorists in the southern part of the Kirkuk region, today, Al-Sumaria News Agency reported. According to their report, Iraq's Hashd Al-Sha'abi (Popular Mobilization Units) tracked down the Islamic State terrorists in southern Kirkuk's Al-Zab area in a bid to clear the region of all terrorist elements.

More Details:

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/iraqi-forces-kill-6-isis-terrorists-southern-kirkuk/>

- **Car bomb explodes in southern Kirkuk, no casualties**

A booby-trapped car went off near Daquq town in southern Kirkuk governorate, a security source said on Thursday. He added that there were no immediate reports on casualties. The Iraqi cities have been witnessing a state of insecurity and chaos as terror attacks target civilians.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/22894/Car-bomb-explodes-in-southern-Kirkuk-no-casualties>

- **Iraq resumes paying damages to Kuwaiti over invasion - Al-Jarallah**

Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said Wednesday the Iraqi government resumed paying compensations to Kuwait relating to the 1990 invasion. Iraq started, a month ago, paying the instalments of the compensations agreed with Kuwait under auspices of the United Nations Compensation Commission, he said.

More Details:

<https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2685619&Language=en>

- **Iran, Iraq agree to jointly develop two small oilfields**

Iran and Iraq have signed a contract to jointly develop two small oilfields in Khorramshahr, southwest of Iran, said deputy head of National Iranian Oil Company. According to Fars News Agency, Gholamreza Manouchehri further said, "We are cooperating with Iraq in some oilfields and an agreement on jointly developing two small oilfields in Khorramshahr was signed.

More Details:

<http://iran-daily.com/News/208728.html>

- **Official: Iraq to offer 150 investment projects at Kuwait conference**

About 150 investment projects will be unveiled at the international conference to be hosted by Kuwait next month to help reconstruct Iraqi cities destroyed by the war against Islamic State, Secretary General of the Iraqi Cabinet Mahdi al-Allaq was quoted as saying Wednesday. Speaking to the official Al-Sabah newspaper, Allaq said the two-day conference, due to start on February 12, will focus on means of reconstructing Iraqi cities devastated by the anti-Islamic State war, as well as increasing investment opportunities in the country and boosting peaceful co-existence.

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/features/official-iraq-to-offer-150-investment-projects-at-kuwait-conference/>

2. SYRIA

- **World powers up the ante on Syria, Russia**

Two dozen countries agreed Tuesday to push for sanctions against perpetrators of chemical attacks in Syria, with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson saying Russia "ultimately bears responsibility" for such strikes. Twenty-four nations approved a new "partnership against impunity" for the use of

chemical weapons, just a day after reports they were used in an attack that sickened 21 people in rebel-held Eastern Ghouta, which Tillerson said was suspected to involve chlorine.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86907>

- **Moscow denies Russian, Syrian government forces behind chemical attack in Syria's Eastern Ghouta**

Russia denied accusations that Moscow and Syrian governmental forces were behind a chemical attack in Syria's Eastern Ghouta on Jan. 22, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in statement on Wednesday, adding that the attack itself has not been confirmed. It also said that accusations were U.S. "propaganda" aimed at undermining peace talks on the Syrian civil war that Russia is hosting in the city of Sochi, due to begin on Monday, or "even torpedo the Syria peace process".

More Details:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-russia-usa/moscow-denies-russian-syrian-government-forces-behind-chemical-attack-in-syrias-eastern-ghouta-idUSKBN1FD2YD?rpc=401&>

- **UK Studying Russian Draft Resolution to Probe Use of Chemical Arms in Syria**

The United Kingdom is studying a Russian draft resolution to create a new investigative body to probe the use of chemical weapons in Syria, UK Deputy Permanent Representative Jonathan Allen told reporters. "We're studying the draft that we've received, we'll look at that carefully and see what merit there is within it," Allen said on Wednesday. "In the past, Russia has attempted to put forward texts which essentially prohibit anybody from investigating any state actor and that's a deep concern to us. We're studying the resolution, we'll hear more from the Russians about their intention."

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201801251061046809-uk-stydy-russia-syria-chemical-resolution/>

- **Tillerson talks with Russian FM on Syria**

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson spoke by phone with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Wednesday, discussing issues and concerns about Syria, said the U.S. State Department in a statement. "On Syria, the two discussed Russia's role in ensuring the Assad regime plays a constructive role in the UN-led Geneva process," according to the statement.

More Details:

http://www.china.org.cn/world/2018-01/25/content_50299058.htm

- **UN-Led Syria Peace Talks To Begin In Vienna**

Syria's Deputy Foreign Minister has condemned the Trump administration's new policy of keeping American troops in the country indefinitely. There are currently close to two thousand US troops on the ground in Syria. Faisal Mekdad described the approach - announced by the US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson last week - as a hostile act.

More Details:

<https://www.forces.net/news/un-led-syria-peace-talks-begin-vienna>

- **Syria staunchly denied claims on chemical weapons use**

"Syria condemns all the lies and allegations by the American and French foreign ministers about chemical weapons use in Syria," a foreign ministry official told state news agency SANA. Syria has staunchly denied the claims, pointing to its 2013 handover of its chemical stores as part of a deal between the United States and Russia.

More Details:

http://en.abna24.com/news/middle-east/syria-staunchly-denied-claims-on-chemical-weapons-use_879105.html

- **Russian FM: US accusations of Russia and Syria of using chemical weapons "lies"**

Russian Foreign Ministry has lashed out over US accusations of Russia and Syria of using chemical weapons as "lies" and aim at obstructing any effort toward finding a way out of the crisis in Syria. The Ministry, in a statement on Wednesday, said that Washington is trying to derail the objective investigation into the chemical attacks as it is not interested in identifying those who are truly responsible for the attacks.

More Details:

<https://sana.sy/en/?p=125386>

3. IRAN

- **Trump trying to 'blackmail' EU in Iran deal: Russian envoy to EU**

US President Donald Trump is trying to blackmail the participants in the deal, but Russia has no reasons to make any amendments in the deal, said the Russian representative to the European

Union. 'It is difficult to consider Trump's recent statements as anything other than an attempt to blackmail the European participants in the deal,' said Vladimir Chizhov, according to TASS.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82807579>

- **Range of Iran's missiles proportionate to threats: ex-defense chief**

Former Defense Minister Hossein Dehqan has said that the range of Iranian missiles is proportionate to the degree of military threats against the country. "Our missiles range are based on potential threats. This does not mean that we are not able to build missiles with longer range, but this is our policy and we do not see the need to increase range of our missiles," Dehqan said in an interview with Mehr news agency published on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/420672/Range-of-Iran-s-missiles-proportionate-to-threats-ex-defense>

- **Europe strongly supports Iran's nuclear deal: EU lawmaker**

A senior member of the European Parliament says the EU strongly supports the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, calling for closer ties with Tehran within the framework of the landmark accord. David McAllister, who heads the European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee, made the remarks in a meeting with Chairman of the Iranian Parliament's Committee on National Security and Foreign Policy Alaeddin Boroujerdi in Brussels on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/25/550099/Iran-EU-nuclear-deal>

- **Iran to negotiate with nobody over missiles: Boroujerdi**

Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the Chairman of Iran's Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, told the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the EP, David McAllister that missile program is part of Iran's strategic policy of deterrence and it is not negotiable. "Repetitive opposition of European Union with Trump's anti-JCPA policies is a good sign that EU is acting within its own benefits regardless of US," said Chairman of Iran's Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Alaeddin Boroujerdi.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/131600/Iran-to-negotiate-with-nobody-over-missiles-Boroujerdi>

- **Qassemi: US stance on nuclear deal exposes its lies**

The Iranian Foreign Ministry rejected the hostile accusations leveled by US Vice President Mike Pence against the Islamic Republic, saying Washington's stance on the 2015 multilateral nuclear deal exposed its lies about Tehran seeking nuclear weapons. Pence told the Israeli parliament on Monday that the nuclear deal with Iran was a "disaster," and that "the United States of America will no longer certify this ill-conceived agreement," officially called the Joint Comprehensive of Action (JCPOA).

More Details:

<http://www.iran-daily.com/News/208723.html>

- **Iran Dismisses Missile Talks with France**

Iranian President's Chief of Staff Mahmoud Vaezi reiterated his country's firm opposition to talks with France and other foreign states about its missile and defense programs. "We have said many times that whatever is related to our defense and missile power is not negotiable. We have not talked about it with anyone," Vaezi told reporters after a cabinet meeting in Tehran on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961104001696>

- **Tehran Suspects Saudi Intelligence of Attempts to Stage Terror Attacks in Iran**

The Iranian Intelligence Ministry suspects Saudi Arabian intelligence services of being involved in illegal explosives trafficking through the Iranian border for staging terror attacks, the ministry said on Wednesday in a statement. The Iranian security services managed to detect two large caches of bombs as well as explosives and shells that were delivered to Iran through the country's eastern border.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201801251061047484-tehran-saudi-intelligence-terror-attacks/>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Israel urges Pence to back settlement 'industrial zone' in E1 area of West Bank**

Israeli Knesset speaker Yuli Edelstein urged US Vice President Mike Pence to back the construction of a new settlement industrial zone in a key area of the occupied West Bank known as 'E1', reported The Jerusalem Post. According to the paper, "Edelstein pressed Pence on the importance of building

an industrial zone at the site”, claiming it would offer work to both “Israelis and Palestinians from the West Bank”.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180124-israel-urges-pence-to-back-settlement-industrial-zone-in-e1-area-of-west-bank/>

- **Ireland May Criminalize Trade with Israeli Settlements**

Ireland is set to discuss a new bill that seeks to prohibit the import and sale of goods originating in illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian Territory. Independent Senator Frances Black, yesterday, launched the “Control of Economic Activities (Occupied Territories) Bill 2018”, which is scheduled for debate in Seanad Éireann on Wednesday 31 January 2018.

More Details:

<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/ireland-may-criminalize-trade-israeli-settlements/>

- **US Jewish organisations urge Slovenia not to recognise Palestine**

Leaders of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations have expressed concern over the announcement that the Slovenian parliament will discuss recognition of Palestine. In a letter to Prime Minister Miro Cerar, they have urged the government not to recognise Palestine as there are no grounds for that.

More Details:

<https://english.sta.si/2475014/us-jewish-organisations-urge-slovenia-not-to-recognise-palestine>

- **UN Security Council to Hold a Session on Palestine**

Palestine’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Riyad Mansour, said on Wednesday that the Security Council is scheduled to meet on Thursday, in order for the Council members to shoulder their responsibility regarding implementation of the UN resolutions related to the Palestinian question. According to Wafa, another meeting of the Security Council will be held on the 22nd of next month to discuss the situation of Palestinians after 50 years of Israeli occupation, in addition to the state of affairs of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), Mansour told Voice of Palestine radio.

More Details:

<http://imemc.org/article/un-security-council-to-hold-a-session-on-palestine/>

- **Leading aid organizations write top US officials protesting cut in aid to refugee agency**

The leaders of 21 international aid organizations sent a letter on Wednesday to top members of US President Donald Trump’s administration strongly protesting a US decision to slash \$65 million in aid from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). “As leaders of organizations deeply involved in programs and advocacy surrounding international humanitarian response, we write to object in the strongest of terms to the decision to withhold \$65 million of the planned United States contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA),” said the letter addressed to US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Defense James Mattis, US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley and National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=sKxmEpa96198434475asKxmEp>

- **Macron says he won’t recognize Palestine in response to Trump’s Jerusalem move**

French President Emmanuel Macron said Wednesday that he would not recognize Palestine as an independent state as a reaction to US President Donald Trump’s declaration of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. “I will not take any decision in reaction to any decision,” Macron told reporters in response to a Times of Israel question on the potential recognition of a Palestinian state.

More Details:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/macron-says-he-wont-recognize-palestine-in-response-to-trumps-jerusalem-move/>

- **Israeli forces detain 18 Palestinians, including husband and wife, during raids**

Israeli forces detained 18 Palestinians during overnight raids between Tuesday and Wednesday across the occupied West Bank, according to Israeli and Palestinian sources. In a continued detention campaign in the northern West Bank city of Jenin, Israeli forces raided the Wadi Burqin area and the Jenin refugee camp, and detained a youth identified by locals as Uday Jabel Saleh Jarrar.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=779778>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Activists demand Lebanon investigate claims of mass spying**

Eight rights groups including Human Rights Watch called on Lebanese authorities Wednesday to investigate reports of a massive espionage campaign traced back to a government security agency. Digital researchers last week said they had uncovered a hacking campaign using malware-infected messaging apps to steal smartphone data from people in more than 20 countries, including journalists and activists.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86917>

- **Lebanon after best relationship with Iran**

Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri told Davos attendees on Wednesday that he as the prime minister wants the best relationship with Iran. "I would like the best relationship with Iran", Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri told Davos attendees on Wednesday.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/131604/Lebanon-after-best-relationship-with-Iran>

- **MP Aoun: Ties with Kataeb Unlikely, Relation with Mustaqbal Won't Be at Expense of Other Ties**

MP Alain Aoun of the Free Patriotic Movement on Thursday said the FPM's relation with al-Mustaqbal Movement "would not be at the expense of its ties with other parties." "The FPM is carrying on contacts and consultations with various political sides before settling on its electoral lists," Aoun told VDL (93.3) in an interview on Thursday.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/241342-mp-aoun-ties-with-kataeb-unlikely-relation-with-mustaqbal-won-t-be-at-expense-of-other-ties>

- **Future bloc MPS Confirm timely elections**

Future Parliamentary bloc MP, Samir Jisr, confirmed on Thursday that the forthcoming Parliamentary elections would take place on their set date. However, the lawmaker made clear that it was early to start discussing electoral alliances, expecting such discussions to start taking place as of February.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/87565/Future-bloc-MPs-confirm-timely-elections>

- **PM Barzani and King Abdullah of Jordan Meet in Davos**

Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani met on Wednesday with King Abdullah of Jordan in Davos, discussing bilateral ties and latest developments in the region. “I met His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan in Davos today. I reiterated my wish to further strengthen the already excellent relations and long-standing friendship between the Kurdistan Region and Jordan,” Barzani said on his official Twitter account.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/kurdistan/409775>

- **King meets French President, Iraqi Prime Minister**

His Majesty King Abdullah II, on Wednesday, held separate meetings in Davos with French President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister of Iraq Haider Al-Abadi. His Majesty and the French President reviewed the strategic partnership between Jordan and France and stressed the importance of enhancing cooperation in economic, trade and investment fields, as well as continuing coordination and consultation on various regional and international issues.

More Details:

http://petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site_id=1&NewsID=337604&CatID=13

- **Queen announces launch of Edraak’s free online platform for school learners in Davos**

Her Majesty Queen Rania on Wednesday announced the launch of a new learning platform catering to school-aged children across the Arab world, according to a statement from Her Majesty's Office. The Queen made the announcement during an event hosted by Google on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, which was attended by His Majesty King Abdullah in the presence of Google CEO Sundar Pichai.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/queen-announces-launch-edraak%E2%80%99s-free-online-platform-school-learners-davos>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Saudi Arabia promises \$1.5 billion in aid to Yemen — but it's still bombing the country**

Saudi Arabia announced \$1.5 billion in new aid for Yemen this week, a move it says is aimed at alleviating the country's humanitarian crisis nearly three years into a Saudi-led military campaign there. But critics, among them a number of Yemenis, have questioned the motives behind the donation, given the Saudis' own role in prolonging the crisis.

More Details:

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-01-24/saudi-arabia-promises-15-billion-aid-yemen-its-still-bombing-country>

- **Saudi Arabia pledges to reduce dependence on foreign labour**

Saudi Economy and Planning Minister Mohammad Al-Tuwaijri has said that one of his ministry's priorities is to "reduce dependence on expatriate workers". "Our young men and women are capable if implementing the programmes and projects of Vision 2030," Al-Tuwaijri said in an interview with Saudi Arabia's Al-Arabiya yesterday. According to the Saudi General Authority for Statistics the number of foreign workers in the public and private sectors reached about 10.69 million in the third quarter of 2017, compared to 10.79 million in the second quarter of the same year.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180125-saudi-arabia-pledges-to-reduce-dependence-on-foreign-labour/>

- **UN taps British mediator as new Yemen envoy**

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has tapped mediator and former aid official Martin Griffiths of Britain to be the next peace negotiator for Yemen, taking up a mission that two UN envoys have quit in frustration, diplomats said Wednesday. Griffiths would replace Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed of Mauritania who failed to make headway in UN efforts to end the war between the Saudi-led coalition supporting Yemen's government and Iran-backed Huthi rebels.

More Details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/899749e4-747f-4156-825c-67a3f61af71f.aspx>

- **UN aid coordinator for war-torn Yemen resigns**

The United Nations humanitarian coordinator for Yemen has announced his resignation, two days after the UN envoy for the war-torn country also said he would step down. "This is my last day here in Sana'a," Jamie McGoldrick told journalists in the Yemeni capital on Wednesday.

More Details:

http://en.abna24.com/news/middle-east/un-aid-coordinator-for-war-torn-yemen-resigns_879086.html

- **Qatar in talks to buy Russian air defence system**

Qatar is in talks with Moscow to buy Russian S-400 missile air defence systems, Tass state news agency quoted the Qatari ambassador to Russia on Thursday as saying. Qatar is engaged in a deepening diplomatic row with some of its Gulf Arab neighbours, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), over allegations it supports terrorism, a charge Doha denies.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/qatar-talks-buy-russian-air-defence-system-2086974601>

- **Tillerson meets with British, Saudi, UAE FM's on Yemen**

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson met Tuesday with the foreign ministers of Britain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE to discuss "a political solution" to the conflict in Yemen, sources said. The meeting was organised by top British diplomat Boris Johnson at the British embassy in Paris. Tillerson and Johnson took part earlier Tuesday in the launch of an international initiative against chemical weapons, in particular in Syria.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86905>

- **Top Bahraini court confirms ruling to deport 14 dissidents**

The top court in Bahrain has confirmed a ruling to deport 14 activists, including a woman, who had been stripped of their nationalities in 2012 for political reasons. Bahrain's Supreme Court also sentenced the individuals to pay a fine of 100 Bahraini dinars, equivalent to \$265, Bahrain's Lulu TV reported on Thursday.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/25/550124/Bahrain-court-expel-activists-Al-Khalifah-regime>

7. EGYPT

- **Egypt leader formally registers candidacy for presidential poll**

Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on Wednesday formally submitted his candidacy for presidential elections in March that he looks certain to dominate as a string of potential challengers have dropped out. Sisi, who was elected president in 2014 a year after heading the military ouster of Islamist leader Mohamed Morsi, on Friday confirmed he would be seeking a second four-year term.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=86924>

- **Khaled Ali latest to bow out of presidential race**

A prominent Egyptian human rights lawyer has become the latest presidential hopeful to withdraw his campaign, leaving only current President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in the running. Khaled Ali said conditions did not allow for a fair contest in the presidential elections, which are set for the end of March.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/egyptian-lawyer-latest-bow-presidential-race-180124165557761.html>

- **Shoukry participates in preparatory meetings of 30th AU Summit**

Foreign Affairs Minister Sameh Shoukry will head to the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa on Wednesday evening to attend the preparatory meetings of the 30th African Union (AU) Summit. The summit will be held this year under the theme “Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa’s Transformation,” said the ministry spokesperson.

More Details:

<https://dailynewsegypt.com/2018/01/24/shoukry-participates-preparatory-meetings-30th-au-summit/>

- **What if Sisi becomes sole presidential candidate?**

President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi became the only candidate in the presidential elections on Wednesday after former presidential hopeful Khaled Ali announced his withdrawal from the race. Ali had his intentions to run for president in November. Former Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and former presidential hopeful Sami Anam was ousted few days earlier from the race upon accusations by the Armed Forces that he had committed legal violations including forgery.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/what-if-sisi-becomes-sole-presidential-candidate/>

- **Document sent to Italian Embassy in Switzerland on Regeni case is entirely forged: Egypt prosecution**

Egypt's general prosecution said on Wednesday that a document sent anonymously to the Italian Embassy in Switzerland – which stated that Italian student Giulio Regeni, who was found murdered in February 2016 in Cairo, had been arrested shortly before he disappeared – was entirely forged. The prosecution said that the forged document purported to be a communiqué – dated 30 January 2016 – from Egyptian General Intelligence informing Military Intelligence of Regeni's arrest.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/288735/Egypt/Politics-/Document-sent-to-Italian-Embassy-in-Switzerland-on.aspx>

- **Sole presidential candidate must receive 3M votes to win**

If there is only one candidate in the presidential election, he must receive three million votes to win the election, according to the law regarding presidential elections. Article 36 of the Egyptian presidential election law indicates that a sole candidate in the presidential election must receive support from five percent of the voters whose names are registered in the voter database.

More Details:

<https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/41019/Sole-presidential-candidate-must-receive-3M-votes-to-win>

- **7 Years Ago, This Was Egypt: Remembering the 25 January Revolution**

Seven years have passed since Egyptians took to the streets to demand to be treated with dignity and respect by their leaders. In one of the most momentous few weeks in the history of the country and the region, the Egyptian people, by uniting in their indignation against unchecked rule and unbearable living conditions, they were able to overthrow the 30-year rule of the nation's president. On January 25, 2011, people gathered in the country's squares and alleys, streets and boulevards, until, 18 days later, on February 11, President Hosni Mubarak announced in a televised address that he was stepping down.

More Details:

<https://egyptianstreets.com/2018/01/25/7-years-ago-this-was-egypt-remembering-the-25-january-revolution/>

- **Russian experts to visit Egypt to discuss resumption of charter flights — ambassador**

Russia and Egypt will begin talks in April on resuming charter flights to the Red Sea resorts of Sharm el-Sheikh and Hurghada, Egypt's Ambassador to Russia Ihab Nasr said in an interview with TASS on Wednesday. "Speaking on resuming charter flights from Russia to Sharm el-Sheikh and Hurghada, we agreed with our Russian colleagues to start the talks in April this year. To this end, Russian experts will arrive in Egypt," the ambassador said.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptdailynews.com/detail/russian-experts-to-visit-egypt-to-discuss-resumption-of-charter-flights--ambassador>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **UN expresses alarm over extrajudicial killings following Benghazi bombings**

The United Nations Libya mission said it was alarmed by reports of "brutal and outrageous summary executions" in the eastern city of Benghazi on Wednesday, after pictures emerged appearing to show at least nine people being shot dead at the site of a twin car bombing. The UN Libya mission, UNSMIL, suggested in a tweet that the gunman was Mahmoud al-Werfalli, a special forces commander wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for allegedly carrying out a number of similar killings.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/un-expresses-alarm-over-extrajudicial-killings-following-benghazi-bombings-1496709460>

- **Human Rights Watch, UNSMIL demand Al-Werfalli be handed to ICC for war crimes**

Human Rights Watch has issued a statement condemning the attacks that killed 34 and injured over 80 in Libya's Benghazi on Tuesday. Human Rights Watch also condemned the summary killings that were revealed to have been conducted by the man wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes, Mahmoud Al-Werfalli.

More Details:

<http://www.libyanexpress.com/human-rights-watch-unsmil-demand-al-werfalli-be-handed-to-icc-for-war-crimes/>

- **Marrakech Hosts Conference on Growth, Jobs & Inclusiveness in Arab World**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development (AFESD) and Government of Morocco will organize a high-level conference in Marrakesh, Jan. 29–30 to look into ways of promoting higher economic growth, job creation, and inclusiveness in the Arab World. The conference, “Opportunity for All: Promoting Growth, Jobs, and Inclusiveness in the Arab World”, will bring together high-level policy makers, corporate executives, academics, youth, media and civil society representatives from countries in the Arab World and beyond to exchange their experiences, lessons and ideas on how to create millions of jobs by exploiting new sources and sectors of growth.

More Details:

<http://northafricapost.com/21883-marrakech-hosts-conference-growth-jobs-inclusiveness-arab-world.html>

- **Morocco among Belgium’s Most Important Partners, Belgian FM**

Morocco is among Belgium’s most important partners, Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Didier Reynders said, noting that the two countries have a lot to gain from sustained and effective cooperation in several fields. Reynders, who will start a working visit to Morocco this Wednesday, said, in an interview with MAP, that the relations between the two kingdoms are excellent.

More Details:

<https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2018/01/239163/morocco-among-belgiums-important-partners-belgian-fm/>

- **Tunisia, most innovative country in Africa and Arab World**

Tunisia confirms and strengthens its status as the most innovative country in Africa and the Arab world. This is apparent from the Bloomberg Innovation Index released on Tuesday 23 January. According to this Index in its 6th edition, Tunisia has moved up two spots compared to the last edition and ranked 43rd in the world ahead of Morocco, last in the top 50.

More Details:

<http://tdailynews.net/story-z9733570>

- **German Foundation for International Legal Co-operation announces opening of regional office in Tunis**

The German Foundation for International Legal Co-operation (IRZ), on Wednesday, announced the opening of its regional office for North Africa in Tunis. The establishment of IRZ’s second permanent

office abroad and first regional office in the Arab World reflects the importance the German Government places on international co-operation with countries of North Africa, IRZ Chief Executive, Veronica KELLER-ENGELS said at a ceremony organised Tuesday in Tunis to announce the opening of the regional office.

More Details:

<https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/9789077-german-foundation>

- **Terrorist supporter arrested in Batna**

A detachment of the People's National Army arrested Tuesday a supporter of terrorist groups in Batna, said Wednesday a communiqué of the National Defence Ministry.

More Details:

<http://en.aps.dz/algeria/22448-terrorist-supporter-arrested-in-batna>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Pak Army says drone strike targeted individual morphed into Afghan Refugees**

The drone strike on January 24 in Spintal, Hangu district was on individual target who had morphed into Afghan refugees and not any organized terrorists sanctuary which have been eliminated. Out of total 54 Afghan Refugees/complexes in Pakistan, 43 are in KP with overlap in FATA (complexes in Hangu including where drone struck on 24 Jan 18, shown on map).

More Details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/272936-pak-army-says-drone-strike-targeted-individual-morphed-into-afghan-refugees>

- **Over 200 Baloch separatists lay down their weapons**

Over 200 Baloch separatist laid down their weapons in the presence of Chief Minister Balochistan Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, Commander Southern Command Asim Saleem Bajwa and other top civil and military officials in a ceremony held in Turbat on Thursday. The militants — a majority of whom were linked to the banned Baloch Liberation Front — also included 15 key commanders, sources within the Balochistan government told DawnNews.

More Details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1385208/over-200-baloch-separatists-lay-down-their-weapons>

- **Pakistan won't allow breach of airspace, sovereignty, says Rabbani**

Chairman of Senate Raza Rabbani on Thursday condemned the US drone strike conducted by coalition forces near Kurram Agency. “The Senate of Pakistan strongly condemns the US drone strike,” said Rabbani. “The US drone attack is a breach of Pakistan’s airspace and sovereignty.”

More Details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/178662-pakistan-will-not-allow-any-breach-of-its-airspace-sovereignty-says-rabbani>

- **Farah governor steps down amid public unity**

The Governor of western Farah Province Mohammad Arif Shah Jahan has resigned from his post citing corruption, mafia groups and protection of national unity among the people reasons behind his resignation. He told reporters here: “In regards to the national unity of the people of Farah today through the media I want to inform the National Unity Government about my resignation from the governor post.”

More Details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/01/25/farah-governor-steps-down-amid-public-unity>

- **International community to regret for silence over Balkh issue: Noor**

The chief executive of Jamiat-e-Islami Ata Mohammad Noor has warned that the international community will regret for the silence over the political deadlock between him and the government over the political leadership of northern Balkh province. Speaking during another gathering in Balkh province, Noor said the international community should intervene as per the commitments they have for the country in the fight against the terror and ensuring good governance and rule of law and justice.

More Details

<https://www.khaama.com/international-community-to-regret-for-silence-over-balkh-issue-noor-04349>

- **Farah Governor Resigns In Wake Of Protest**

Following Wednesday’s protest action in Farah about the ongoing security crisis in the province, the provincial governor has decided to step down. Mohammad Arif Shahjahan, Farah’s provincial governor, on Thursday stepped down following Wednesday’s protests over the deteriorating security in the province. Shahjahan said that he has resigned due to the increase in insecurity and a split in opinion between residents over the security situation in the province.

More Details:

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/farah-governor-resigns-wake-protest>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Erdogan, Qatar emir discuss Afrin operation, Syria**

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani discussed in a phone conversation the recent developments in Syria amid the ongoing Turkish military operation in Afrin, according to a presidential source on Wednesday. The leaders exchanged views on Operation Olive Branch launched on Saturday to remove PYD/PKK and Daesh terrorists from Afrin region, according to a source who asked not to be named due to restrictions on speaking to the media.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/erdogan-qatar-emir-discuss-afrin-operation-syria/1041663>

- **Syria crisis residue from Obama's broken promises, Erdoğan says**

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Wednesday that the instability and terrorism from the PKK terrorist organization's Syrian affiliate Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its People's Protection Units (YPG) militia are the results of former U.S. President Barack Obama's wrong policies, including supporting the YPG militarily. "During Mr. Obama's term, we also had Operation Olive Grove. Unfortunately, at that time, Obama did not keep promises. That operation had the aim of clearing terrorists from Manbij," Erdoğan said in a speech at the Presidential Complex in Ankara, referring to the YPG after it took control of the northern Syrian town in 2016.

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2018/01/25/syria-crisis-residue-from-obamas-broken-promises-erdogan-says>

- **Afrin operation targets only terrorists: European group**

Turkey launched Operation Olive Branch in northern Syria due to threats from PYD/PKK and Daesh terrorist organizations, the Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD) said Wednesday. In a statement released across European capitals and in some major cities, the group said the operation complied by relevant UN anti-terror articles and resolutions.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/europe/afrin-operation-targets-only-terrorists-european-group/1041526>

- **7 terrorists captured during Turkey's Afrin operation**

Seven terrorists have been captured during Turkey's ongoing operation in Syria's Afrin, according to a security source Thursday. On Saturday, Turkey launched Operation Olive Branch to remove PYD/PKK and ISIL terrorists from Afrin.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/198186/7-terrorists-captured-during-turkeys-afrin-operation>

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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