



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Proces of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

Energy Security

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1. IRAQ,

- **Iraq: ISIS Attacks Hit Baghdad**

Suicide bombers hit a Shiite religious building and a military checkpoint in a Shiite-majority neighborhood of Baghdad on Thursday, killing 15 people and wounding 48, an Iraqi security official said. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attacks, Iraq's national news agency reported.

More details:

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/26/world/middleeast/iraq-isis-attacks-hit-baghdad.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&_r=0

- **Security forces will arrive at New Fallujah Bridge, says Anbar Council**

Member of Anbar Provincial Council, Rageh al-Issawi, announced on Thursday that the security forces are awaited to arrive at the New Fallujah Bridge as part of the military plan, while pointed out that the security forces were able to free one of the areas in southern Fallujah.

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/security-forces-arrive-fallujah-bridge-says-anbar-council/>

- **Security forces cleanse Abu Daeig, kill 19 ISIS militants**

On Thursday, a source in Anbar Operations Command announced the cleansing of Abu Daeig area in southern Fallujah, while indicated to the killing of 19 ISIS members during the operation. The source said in a statement received by IraqiNews.com, "This morning the security forces carried out a military operation to cleanse the areas around al-Amiriyah, liberating Abu Daeig area after fierce battles and killing 19 ISIS members.

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/security-forces-cleanse-abu-daeig-kill-19-isis-militans/>

- **Thousands face starvation in Iraq's Fallujah as siege tightens**

Tens of thousands of Iraqis, trapped in the Islamic State-held Fallujah, have been left without regular access to food and medicine as shortages have intensified in recent weeks. Residents and local officials all complain of rampant shortages and say that the situation is growing desperate as the pro-Baghdad forces continue to tighten their grip on the city, while the Islamic State (IS) group grows ever bloodier and more desperate inside.

More details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/10000s-face-starvation-iraqs-fallujah-siege-tightens-1545046929>

- **KRG Releases Detailed Report on Oil Sales in January 2016**

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) announced that it has earned \$650 million from oil exports in January 2016. In a statement released on Thursday, 25 of February, KRG's Minister of Natural Resources revealed that it has exported 18,656,131 barrels of crude oil (an average of 601,811 barrels per day (bpd)) in the month of January through the Kurdistan pipeline network to the port of Ceyhan in Turkey.

More details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/economy/260966>

- **Trapped between Iraq frontlines, refugees illustrate Sunni Arab predicament**

They are trapped between two worlds - one they want to leave and the other to which they are denied entry. For three months, more than 500 men, women and children have been living in no-man's land in northern Iraq, caught in the crossfire between Kurdish forces and Islamic State.

More details:

<http://english.shafaag.com/politics/17447-trapped-between-iraq-frontlines,-refugees-illustrate-sunni-arab-predicament.html>

- **Isis hackers 'threaten' Facebook and Twitter founders for shutting accounts**

A group of pro-Isis hackers has reportedly released a video threatening the founders of Facebook and Twitter – because their social media accounts keep getting shut down. In a 25-minute video which began circulating on social media on Tuesday afternoon, pictures of Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg and Twitter's Jack Dorsey were shown superimposed with bullet holes.

More details:

<http://english.shafaag.com/politics/17448-isis-hackers-threaten-facebook-and-twitter-founders-for-shutting-accounts.html>

- **ISIS will fight on even if it loses all territories**

The head of IHS Jane's Terrorism & Insurgency Center, Matthew Henman, says that the Islamic State (ISIS) will continue to be a problem and will continue to function even if it loses every piece of territory it has managed to seize to date. "The Islamic State insurgency will not end if or when all territory is recaptured in Iraq and Syria," he told the Jerusalem Post.

More details:

<http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/26022016?>

- **Source: ISIS blows up 35 houses for displaced families southwest of Kirkuk**

A local source in Kirkuk province said Thursday, that ISIS blew up 35 houses for the displaced families who fled from Hawija southwest of the province. The source reported for IraqiNews.com, "ISIS militants blew up 35 houses in the areas of Abbasi, Riyadh, Zab and the outskirts of Hawija (55 km southwest of Kirkuk)," noting that "Those houses belong to displaced families that fled from the [ISIS] oppression."

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/source-isis-blows-35-houses-displaced-families-southwest-kirkuk/>

- **ISIS extremists behead Imam of Mosul mosque for 'fighting the Caliphate'**

The ISIS extremist group has executed an Imam in Mosul city in Iraq's northwestern Nineveh province on Wednesday, after accusing him of "fighting the Caliphate". Fawasz Hussein al-Wanli, Imam of Ali Bin Abi Talib mosque in Mosul, was arrested last Friday after delivering a speech calling on the people of Mosul to take up arms and fight against ISIS.

More details:

<http://en.abna24.com/service/middle-east-west-asia/archive/2016/02/25/737114/story.html>

- **Not a Secret': Iraq Warns Turkey Against 'Playing' With Daesh**

Turkey should not "play" with Daesh terrorists, as this will backfire, the deputy chief of staff to the prime minister of Iraq told Sputnik on Thursday. Naufel Alhassan noted that the vast majority of foreign fighters in the group's ranks arrived through Turkey, which is "not a secret, everybody knows that."

More details:

<http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20160225/1035346125/iraq-turkey-playing-daesh.html>

- **French oil giant Total fined over Iraq 'oil-for-food'**

French oil giant Total was ordered on appeal Friday to pay 750,000 euros (\$827,000) for corruption linked to the UN "oil-for-food" programme established for Iraq during Saddam Hussein's rule

More details:

<http://www.english.rfi.fr/general/20160226-frech-oil-giant-total-fined-over-iraq-oil-food?>

- **Flow to resume for Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline**

The flow of Kurdish crude oil has been halted as the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline was sabotaged in Turkey. The pipeline transports 600 000 bpd of crude oil to Turkey's Ceyhan port from Iraq's Kurdish north fields and Kirkus. The line has been halted since its alleged sabotage on 17 February, and is not expected to go back online until at least 29 February due to security concerns.

More details:

<http://www.energyglobal.com/pipelines/project-news/26022016/Flow-to-resume-for-Kirkuk-Ceyhan-pipeline/>?

- **Security forces kill 5 ISIS militants during clashes north of Tikrit**

The Federal Police Command announced on Thursday the killing of five ISIS elements during armed clashes in Makhoul Mountains north of Tikrit. The commander of the Federal Police Command, Raed Shaker Jawdat, said in a press statement followed by IraqiNews.com, "A force from the federal police in Makhoul Mountains had launched, today, surprise attacks on the ISIS headquarters in the villages of Massoud in Makhoul Mountains north of Tikrit, resulting in the death of five ISIS elements as well as the destruction of three defensive positions."

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/148395/>

- **Source: ISIS uses special forces in Sharqat after collapse of defensive lines**

A local source in Salahuddin province said on Thursday, that ISIS used a special force called "the red streaks" after the collapse of the defensive line in the vicinity of Sharqat. The source said in a statement received by IraqiNews.com, "A combat force called the red streaks belonging to al-Asra army that forms the special guards of the leader of ISIS Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, arrived from Mosul to the vicinity of Sharqat."

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/148389/>

2. SYRIA

- **Obama says latest pact 'could end Syria's war'**

US President Barack Obama says a proposed ceasefire due to come into effect on Saturday could be a key step towards ending Syria's war. Obama told a meeting of members of his National Security Council in Washington on Thursday that halting air strikes was essential for the truce to be successful.

More details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/obama-latest-pact-syria-war-160226034334317.html>

- **Syrian President Adviser: Iran, Russia, China, Allies Seriously Fighting ISIS**

Syria's Presidential Political and Media Advisor Bouthaina Shaaban underlined that Iran, Russia and China are effectively and really fighting against the terrorist groups. Shaaban, meantime, underlined that the US and its allies on the contrary have never been serious in their alleged fight against the Daesh (ISIS/ISIL) terrorist group.

More details:

<http://en.alalam.ir/news/1793234?>

- **UN envoy to announce date for inter-Syrian dialog**

The UN special envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, is expected to announce today the date for resuming talks between the Syrian Government and the opponents, the UN confirmed. In remarks to journalists, the UN spokesman Stephan Dujarric ratified the announcement made by de Mistura in Geneva, where the parties in conflict are expected to return to the negotiation table, though perhaps not face-to-face, at least in the first contacts.

More details:

<http://en.mehrnews.com/news/114763/UN-envoy-to-announce-date-for-inter-Syrian-dialog>

- **Obama warns Russia 'world will be watching' Syria ceasefire**

US President Barack Obama put the onus for upholding a ceasefire in Syria firmly on the regime and its Russian ally Thursday, warning Moscow and Damascus that the "world will be watching". Hours before the Saturday cessation of hostilities comes into force, Obama huddled with his top national security advisors to plot the way forward and discuss the campaign against the Islamic State (IS) group.

More details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/obama-warns-russia-world-will-be-watching-syria-ceasefire-175354202?>

- **Syrian officials: Nusra Front fired mortars on civilians in Damascus**

Reuters reports that Syrian state media claims al-Nusra Front fired mortars at civilians in Damascus on Thursday. The rebel-held suburbs of Damascus have been the site of increased fighting in recent days. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports that two days of airstrikes preceded Thursday's attacks.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/syrian-officials-nusra-front-fired-mortars-civilians-damascus-810144>

- **UN aid to Syria falls into hands of Assad forces: Activists**

Nearly half of the humanitarian supplies air dropped into besieged areas of Deir Ezzor in Syria on Wednesday are unaccounted for, the UN confirmed on Thursday. The confirmation came after local activists said much of the aid fell directly into the hands of President Assad's military forces.

More details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/un-aid-syria-falls-hands-assad-forces-771714881>

- **Russia deportation of Syrian refugees condemned as 'shameful'**

Russia was set to deport three Syrian refugees on Thursday back to Damascus from a Moscow airport, rights activists said, in a move condemned as "shameful" by Amnesty International. "One has just called... they are being held under guard, under police escort," head of the migrant rights group The Civic Assistance Committee, told AFP around 1500 GMT.

More details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=75458>

- **People Die from 'Bird Flu' in IS-Held Areas of Eastern Syria**

The Islamic State (IS) is concerned over the various cases of 'bird flu' reported across the areas under its control in Syria. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the jihadist group is now urging civilians in the areas near Deir al-Zour, Eastern Syria, to frequently visit hospitals and receive medical masks to protect themselves against the the bird flu.

More details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/middle-east/261000>

- **British action in Syria: 33 strikes in just under three months**

The British government's extension of its air campaign against the Islamic State group to Syria has resulted in 33 successful strikes in almost three months of operations, analysis of official figures by Middle East Eye shows.

More details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/british-action-syria-33-strikes-just-under-three-months-1693419467?>

- **Russia, US May Attack Militants Not Observing Ceasefire in Syria: Moscow**

Russian deputy foreign minister said Moscow and Washington may carry out airstrikes against those who will not adhere to the ceasefire in Syria. Moscow does not rule out that along with the United States groups in Syria not adhering to the cessation of hostilities agreement may be bombed, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov said Thursday.

More details:

<http://en.alalam.ir/news/1793279?>

3. IRAN

- **Iranian President Casts Vote in Elections**

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani cast his vote in the ballot box at a polling station in Tehran on Friday. Rouhani cast his vote in the ballot box at the venue of the interior ministry in Central Tehran this morning. He will talk to reporters after visiting different parts of the interior ministry which are responsible for holding elections. Rouhani said on Wednesday that high turnout in the Friday elections will enhance Iran's global standing.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13941207000303>

- **Iranians voting in parliamentary, Assembly of Experts elections**

Iranians begin voting in crucial elections to choose members of Parliament (Majlis) and the Assembly of Experts. Polls opened at 8:00 local time (0430 GMT) and are slated to close at 18:00 (1430 GMT) on Friday, but voting hours could be extended if the need arises amid expectations of a high turnout.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2016/02/26/452380/Iran-Elections-Parliament-Assembly-of-Experts>

- **Elections allowed Iran to proceed with N-talks**

Iranian FM Zarif said Fri. it was the elections that gave Iran the power to proceed with the nuclear negotiations and end the unjust and cruel sanctions. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on the sideline of the 10th Parliamentary and the 5th Assembly of Experts elections at Hosseinieh Jamaran on Friday told Mehr News correspondent that elections in Iran are the ‘manifestation of religious democracy’, adding “our nation have so far demonstrated beautifully on the elections scene that despite all difficulties and pressures, they are allied and united with the government and fully support the Islamic Republic.”

More Details:

<http://en.mehrnews.com/news/114759/Elections-allowed-Iran-to-proceed-with-N-talks>

- **US Secretary of State pressuring Congress not to renew Iran Sanctions Act**

The US Secretary of State John Kerry is pressuring Congress not to renew the Iran Sanctions Act, it was reported on Friday. 'I wouldn't advise that for a number of reasons,' Kerry told the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee at a hearing on the State Department's budget on Thursday.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/81979558/>

- **Non-oil trade tops \$75.8b in 11 months**

The value of Iran's non-oil trade hit over \$75.835 billion in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2015-February 19, 2016), the country's Customs Administration reported on Wednesday. Iran's non-oil exports amounted to \$38.75 billion in the 11-month period, showing a 16.69 percent decrease compared to the same period last year.

More Details:

http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=253292

- **Greece in talks with Iran to buy LNG, deliver fuel to Europe**

Greek Energy Minister Panos Skourletis says Athens is in talks with Tehran to buy liquefied natural gas (LNG) for domestic needs. He added that Greece also seeks to provide a gateway for Iran to

supply fuel to other parts of Europe. “What’s sure is that Iran wants to start selling its natural gas in liquefied form using ships and is interested in Greece,” Skourletis said.

More Details:

<http://www.iran-daily.com/News/137335.html>

- **Iran's Rouhani says he welcomes new parliament with any composition**

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani called the elections an independence and sovereignty symbol of the country. Iran's Ministry of Interior affairs is responsible for observing the elections. After casting votes at the parliament and Assembly of Experts elections in Tehran, Rouhani said that Iranians now decide on the future of Iran, IRNA reported on Feb.26.

More Details:

<http://en.trend.az/iran/politics/2499729.html>

- **Iran’s Naval Fleet to Berth at Tanzanian Port**

“The flotilla will probably dock at Tanzania’s Dar es Salaam port tomorrow or the day after tomorrow,” Sayyari told reporters on the sidelines of a meeting with an Indian Navy delegation. He further highlighted the significance of security in the Indian Ocean, saying that its importance is no secret to anyone. Iran’s trade is mostly carried out in this strategic region, and the northern Indian Ocean is of importance to Iran, India, and the world, the Iranian commander noted.

More Details:

<http://iranfrontpage.com/news/politics/security/2016/02/irans-naval-fleet-to-berth-at-tanzanian-port/>

- **Iran reducing troops in Syria: US**

Iran has reduced its involvement in Syria and withdrawn a "significant number" of its elite Revolutionary Guards troops, Secretary of State John Kerry told lawmakers Thursday. "The IRGC [Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution] has actually pulled its troops back from Syria. Ayatollah Khamenei pulled a significant number of troops out.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/world/iran-reducing-troops-in-syria-us/527360?>

- **Voting Underway in Iran's Parliamentary Elections**

Iranians were voting on Friday in parliamentary elections, the country's first since its landmark nuclear deal with world powers last summer. The vote is in part seen as a referendum on the policies of moderate President Hassan Rouhani, who is credited with bringing about the deal that curbed Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for the lifting of crippling international sanctions.

More Details:

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_IRAN_ELECTIONS?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2016-02-25-13-15-07

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Netanyahu: We failed to deport terrorists' families**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday lamented his inability to deport the families of terrorists, arguing that courts were misinterpreting the Geneva Conventions' provisions regarding population transfers. "There is one thing we have not managed to do," Netanyahu said at a Likud meeting in Ofakim. "We have not managed to bring about deportation of terrorists' families. We cannot do this because the courts define this as a war crime. That is how it is defined in the Geneva Conventions, etc.

More Details:

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4771142,00.html>

- **Israeli businessman arrested in Guatemala**

An Israeli businessman was arrested Tuesday in Guatemala on suspicion of bribing an official to secure a government contract to clean up a polluted lake in the central American country, Israel's Channel 10 reported Thursday. Also involved in the case are senior Guatemalan political figures and a relation of the country's deputy president.

More Details:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-businessman-arrested-in-guatemala/>

- **MKs support Rivlin's decision to disinvite Zahalka**

Knesset members supported President Reuven Rivlin's decision to disinvite MK Jamal Zahalka from a meeting on Wednesday at the President's Residence. MK Shelly Yacimovich (Zionist Union), a longtime Rivlin supporter, called the president's decision "a precise civics lesson" to disinvite Zahalka

and two other Joint List MKs after they met with the families of slain terrorists and stood in silence to honor their memories.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/MKs-support-Rivlins-decision-to-disinvite-Zahalka-446188>

- **US cyber security cos warning Israel on regulation**

Israeli and foreign firms are planning to file objections to a new draft order requiring export licenses for some cyber technologies. American cyber security companies without a presence in Israel are considering petitioning Israel's Ministry of Defense in the coming days over the planned regulation of exports of cyber systems with offensive and intelligence gathering capabilities according to Adv. Daniel Reisner, the resident cyber and homeland security and compliance expert at Herzog Fox & Ne'eman.

More Details:

<http://www.globes.co.il/en/article-us-cyber-security-cos-warning-israel-on-regulation-1001106510>

- **Trump under fire for not 'taking sides' on Israel**

Donald Trump said Thursday night that he's "totally pro-Israel," but that didn't stop his Republican opponents from ripping his stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Trump said during Thursday night's CNN debate that he's very supportive of Israel and has won many awards for that support.

More Details:

<http://www.politico.eu/article/trump-under-fire-for-not-taking-sides-on-israel/>

- **Erekat Expresses Concerns over Kenyan President's Visit to Jerusalem, Jordan Valley**

Palestine Liberation Organization's Secretary-General Saeb Erekat Thursday expressed his concerns over Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta's visit to Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley. Erekat expressed his concerns over Kenyatta's visit to occupied East Jerusalem and an Israeli settlement in the Jordan Valley in the context of an official visit to Israel.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=2uV05Da31228919436a2uV05D>

- **Israel issues 9 home demolition orders in Jerusalem-area village**

Israeli forces on Wednesday issued nine home demolition orders to residents in the occupied East Jerusalem village of al-Issawiya, a local follow-up committee member said. Muhammad Abu al-Hummus told Ma'an that Israeli forces issued the home demolitions in the Abu Riyala area of the village, telling residents their homes would be demolished due to lack of permits.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=770431>

- **Russia-US Ceasefire Plan for Syria May Help Israel-Palestine Peace Process**

The US-Russian ceasefire plan for Syria may contribute to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the secretary general of the Palestinian National Initiative (PNI) told Sputnik Thursday. On Monday, Russia and the United States announced that a deal to cease hostilities between the Syrian government of President Bashar Assad and armed opposition factions had been reached. The agreement is set to come into force on February 27.

More Details:

<http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20160225/1035331152/syria-israel-palestine.html?>

- **Canada's liberals attack Palestine solidarity**

On Monday, Canada's House of Commons passed a motion condemning the movement to boycott, divest from, and sanction (BDS) Israel. The opposition Conservatives introduced the motion, but almost all of the Liberal government voted in favour of it, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The motion rejects BDS, says that it "promotes the demonization and delegitimization of the State of Israel," and "calls upon the government to condemn any and all attempts by Canadian organizations, groups or individuals to promote the BDS movement, both here at home and abroad".

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/canadas-liberals-attack-palestine-solidarity-1291547280?>

- **OIC summit to focus on Palestine**

Member nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) gather in Jakarta on March 6-7 for the organization's fifth extraordinary summit, which will focus on providing a solution to the Palestinian crisis. Samir Bakr Diab, the OIC's assistant secretary-general for Palestine and Jerusalem, said the event entitled "Unity for a Just and Lasting Solution" will be looking at ways to unite the efforts of member states in the face of Israel "riding roughshod" over international treaties, agreements and resolutions.

More Details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/saudi-arabia/news/885996?>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Jordan — ‘a country that punches above its weight’**

US President Barack Obama lauded the strategic alliance between Jordan and the US and praised His Majesty King Abdullah’s and Jordan’s constructive role in various regional files in statements to the media at the White House, following the two leaders’ summit on Wednesday.

More details:

<http://www.jordantimes.com/opinion/editorial/jordan-%E2%80%94-country-punches-above-its-weight%E2%80%99?#sthash.zzwzkSt6.dpuf>

- **Obama vows aid to Jordan for Syria, Iraq refugees**

President Barack Obama said the US would sustain financial aid to Jordan to help the country cope with a flood of refugees, after a meeting with King Abdullah on Wednesday at the White House.

More details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/a1dd4d59-d2bd-4291-9c29-eb6cec7ea38a.aspx?>

- **Jordan's mixed plans for its Palestinian 'guests'**

MPs were fulsome and bordered on the raucous. Further contributions from the floor had to be restrained.

More details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/west-bank-vs-gaza-jordans-mixed-plans-its-palestinian-guests-1529473549?#sthash.83aShwPi.dpuf>

- **World Bank Woos Western Corporations to Profit from Labor of Stranded Syrian Refugees**

Under the guise of humanitarian aid, the World Bank is enticing Western companies to launch “new investments” in Jordan in order to profit from the labor of stranded Syrian refugees.

More details:

<http://www.alternet.org/labor/world-bank-woos-western-corporations-profit-labor-stranded-syrian-refugees?>

- **Report: Salam Drops Gulf Tour Plan**

Prime Minister Tammam Salam has dropped a plan to go on a Gulf tour following a Saudi decision to cut off billions of dollars of aid to the Lebanese army and security forces, al-Joumhouria daily reported Friday.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/203140-report-salam-drops-gulf-tour-plan?>

- **U.N. Calls for Continued Support for Lebanese Army after Saudi Aid Cut**

The United Nations has called for continued support by the international community for the Lebanese army and security forces following a Saudi decision to cut off billions of dollars of aid.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/203139-u-n-calls-for-continued-support-for-lebanese-army-after-saudi-aid-cut?>

- **Hajjar: Iran wants transferring Lebanon to military base to depart from**

MP Mohammad Hajjar stressed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Gulf Cooperation Council countries should never be equalized to Iran that aims "to transfer Lebanon to a military base to depart from."

More details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/57495/Hajjar-Iran-wants-transferring-Lebanon-to-military-base-to-depart-from?>

- **Chamoun: Saudi Arabia won't leave Lebanon and Lebanon won't abandon it**

"National Liberal" Party head, MP Dory Chamoun said on Thursday "Saudi Arabia will not leave Lebanon and also Lebanon will never discard the Kingdom".

More details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/57478/Chamoun-Saudi-Arabia-won-39-leave-Lebanon-and-Lebanon-won-39-abandon-it?>

- **Czechs Allow Extradition of Lebanese to U.S., Fayad's Fate Depends on Cabinet**

Czech Justice Minister Robert Pelikan has agreed to extradite an Ivory Coast national of Lebanese origin to the United States to face weapons charges although another alleged accomplice remains in Lebanese custody.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/203147-czechs-allow-extradition-of-lebanese-to-u-s-fayad-s-fate-depends-on-cabinet?>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Riyadh Seeking Arab Support for Anti-Hizbullah Resolution**

Saudi Arabia has launched consultations to hold an emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers for the purpose of issuing a decision that condemns Hizbullah, reports said Friday. According to the reports, Riyadh is seeking to clinch an Arab support for a draft resolution that condemns Hizbullah over its role in Syria and Yemen.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/203142-riyadh-seeking-arab-support-for-anti-hizbullah-resolution?>

- **Thirteen Egyptian sailors freed in Yemen**

Egypt's authorities secured the release of 13 sailors detained at Al Hadidiya port in western Yemen that is controlled by Houthi fighters, a statement by the foreign affairs ministry said. "The Egyptian ambassador to Yemen made extensive efforts by contacting the countries security authorities and port officials to ensure the safety of the sailors," the statement read.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/thirteen-egyptian-sailors-freed-yemen-810182>

- **EU parliament calls for arms embargo against Saudi Arabia**

European lawmakers on Thursday called for an EU arms embargo against Saudi Arabia over its military campaign in conflict-torn Yemen which has caused "thousands of deaths." Saudi Arabia told AFP last week it would continue its intervention, launched in March last year against Iran-backed Huthi rebels, until Yemen President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi was fully restored to power

More details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=75457>

- **Bahrain jails four people for allegedly plotting weapons smuggling, attacks**

A court in Bahrain has sentenced four people to five years in jail on charges of allegedly planning to receiving explosives and training in order to carry out attacks in the country. Bahrain's public prosecutor made the announcement in a statement released by the state BNA news agency, on Thursday.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/bahrain-jails-four-people-allegedly-plotting-weapons-smuggling-attacks-810146>

- **'Saudi Arabia has built a road to destruction'**

Imam Abdul Alim Musa (Clarence Reams), the director of Masjid Al-Islam in Washington D.C., believes that the policy that the new rulers in the Saudi kingdom has adopted is "suicidal". "Saudi Arabia has built a road to its own destruction," Alim Musa, an African-American Muslim activist, said in an interview with the Mehr news agency and Tehran Times.

More details:

http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=253281

- **Implications of the Saudi-Yemen war**

The Houthi rebels want an end to the Saudi monarchy and death to its western 'patron', the US. They seem to miss the fact that the Saudi-US relationship has ceased to be that of a patron-client since 2014. Riyadh and Washington are engaged in an adversarial relationship in the energy sector. Washington's efforts at making itself energy independent through the shale gas revolution are frustrated by Riyadh's decision to glut the market with cheap conventional oil.

More details:

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/26-Feb-2016/implications-of-the-saudi-yemen-war?>

- **UAE passport most powerful in Middle East**

The UAE passport has been ranked first among Arab and Middle Eastern countries for the second year in a row in the Visa Restrictions Index 2016 released by Henley & Partners, the global leader in residence and citizenship planning. The UAE has risen by two spots to 38, with visa-free access to 122 countries.

More details:

<http://www.emirates247.com/news/emirates/uae-passport-most-powerful-in-middle-east-2016-02-25-1.622233>

- **Kuwait gov't said to mull raising petrol prices by 83%**

Kuwait's government has proposed to raise the prices of petrol by 42 percent to 83 percent. The suggestion was made during a meeting between the government and the National Assembly to discuss the cutting of electricity and fuel subsidies as part of an economic reform plan, reported Kuwait Times.

More details:

<http://www.arabianbusiness.com/kuwait-gov-t-said-mull-raising-petrol-prices-by-83--622722.html?#.VtAZiH2LRkg>

- **Saudi jets for Syria campaign due in Turkey this week**

Saudi jets are due to arrive at a Turkish base this week take part in the air campaign against Islamic State jihadists in Syria, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Thursday. "We are expecting the planes to arrive today or tomorrow (Friday)," Cavusoglu told the state-run Anatolia news agency, adding that Saudi equipment and personnel had already arrived on the ground.

More details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=75452>

- **News Rewind: Cuts in public sector benefits dominates news headlines this week**

Oman's economy which is struggling due to the oil price crunch, and the government's plan to get back on track, continued to dominate the news agenda this week in Oman.

More details:

<http://timesofoman.com/article/78226/Oman/News-Rewind:-Thousands-in-Oman-to-get-their-job-benefits-cut-dominates-news-headlines-this-week>

7. EGYPT

- **Sisi starts Asian tour with visit to Kazakhstan**

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi arrived in the early hours of Friday morning in Astana, the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan, starting an Asian tour that includes Japan and South Korea.

More details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com//news/sisi-starts-asian-tour-visit-kazakhstan>

- **Thirteen Egyptian sailors freed in Yemen**

Egypt's authorities secured the release of 13 sailors detained at Al Hadidiya port in western Yemen that is controlled by Houthi fighters, a statement by the foreign affairs ministry said.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/thirteen-egyptian-sailors-freed-yemen-810182>

- **Egypt's President links Russian plane crash to terrorism**

Egypt's President has publicly linked terrorism to the downing of a Russian passenger jet over Sinai last year - reportedly for the first time.

More details:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/02/24/middleeast/egypt-sissi-russian-plane-sinai/index.html?>

- **Dinner with Israel's ambassador earns 'anti-Zionist' Egyptian MP Okasha criticism**

The controversial TV host and parliamentarian, who regularly renounces an 'American-Israeli conspiracy' against Egypt, was called out on actions by many critics

More details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/188525/-.aspx?>

- **Two-Day Africa Investment Conference wraps up in Egypt**

Qalaa Holdings, a leading African investor in energy and infrastructure has just concluded its participation in the Africa 2016 Investment Forum in Sharm El-Sheik, a two-day event that brought together heads of state, members of cabinet and top business leaders from Egypt and the continent to discuss ways of enhancing trade and investment amongst African nations with a focus on the rising role of the private sector.

More details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/826f5f3d-1ce4-4041-94bf-56ab71882326.aspx?>

- **Egypt's president claims he'd sell himself if he could**

Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, attempting to show his devotion to the country, said he would be willing to put himself up for sale to give the country's economy a cash boost.

More details:

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/02/25/egypts-president-claims-hed-sell-himself-if-could.html?>

- **Egypt's Sisi under attack on social media after television speech**

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who once enjoyed widespread popular support, has come under withering criticism from Egyptians on social media after delivering a long televised speech on Wednesday.

More details:

<http://in.reuters.com/article/egypt-sisi-idINKCNOVY1ZE?rpc=401>

- **Egyptian parliamentarian under fire for meeting Israeli envoy**

An Egyptian TV host and parliamentarian is coming under fire for meeting with the Israeli ambassador to Egypt, the Al-Ahram newspaper reported on Thursday.

More details:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/208560?#.VtAfVbSLRDB>

- **Italy Stages sit-in at Egypt Embassy over Student's Death**

Several dozen people have staged a sit-in outside Egypt's embassy in Rome to demand the truth about the torture and death of an Italian student in Cairo.

More details:

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/E/EU_ITALY_EGYPT?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2016-02-25-13-31-15

- **Access English Scholarships awarded to 684 Egyptian Students**

In a ceremony held on February 25, U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Stephen Beecroft awarded scholarship certificates to the newest group of Access English students. The scholarships provide two years of high-quality English language classes and extracurricular activities to Egyptian youth throughout the country. Since 2006, over 2600 Egyptian high school students have graduated from the Access Program.

More details:

<http://thecairopost.youm7.com/news/196220/news/access-english-scholarships-awarded-to-684-egyptian-students?>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **We cooperate with Algeria on issue of Algerian prisoners in Iraq, says Al-Jaafri**

Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs Ibrahim Al-Ashaiqer Al-Jaafari affirmed Thursday that his country cooperates with Algeria on the issue of Algerian prisoners in Iraq.

More details:

<http://www.aps.dz/en/algeria/11052-we-cooperate-with-algeria-on-issue-of-algerian-prisoners-in-iraq,-says-al-jaafri?>

- **Linhart: Algeria, "strategic partner" for Austria**

Algeria is a "strategic partner" in several fields for Austria, Secretary General of Austria's federal Foreign Affairs Ministry Michael Linhart stressed Thursday in Algiers.

More details:

<http://www.aps.dz/en/algeria/11035-linhart-algeria,-strategic-partner-for-austria?>

- **Algeria's Bouteflika says to cope with oil price crisis**

Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika on Wednesday said his country will deal with the crisis of falling oil prices and its effects on the national economy.

More details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-02/25/c_135128049.htm?

- **ISIS Militant Head Arrested in Northwestern Libya**

A local commander of the ISIS terrorist group and two of his aides have been arrested near the Libyan capital city of Tripoli amid ongoing skirmishes between the extremists and militants loyal to the unrecognized Tripoli-based government.

More details:

<http://en.alalam.ir/news/1793263?>

- **Trump: We'd be better off with Qaddafi, Saddam in power**

The Islamic State would not have been able to gain a foothold if former Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi were still alive and in power, Donald Trump said Thursday at a Republican debate.

More details:

<http://www.politico.eu/article/trump-wed-be-better-off-with-qaddafi-saddam-in-power/>

- **Islamic State in Libya: ‘They’re Getting Stronger Because No One Is Fighting Them’**

“They’re getting stronger because no one is fighting them,” Libyan military commander Mahmoud Gazwan said of the Islamic State, in an interview with Reuters. Libyan officers are pleading for more Western help defeating the terror state.

More details:

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2016/02/25/isis-in-libya-theyre-getting-stronger-because-no-one-is-fighting-them/>

- **UN Urged To Look Harder At Libya after Abuses Report**

UNITED NATIONS human rights head Zeid Raad al-Hussein urged the security council to increase monitoring in Libya and “take action” against rights violators following the release of a report documenting torture, beheadings and other violence in the country.

More details:

<http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/a-f711-UN-urged-to-look-harder-at-Libya-after-abuses-report>

- **“Portugal committed to support Tunisia’s efforts to conclude large agreement with EU” (Santos Silva)**

Portuguese Foreign Minister Augusto Santos Silva reaffirmed, Thursday, his country’s commitment to support Tunisia’s efforts to conclude a broad agreement with the European Union (EU).

More details:

<http://www.tap.info.tn/en/index.php/politics2/33737-portugal-committed-to-support-tunisia-s-efforts-to-conclude-large-agreement-with-eu-santos-silva>

- **Tunisia police protest over pay, work conditions**

Several thousand Tunisian policemen protested in front of the prime minister's office on Thursday, chanting and demanding more pay and better working conditions as they face Islamist militants targeting security forces.

More details:

http://af.reuters.com/article/tunisiaNews/idAFL8N1643SU?feedType=RSS&feedName=tunisiaNews&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FAfricaTunisiaNews+%28News+%2F+Africa+%2F+Tunisia+News%29&rpc=401

- **Libya Rejects Presence of France Soldiers in Fight against ISIS**

Libya's internationally recognized government has denied media reports that French Special Forces are engaged in covert military operations against ISIS terrorists in the North African state.

More details:

<http://en.alalam.ir/news/1793273?#sthash.et50xHmg.dpuf>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Pakistan central bank clears financial transactions with Iran**

Pakistan's central bank has cleared all commercial banks and financial institutions for business with Iran, paving the way for the two countries to resume regular business activity that was hampered by years of sanctions. Global transaction network SWIFT reconnected a number of Iranian banks to its system earlier this month, allowing them to restart cross-border transactions with foreign banks after the lifting of most sanctions on Tehran in January.

More Details:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/pakistan-iran-idUSL3N16535K?rpc=401>

- **SC annuls special court's verdict to implicate co-accused in high treason trial**

Ruling in favour of former Chief Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar's appeal against implicating him in a treason trial, the Supreme Court on Friday annulled a Special Court's earlier verdict which had ordered reinvestigating the role of facilitators in imposition of the November 3, 2007 emergency by former dictator Gen (r) Pervez Musharraf.

More Details:

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/101126-SC-annuls-special-courts-verdict-to-include-co-accused-in-high-treason-trial>

- **Hakimi, World Bank director talk economic reform agenda**

Minister of Finance Eklil Hakimi and Worldinfo-icon Bank Country Director Bob Sum have conferred on prioritisation of projects, budget execution and revenue collection. During his visit to Istanbul, Hakimi led a delegation of Ministry of Finance and Da Afghanistaninfo-icon Bank officials at the meeting with the IMF mission team on the economic reform agenda.

More Details:

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2016/02/26/hakimi-world-bank-director-talk-economic-reform-agenda>

- **Fata operation forced Haqqanis to flee: US**

The ongoing military operation in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) forced the Haqqani network to relocate, said US Secretary of State John Kerry while defending the Obama administration's decision to sell eight F-16 aircraft to Pakistan. The network's presence in Fata was used as the main argument against the proposed sale during a congressional hearing on Tuesday.

More Details:

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1241796/fata-operation-forced-haqqanis-to-leave-us>

- **MPs Ask ECP Not To Put Their Asset Details On Web**

Parliament has sought from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) permission to avoid placing on its official website the assets and wealth declaration of MPs but the latter is not inclined to accept this request. Informed sources said that the Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms had made this request to the ECP, apparently for security reasons and to protect the privacy of the members of parliament.

More Details:

<http://www.geo.tv/latest/101501-MPs-ask-ECP-not-to-put-their-asset-details-on-web>

- **31 militants killed in air, ground operations in Kunduz and Baghlan**

At least thirty one anti-government armed militants were killed in separate military operations in northern Kunduz and Baghlan provinces of Afghanistan. The Ministry of Defense (MoD) said the operations were conducted in the past 24 hours by the Afghan National Security Forces who were backed by air support.

More Details:

<http://www.khaama.com/31-militants-killed-in-air-ground-operations-in-kunduz-and-baghlan-0174>

- **NDS: 600 Kg Narcotic Drugs Discovered**

An Amount of 600 kilograms narcotic drugs type of opium have been discovered and seized by National Directorate Security (NDS) personnel in Logar province. A Source of NDS stated BNA reporter, according to discovery report the National Security Directorate personnel during a special operation succeeded to discover 600 kg opium in Khoshi district of Logar province.

More Details:

<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/security/item/21367-nds-600-kg-narcotic-drugs-discovered.html>

- **Kidnapped former Afghanistan governor freed in Pakistan shoot-out**

A former Afghan governor kidnapped nearly two weeks ago in Pakistan's capital was freed on Friday (Feb 26) after a shoot-out with the police, he told AFP, saying he could not identify the men who abducted him. Mr Sayed Fazlullah Wahidi said he was blindfolded and being transported by his kidnappers when they were stopped at a police checkpoint in Mardan, near Pakistan's north-western city of Peshawar.

More Details:

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/south-asia/kidnapped-former-afghanistan-governor-freed-in-pakistan-shoot-out?>

- **Daesh Militants Surrender For First Time in Afghanistan – Local Authorities**

Daesh (ISIL/ISIS) terrorists have surrendered their weapons in Afghanistan for the first time since the group became active in the country, local authorities said. According to the spokesman, 14 Taliban fighters joined the surrendered Daesh terrorists.

More Details:

<http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20160226/1035371481/daesh-afghanistan-surrender.html?>

10. TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Syrian refugees give strong support to Kilis' Nobel bid**

Syrian refugees have been backing various calls to nominate Kilis, a southern Turkish province, for a Nobel Prize because of its role in helping over 100,000 people who have fled the brutal civil war across the border. Kilis has seen its population of nearly 90,000 doubled and is now additionally hosting 127,000 refugees.

More Details:

<http://www.trtworld.com/mea/syrian-refugees-give-strong-support-to-kilis-nobel-bid-55164>

- **Turkish ship carrying humanitarian aid arrives in Yemen's Aden**

A Turkish ship carrying humanitarian aid arrived in the Yemeni port of Aden on Wednesday as the population of the country on the Arabian Peninsula struggles in the face of ongoing civil war.

Mahmoud Awad Ahmed, a Yemeni provincial official, said the ship was loaded with 5,300 tons of food and medical supplies.

More Details:

<http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2016/02/24/turkish-ship-carrying-humanitarian-aid-arrives-in-yemens-aden>

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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