



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

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- PYD/PKK terror attack kills teenage girl in Turkey 24

1. IRAQ

- **Iraqi MPs disrupt political process in Iraq**

Several Iraqi MPs have refrained from attending the parliamentary sessions, therefore voting over many drafts has been suspended, Hadi Jalo Marie, the head of the Journalistic Freedoms Observatory, said on Wednesday. He added that most of the lawmakers do not care about Iraqi people's interest as they go shopping with their wives instead of attending the sessions.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/23173/Iraqi-MPs-disrupt-political-process-in-Iraq>

- **ISIS Is Weakened, but Iraq Election Could Unravel Hard-Won Stability**

In just three years, the Iraqi prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, has rebuilt the army, defeated the Islamic State and restored sovereignty across this deeply divided nation, accomplishments that, in the eyes of many, give him the stature of an Iraqi Abe Lincoln. Still, as Mr. Abadi is quick to warn in weekly addresses to the nation, stability remains fragile.

More Details:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/30/world/middleeast/iraq-election-abadi.html>

- **Iraq's Electoral Commission Warns of Delaying Elections**

The Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq has warned of the possibility of delaying the elections due to lack of funds. Riyadh Badran, an official at the electoral commission, said on Tuesday that they might not be able to finalise the preparations for the upcoming polls if the government delays providing the required funds.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/411341>

- **Federal Iraq Court Bars 78 Lawmakers from Running in Elections**

The High Federal Court in Iraq ratified on Monday a ruling that requires candidates wishing to run in the upcoming parliamentary elections to hold a Baccalaureate school certificate or its equivalent. This means that 35 MPs, who have been serving in parliament since 2005, are now barred from running in the May 12 polls.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1159351/federal-iraq-court-bars-78-lawmakers-running-elections>

- **U.S. offers to secure elections in three Sunni-dominated governorates in Iraq**

The London-based Al-Arab daily has uncovered a proposal put forward by the U.S. army to let American soldiers secure parliamentary and provincial elections, slated for May, just in three Sunni-dominated governorates, namely Nineveh, Salahuddin and Anbar. Quoting what it described as well-placed Iraqi sources, the paper said on Tuesday that the U.S. military made this request as it “fears that the current situation in Anbar and Mosul might affect the representation of Sunni groups in the parliament and government.”

More Details:

http://www.shafaq.com/en/En_NewsReader/139d3ec9-fd94-4a07-917d-eee864f9bdf4

- **Iraq comments on U.S. offer to secure elections, says “our responsibility”**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi’s office has said that securing the upcoming elections that will take place at all Iraqi cities is a responsibility of both the military and local police. This came in response to new reports that tackled a proposal by Washington over securing the upcoming local and legislative elections at each of Anbar, Salahuddin and Nineveh fearing fraud there.

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/features/iraq-comments-u-s-offer-secure-elections-says-responsibility/>

- **Iraq MP: A Gulf state seeks to reinstate Masoud Barzani**

A Gulf state is working to reinstate former Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani, the New Khaleej reported a member of parliament close to Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar Al-Abadi saying yesterday. MP of State of Law Coalition Jasim Mohamed Jaafar Al-Bayati said that this state had allocated large sums of money to return Barzani to the political arena.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180130-iraq-mp-a-gulf-state-seeks-to-reinstate-masoud-barzani/>

- **US presence in Iraq sign of their occupation**

Hezbollah al-Nujaba Secretary General Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi said “if the Americans don’t leave Iraq, we will consider them occupiers.” Responding to the aggression of American forces, Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi warned that if the Americans don’t leave Iraq, we will consider them occupiers.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/131747/US-presence-in-Iraq-sign-of-their-occupation>

- **Al-Abadi says Iran helped Iraq win the war on Daesh**

Haider al-Abadi, the Iraqi prime minister, has said Iran has “zero” influence on his country and said Iran along with others helped Baghdad win the war against Daesh. “Zero, I would say zero, I have to be frank,” al-Abadi said when asked about Iran’s influence in Iraq. The Iraqi prime minister made the remarks in an interview with CNN on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

More Details:

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/420844/Al-Abadi-says-Iran-helped-Iraq-win-the-war-on-Daesh>

- **Iraq’s Militias Set Their Sights on Political Power**

This month, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced an unexpected political alliance with the leader of an Iranian-aligned militia. Hadi al-Amiri, the head of the Badr Organization, was set to join Abadi’s grand coalition of political parties slated to run for election in May. The alliance provoked a swift backlash from across Iraq’s political spectrum. Long seen as a nationalist by Western governments, the prime minister was traditionally viewed as Amiri’s political enemy. Just days earlier, the two were exchanging slurs and heated accusations, with Abadi singling out militias like those allied to Amiri for particularly harsh criticism.

More Details:

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/30/iraqs-militias-are-setting-their-sights-on-power/>

- **Locals want US troops out of Iraq after 8 reportedly killed in coalition air strike**

Locals recounted grizzly details of a US-led coalition attack that reportedly killed at least 8 Iraqis Saturday, calling on American forces to leave the country. The Coalition said the incident is under investigation. “We demand the departure of the American forces for having trampled upon the blood of children and civilians,” Al-Sheikh Qater Al-Samawad, a Member of Al-Obeid tribe in Al-Anbar told RT following the alleged strike.

More Details:

<https://www.rt.com/news/417445-iraq-us-air-strike-anbar/>

- **Eyewitnesses Recall Coalition's Alleged 'Friendly Fire' Attack in Iraq**

Witnesses have said that a combat helicopter of the US-led coalition fired on a car transporting wounded people in the western Iraqi province of Anbar, claiming the lives of several police officers

and civilians. A video showing eyewitnesses speaking about the coalition's "friendly fire" in western Iraq's Anbar province which killed at least eight people has emerged.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201801301061193926-iraq-video-us-alleged-friendly-fire/>

- **Group arrested for Trafficking of Human Organs in Babel**

On Tuesday, the National Security Directorate in Babel province arrested a gang that is exploiting the poor's need for money to sell their human organs. An official source at the National Security Directorate stated in a press meeting today that the security forces in Babylon have arrested a gang that trades human organs.

More Details:

http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=42650

- **Crude Swap with Iraq Will Begin Next Week**

Iraq is expected to start crude oil exports from its northern Kirkuk Oilfield to Iran next week, an Iraqi oil official said. Alaa al-Yasiri, acting director general of Iraqi state oil marketer SOMO, added that Iraqi exports could increase, as the country plans to start trucking crude to Iran's Kermanshah Refinery under a swap agreement announced last month, Reuters reported. Iraq and Iran have agreed to swap up to 60,000 barrels per day of crude produced from Kirkuk for Iranian oil to be delivered to Iraqi customers in southern Iran.

More Details:

<https://financialtribune.com/articles/energy/81105/crude-swap-with-iraq-will-begin-next-week>

2. SYRIA

- **No significant breakthrough at Russia's showpiece Syria congress**

Russia's showpiece Syria congress aimed to bring seven years of war closer to an end Tuesday, but closed without a significant breakthrough after a string of boycotts and last-minute cancellations. Around 1,400 delegates attended the meeting in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, as part of a broader push by regime-backer Moscow to consolidate its influence in the Middle East and start hammering out a political solution to the conflict.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87021>

- **Participants of Sochi conference adopt 12-point plan on Syria's future**

Participants at the much-talked-about peace conference in Russia stressed the need to preserve the territorial integrity of Syria on Tuesday, stating that the Syrian people alone should decide the fate of the country, according to the conference's final statement. Moscow, a strong ally of Damascus, hosted the conference named the "Syrian National Dialogue Congress" at the Black Sea resort of Sochi, hoping the talks would help with the drafting of a new constitution in Syria.

More Details:

<http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/62213b25-7ef4-4e9c-90cc-e4caf052a289>

- **Sochi final declaration stresses full commitment to Syria's sovereignty**

The National Dialogue Congress in Sochi, which brought together some 1,500 Syrians, wrapped up on Tue. with releasing a statement that called for full commitment to Syria's sovereignty and Syrian people as the sole agent in determining the future of their country. According to Sputnik, the Congress in Sochi laid the cornerstone for the formation of the Constitutional Commission – it announced the general agreement to do so, and nominated 150 Syrian personalities as possible members. At the same time, the link with Geneva was respected: it will be de Mistura, who will approve the final composition and decide on its work procedures, and it will be Geneva where the commission will function.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/131780/Sochi-final-declaration-stresses-full-commitment-to-Syria-s-sovereignty>

- **Erdogan, Putin agree to speed up founding of 'observation posts' in Syria's Idlib**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to step up efforts to form "observation posts" in the northwestern Syrian province of Idlib, Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency quoted presidential sources as saying on Jan. 31. The establishment of de-escalation zones between Turkey, which backs groups opposed to Syria's Bashar al-Assad regime, Russia and Iran, who support the regime, was agreed back in May 2017.

More Details:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-putin-agree-to-speed-up-founding-of-observation-posts-in-syrias-idlib-126573>

- **Washington has two options in Syria**

Turkey's launch of Operation Olive Branch on Jan. 20, forces the United States to revise its Syria policy. Sooner or later, the Americans will have to reconsider their People's Protection Units (YPG)

policy as well. Washington made a huge mistake by relating its plans to remain in Syria after Daesh is defeated. But their biggest mistake was to turn their back on the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which represents Syrian Arabs and Sunnis, instead of empowering it. The "tactical" minds in Washington were wrong to assume that the YPG was the only group on the ground that they could cooperate with.

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/columns/duran-burhanettin/2018/01/31/washington-has-two-options-in-syria>

- **UN envoy upbeat about outcome of Syria talks in Sochi**

The UN special envoy for the Syria crisis, Staffan de Mistura, was upbeat on Tuesday about the outcome of the just concluded intra-Syria talks in Sochi, Russia, hailing an agreement on the formation of a committee to be tasked to draft a new constitution for the war-torn country. In the final declaration of the Sochi talks that were brokered by Russia, Iran and Turkey, the participants agreed on the formation of a constitutional committee composed of representatives of the Syrian government, the opposition and independents for the drafting of a constitution in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254, de Mistura told reporters at UN Headquarters in New York via video conference.

More Details:

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/31/c_136937234.htm

- **63 more terrorists 'neutralized' in Turkey's Syria op**

At least 63 more PYD/PKK and Daesh terrorists have been "neutralized" in Turkey's Operation Olive Branch in Syria, the Turkish General Staff said on Wednesday. So far, 712 terrorists have been "neutralized" since the beginning of the operation, said the military in a statement.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/63-more-terrorists-neutralized-in-turkeys-syria-op/1048276>

3. IRAN

- **Iran's Foreign Ministry Defends Joining UN Convention on Organized Crimes**

Iran's ministry of foreign affairs has rejected criticism of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) by conservatives, saying that the document does not deal with the activities of the so-called "freedom movements", a term used by the Iranian regime to describe groups such as Lebanese Hezbollah and Palestinian Hamas.

More Details:

<https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-foreign-ministry-defends-joining-untoc/29009458.html>

- **Iran: Protest Gathering of the Railways Workers Enters 10th Day**

The guild protest of the railroad workers in the Dorood region in the province of Lorestan (western Iran), which started 10 days ago, continued on Tuesday January 30. According to the state-run ILNA news agency on January 30, one of the railroad workers announced the news on the gathering of the workers and said: "We are about 150 rail workers who have been working in Dorood region under the responsibility of Travers Company with high record of working years."

More Details:

<https://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/iran-protests/24258-iran-protest-gathering-of-the-railways-workers-enters-10th-day>

- **Bennett: Israel should target Iran, not just its terror proxies**

Israel must immediately change its strategy and hold Iran responsible for attacks from Hezbollah and Syria, security cabinet minister Naftali Bennett (Bayit Yehudi) said Wednesday at the Institute for National Security Studies conference in Tel Aviv. Bennett said that for 30 years, Israel has made the mistake of targeting what he called "mosquitoes" and not "the swamp" and what he called "tentacles" and not "the octopus."

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Bennett-Israel-should-target-Iran-not-just-its-terror-proxies-540288>

- **Iran, Armenia Stress Expanding Police Cooperation**

Iranian Ambassador to Yerevan Kazzem Sajjadi and Armenia's Police Chief Vladimir Gasparian emphasized the need for broadening of relations between the two countries police forces. During the meeting, Sajjadi and Gasparian explored avenues for bolstering and reinvigorating mutual cooperation in different fields, specially in the areas related to the security and police affairs.

More Details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961111000966>

- **Trump not certainly standing with Iranian people: Iran FM**

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has rejected the US president's latest claim that he is standing alongside Iranian people, saying Donald Trump's assertion once again demonstrated his

“ignorance” of the realities on the ground in Iran and the wider region. In his first State of the Union address to Congress on Tuesday, Trump claimed his foreign policy is focused on strengthening “friendships around the world” while “restoring clarity about our adversaries.”

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/01/31/550781/Iran-Javad-Zarif-Donald-Trump>

- **Iranian diplomat meets with Syrian opposition leaders**

Head of Iranian delegation at Astana talks Hossein Jaber Ansari met with some opposition figures of the Syrian crisis in Sochi of Russia late on Tuesday. Iranian Foreign Minister’s Special Assistant in Political Affairs Hossein Jaber Ansari, who is in Russian sea-resort city, Sochi, to attend the Syrian National Dialogue Congress, met with the leaders and main figures of some of the opposition groups in war in Syria.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/131786/Iranian-diplomat-meets-with-Syrian-opposition-leaders>

- **Rouhani says Iran must learn from 1979 revolution**

President Hassan Rouhani said Wednesday that Iran must listen to protesters behind a recent wave of unrest, hinting that it risked another revolution if their demands are ignored. In a speech marking the 39th anniversary of the uprising, Rouhani also warned foreign powers that Iran's people would "forever safeguard the Islamic republic".

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87023>

- **Interior minister: Nearly 300 people still in custody over riots**

Iran’s Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said on Tuesday that fewer than 300 people remain in custody on charges of involvement in the recent riots in the country, IRNA reported. Based on the latest reports from across the country, fewer than 300 individuals are still in custody, Rahmani Fazli said, adding that the judiciary is handling their cases.

More Details:

<http://www.iran-daily.com/News/209099.html>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **UNRWA chief slams 'political dimension' of US cuts**

The head of the UN agency for Palestinians criticised Tuesday the "political dimension" of a US decision to dramatically slash funding to the organisation, warning this could lead to rising instability. Pierre Krahenbuhl said the US decision to reduce funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) this year by \$300 million "has a political dimension that I think should be avoided."

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87010>

- **UNRWA launches \$800 million emergency appeal for Syria, West Bank, Gaza**

The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the UN Agency tasked with providing assistance to Palestinian refugees, has launched an emergency appeal for Syria, the occupied West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. UNRWA released a statement on Tuesday saying that the agency's Commissioner General, Pierre Krahenbuhl, was launching an \$800 million appeal for its emergency program -- \$400 million for Syria and \$400 million for the West Bank and Gaza.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=779796>

- **Gaza sinking into humanitarian catastrophe: Expert**

The blockaded Gaza Strip is sinking into a humanitarian catastrophe, a professor of political science and author said Tuesday. "Gaza is now sinking into a real humanitarian catastrophe. It is sealed off from the outside world and rapidly and literally becoming unlivable," Norman Finkelstein, who has written several books including "The Holocaust Industry" and "Method and Madness", said during his address at Columbia University.

More Details:

<http://eurasiadiary.com/en/news/world/242300-gaza-sinking-into-humanitarian-catastrophe-expert>

- **Palestine refuses peace talks until Trump reverses US embassy's move to Jerusalem**

Discussions with the Trump administration will be stalled until the US's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital is reversed, said Palestine's top negotiator. Saeb Erekat, secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, said the decision to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem - effectively backing Israel's disputed claim to East Jerusalem - was "part of a new American era of moving from negotiation to dictation."

More Details:

<http://www.scmp.com/news/world/middle-east/article/2131279/no-talks-us-until-jerusalem-move-reversed-says-palestinian>

- **Palestinians suffocate in Ramallah-district clashes**

Many Palestinians Wednesday suffocated from tear gas during overnight clashes with Israeli forces in Deir Nitham village, northwest of Ramallah, said a local activist. Safi Tamimi, Coordinator of the Land Defense Committee, told Wafa that Israeli forces fired tear gas canisters towards a group of youth and the villagers' homes, causing many to suffer from excessive tear gas suffocation, including children inside their family homes.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=9k5CiXa96274574715a9k5CiX>

- **After Sweden, Slovenia Likely to Recognize Palestine**

Slovenia's parliament is expected to recognize the State of Palestine, as the Foreign Affairs Committee of the legislature will vote Wednesday on a draft resolution, with the backing of Foreign Minister Karl Erjavec, before it passes to the parliament for a full vote. "The Republic of Slovenia recognizes Palestine as an independent and sovereign state," the draft resolution said. However, the foreign affairs committee will likely ask the government to prepare its own proposal, which will probably be very similar.

More Details:

<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/sweden-slovenia-likely-recognize-palestine/>

- **Rocket fire from Lebanon means 'war': Israeli minister**

Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett said Wednesday any rocket fire from Lebanon will be considered a "declaration of war". "The launch of any missile from Lebanon into Israel would mean a declaration of war on Israel by the Lebanese government," Bennett told a conference at the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/rocket-fire-from-lebanon-means-war-israeli-minister/1048636>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Jordan paying economic price for its unrelenting political stands — King**

His Majesty King Abdullah has said that the challenging economic situation and pressures on Jordan have ensued from the Kingdom's political stands. He added that the country has received messages offering easing the economic pressure on Jordan in return for accepting to change its position on Jerusalem. He made the remarks during a conversation with University of Jordan students on Tuesday, excerpts of which were released by the Royal Court on its social media accounts.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-paying-economic-price-its-unrelenting-political-stands-%E2%80%94-king>

- **Army chief receives US military official**

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lt. General Mahmoud Friihat, received on Tuesday U.S. Security Coordinator, Lt. General Eric Wendt and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, the army chief discussed with the U.S official the latest developments at the regional and international levels, and coordination and cooperation on various issues of concern to the armed forces of the two countries.

More Details:

http://petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site_id=1&NewsID=338337&CatID=13

- **Queen Rania joins local families at inauguration of Al Mustanadeh Park in Al Qweismeh**

Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah visited Al Mustanadeh Park in Al Qweismeh on Tuesday, joining members of the local community to mark the official launch of the area's new public park and community center. Built by the Greater Amman Municipality under the administrative supervision of Zaha Cultural Center, Al Mustanadeh is one of several Amman parks to be launched in implementation of royal directives from His Majesty King Abdullah II.

More Details:

http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=37091#.WnG9b65l_cs

- **Ain el-Tineh Visitors: Berri Man of Valour to Apologize for Harm Caused by Protesters**

Visitors to Speaker Nabih Berri reflected Wednesday the Speaker's "audacity" to apologize to Lebanese citizens over any harm caused by AMAL supporters during the latest street protests

denouncing Bassil's remarks. "Berri has the audacity and responsibility to apologize to the Lebanese for any harm caused to any citizen," said AMAL Movement MP Ali Bazzi after Berri's weekly meeting with lawmakers.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/241584-ain-el-tineh-visitors-berri-man-of-valour-to-apologize-for-harm-caused-by-protesters>

- **Kobeissi: ministry of foreign affairs acting with partisan logic**

Amal Movement MP, Hani Kobeissi, regretted on Wednesday what he described as "partisan" rhetoric by Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Minister, Gebran Bassil. The lawmaker censured the fact that despite the renowned respect of the Lebanese diplomacy, the foreign ministry was acting this way. He also sounded the alarm on the grave consequences of such incidents harming Lebanon and its reputation.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/87781/Kobeissi-Ministry-of-Foreign-Affairs-acting-with-partisan-logic>

- **President Aoun Calls for Forgiveness after Political Feud**

The President of the republic, Michel Aoun, considers that what happened yesterday on the political and security levels, has harmed everybody and led to the degradation of the political rhetoric that is not suitable for the Lebanese, a statement issued by the presidency's press office indicated on Tuesday. "What happened on the streets was a huge mistake that was triggered by a previous mistake; therefore, from my constitutional and fatherly position, I forgive all those who have offended me and my family; I am looking forward to seeing those who traded insults forgive each other, because the nation is bigger than everybody," the statement read.

More Details:

<http://english.almanar.com.lb/436533>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Yemen separatists seize de facto capital**

Separatists in war-ravaged Yemen have seized all but one district of the government's de facto capital Aden, also laying siege to the isolated presidential palace on the city's southern outskirts on Tuesday. Global charity Save the Children said it was suspending life-saving work in Aden as its staff

were forced to hunker down amid gun battles that the Red Cross says have killed at least 36 people in the past three days.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87019>

- **At Least 21 Killed in Ongoing Yemen Clashes**

At least 21 people have been killed and scores injured in ongoing clashes between government forces and southern separatists in Yemen's coastal city of Aden. Health ministry official Jalal Baoudah said the death toll had risen to 21 and 290 injured since Sunday, Yemen's official SABA news agency reported Tuesday.

More Details:

<https://www.albawaba.com/news/least-21-killed-ongoing-yemen-clashes-1082248>

- **Saudi anti-corruption settlements reach \$107 billion**

Saudi Arabia said on Tuesday it had arranged to recover almost \$107 billion in settlements from businessmen and officials detained in the country's months-long corruption crackdown. The sum comprises assets including property, commercial entities, stocks and cash, though the investigation has not concluded.

More Details:

<https://www.thenational.ae/world/gcc/saudi-anti-corruption-settlements-reach-107-billion-1.700232>

- **UK lawyers call on UN rights council to suspend Saudi Arabia**

Two British human rights lawyers have asked for Saudi Arabia to be suspended from the UN Human Rights Council over 61 people "arbitrarily detained or disappeared" by the kingdom's authorities. Ken Macdonald and Rodney Dixon submitted their report to the council in Geneva on Wednesday, stating that the arrests of prominent clerics, human rights activists, journalists, poets and academics were "in breach of both Saudi and international law".

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uk-lawyers-ask-saudi-arabia-suspension-un-body-2113839637>

- **US ready to deter 'external threats' to Qatar**

The U.S. has signaled willingness to work closely with Qatar to “deter and confront” external threats to the territorial integrity of the Gulf country, according to Qatar’s official QNA news agency. In a statement issued at the conclusion of the U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue late Tuesday, the two sides called for an immediate solution to the Gulf crisis in a way that respects Qatar’s sovereignty.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/americas/us-ready-to-deter-external-threats-to-qatar/1048475>

- **Two sentenced to death in Bahrain's mass trial**

A Bahraini court has sentenced two Shia Muslims to death and jailed 56 others on charges of "terrorism", prosecutors in the Sunni-ruled Gulf kingdom have said. The supreme criminal court also stripped 47 of the defendants of their Bahraini citizenship at Wednesday's mass trial, accusing them of "forming a terrorist group" to carry out "murders" and "attacks" against police officers, a statement on the state news agency BNA said.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/sentenced-death-bahrain-mass-trial-180131093705798.html>

- **Bahrain court sentences 58 people on terror charges**

A court in Bahrain on Wednesday sentenced 58 people on terrorism charges, condemning two of them to death and stripping citizenship from 47, state news agency BNA reported. The ruling is the latest in a series of scores of harsh penalties in the Western-allied Gulf kingdom for defendants accused of Iranian-backed militancy but who activists say are mostly peaceful opposition members.

More Details:

<http://www.arabianbusiness.com/culture-society/388875-bahrain-court-sentences-58-people-on-terror-charges>

7. EGYPT

- **Why are Egypt’s Salafists backing Sisi?**

A campaign by Salafists to rally support for Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s re-election bid comes as no surprise to those observing relations between the ultra-orthodox group and the Egyptian regime. Egypt’s Salafists remain the most organised Islamist political force in the country following the 2013 designation of the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation. The group

backed the 2013 ouster of Muslim Brotherhood-aligned President Muhammad Morsi and supported Sisi throughout his presidency.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87025>

- **Egypt's National Elections Authority publishes initial list of presidential candidates**

Egypt's National Election Authority (NEA) published Wednesday an initial list of presidential candidates who have submitted their candidacy documents, along with the numbers of endorsements they received, in the state-owned Al-Ahram and Al-Akhbar newspapers. According to a statement published as an ad on the front pages of Al-Ahram and Al-Akhbar, the initial list of presidential candidates are Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi and Moussa Mostafa Moussa.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/1187/289118/Egypt/-Presidential-Elections--/Egypts-National-Elections-Authority-publishes-init.aspx>

- **Economic growth my top priority: Moussa Mostafa Moussa**

Presidential candidate Moussa Mostafa Moussa said, at a press conference on Monday, that economic growth will be at the forefront of his priorities. The press conference came a few hours after he submitted his nomination papers to run for the presidency 15 minutes before the scheduled deadline on Monday.

More Details:

<https://dailynewsegypt.com/2018/01/30/economic-growth-top-priority-moussa-mostafa-moussa/>

- **Egyptian opposition calls for boycott of 'absurd' poll**

A coalition of Egyptian opposition groups have called for an election boycott, calling the vote an "absurdity bordering on madness" after all serious candidates were either arrested or subjected to a campaign of intimidation. In a joint statement, eight Egyptian opposition parties and 150 pro-democracy public figures urged Egyptians to stay away from the March polls in protest, accusing the government of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of preventing "any fair competition".

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/egyptian-opposition-calls-boycott-absurd-poll-180131064805978.html>

- **Sisi briefs cabinet on dam discussions with Ethiopia, Sudan**

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi held a meeting on Tuesday with Prime Minister Sherif Ismail, Governor of the Central Bank Tarek Amer, and various cabinet members on Tuesday to provide an overview of the negotiations and discussions held at Monday's African Union (AU) summit in Ethiopia, which sought to move past the stalemate and dissolve the brewing tension between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia regarding the controversial technical issues of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/sisi-briefs-cabinet-on-dam-discussions-with-ethiopia-sudan/>

- **Eight liberal and leftist parties to boycott 2018 presidential elections**

The Civil Democratic Movement (CDM), a coalition of liberal and leftist political parties and organisations, announced in a statement on Tuesday its decision to boycott the Egyptian presidential elections in March, citing what its described as "the lack of any positive signs from the regime to guarantee a free and fair electoral process." The CDM, which was founded in December 2017, claimed that the state used forced engineering of the presidential elections to eliminate the possibilities of any serious challenges to President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, citing difficulties and obstacle faced by a number of potential candidates to run in the contest. The CDM includes the liberal Dostour, Egyptian Social Democratic, and Reform parties, as well as the Development Party, the Socialist Popular Alliance Party, the Nasserist Karama Current and the leftist under-construction Bread and Freedom Party.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptdailynews.com/detail/eight-liberal-and-leftist-parties-to-boycott--presidential-elections>

- **Conservative party supports Sisi for second term in office**

Al-Mohafezeen (The Conservative) party, headed by Parliamentarian Akmal Kortam, announced their support to Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi in the upcoming presidential election. In a statement published on Tuesday, the party said they discussed the recent challenges and dangers facing Egypt, especially those concerning the national security of the country.

More Details:

<https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/41529/Conservative-party-supports-Sisi-for-second-term-in-office>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **AU Breaks Away with Algerian Rhetoric on Sahara**

Since its triumphal return to the African Union, Morocco continues to score precious diplomatic points on the Sahara issue at the continental level. The speech given by the Chairperson of the African Union's Commission, Faki Mahamat at the opening of the 30th Summit of the pan-African organization is indicative of a U-turn in how the Sahara issue will be tackled at the continental stage.

More Details:

<http://northafricapost.com/21985-au-breaks-away-algerian-rhetoric-sahara.html>

- **IVD pledges to keep victims of violations informed of progress of their cases**

The Truth and Dignity Commission (French: IVD) received on Tuesday at the seat of the Commission representatives of participants in the protest campaign called "What about my case". President of the IVD Sihem Ben Sedrine said it was agreed to organise periodic meetings to keep them informed of the latest actions of the commission.

More Details:

<https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/9809940-ivd-pledges-to-keep>

- **"We support government reforms and will continue to work closely to ensure reforms are socially balanced"**

"We support the government's reforms and will continue to work closely with them to ensure the reforms are socially balanced," Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Christine Lagarde said after a meeting with Prime Minister Youssef Chahed Tuesday in Marrakech, on the fringes of the Conference: 'Opportunities for All: Growth, Employment and Inclusiveness in the Arab World' (January 29-30). Speaking to reporters, Lagarde said: 'we had a productive meeting. We discussed the recent events in Tunisia and the government's efforts to improve the economy.'

More Details:

<http://tdailynews.net/story-z9751640>

- **11 Industrial Investments, 24,000 Jobs to be Launched in Sous-Massa**

During a ceremony led by the King Mohammed VI on Sunday, December 29, in Agadir, eight conventions were signed into law, creating 24,000 jobs. Minister of Industry, Trade, Investment, and Digital Economy Moulay Hafid El Alamy stated that the convention were signed "in partnership with

the professional federations, the first of which is generated by the projects signed today by private investors.”

More Details:

<http://marocgazette.com/story-z2925579>

- **Libyan Navy: 121 migrants rescued off Garabulli shores**

A total of 121 illegal immigrants were rescued off the coast of Libya late Monday, including women and children. The rescue operation was conducted offshore of Garabulli, 60 kilometers east of the Libyan capital Tripoli, and the immigrants were brought to the Anti-Illegal Migration Authority.

More Details:

<http://www.libyanexpress.com/libyan-navy-121-migrants-rescued-off-garabulli-shores/>

- **HoR member leaves Libyans outraged by insulting February revolution as "disaster"**

The member of the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) Jaballah Al-Shibani, has been the talk of the town in Libya over the last 24 hours after he described the Libyan February revolution of 2011 as "a disaster." The bold description of Libya's revolution that killed the long-time dictator Moamar Gaddafi was uttered by Al-Shibani – elected to represent Tawergha – during Monday's HoR meeting, where he said that he thinks of the revolution as "incidents" and when confronted by a colleague MP, he said "it is a disaster."

More Details:

<https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/hor-member-leaves-libyans-outraged-insulting-february-revolution-disaster>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **ATC summons Imran Khan on Feb 15, 26**

An Anti-Terrorism Court of Islamabad has summoned Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chief Imran Khan on February 15 and 26 in SSP Asmatullah Junejo torture case and case pertaining to attack on PTV and the parliament respectively during sit-in in 2014. The summons were issued by ATC Judge, Shahrukh Arjmand here Wednesday.

More Details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/275358-atc-summons-imran-khan-on-feb-15-26>

- **Lifelong disqualification is a violation of basic human rights, lawyer tells SC**

The Supreme Court on Wednesday allowed a lawyer representing ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif a week's time to prepare his arguments for a case concerning the interpretation of Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution — the same article under which Sharif was disqualified last year.

More Details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1386409/lifelong-disqualification-is-a-violation-of-basic-human-rights-lawyer-tells-sc>

- **Shahzeb murder case: CJP questions if case pertains to terrorism**

The Supreme Court on Wednesday held a hearing on the Shahzeb Khan murder case, which is being re-examined after a civil society petition challenged a Sindh High Court decision ordering a retrial of the case. The SHC had set aside the punishments awarded to accused earlier by an anti-terrorism court and had ordered a retrial of the case in a sessions court. The defence had argued that the accused was a juvenile at the time of the crime.

More Details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/179617-sc-hears-shahzeb-khan-murder-case>

- **Sayyad appointed as new head of election commission**

Gulajan Abdul Bade Sayyad has been appointed as new head of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) based on the administrative board's election, an official said on Wednesday. IEC member Syed Hafeez Hashimi told Pajhwok Afghan News elections for the administrative board of IEC were conducted before noon. Rafiullah Baidar and Sayyad were in the run for IEC chairman.

More Details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/01/31/sayyad-appointed-new-head-election-commission>

- **First round of competitive exams for MUDH vacancies organized in Kabul**

The first round of the competitive exams for the contract-based jobs for the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing was held in Kabul. The Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH) in a statement said the first round of the examinations was organized as part of a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Urban Development and Housing Minister Syed Sadat Mansoor Naderi and the Head of the Administrative Reforms and Civil Services Independent Commission Nader Naderi.

More Details:

<https://www.khaama.com/first-round-of-competitive-exams-for-mudh-vacancies-organized-in-kabul-04394>

- **Various Statistics To Cause Fair Service Supply Face Problem, VP Danesh**

Vice-President Mohammad Sarwar Danesh, chaired the meeting of National Statistics Committee and called for coordination between central administrations and the National Statistics Committee (NSC), a statement from his office said Monday.

More Details:

<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/politics/item/31853-various-statistics-to-cause-fair-service-supply-face-problem-vp-danesh.html>

- **Modi Calls Ghani, Offers Medical Help for Victims**

In a phone call to Ghani, the Indian PM said his country stands by the people of Afghanistan and that it was ready to help treat victims. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi phoned President Ashraf Ghani on Wednesday to share his condolences with the Afghan government in the wake of recent attacks in Kabul and said his country was ready to help with the treatment of victims.

More Details:

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/modi%C2%A0calls%C2%A0ghani%C2%A0offers-medical-help-victims>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkish soldiers, Free Syrian Army liberate village**

Turkish and Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces on Wednesday liberated a Syrian village from PYD/PKK terrorists as part of the ongoing Operation Olive Branch. According to an Anadolu Agency correspondent at the scene, the village of Bak Ubasi in Syria's northwestern Afrin region has been liberated.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkish-soldiers-free-syrian-army-liberate-village/1048479>

- **Hariri Meets Turkish Counterpart in Ankara**

Prime Minister Saad Hariri met with his Turkish counterpart Benali Yildirim in Turkey where talks focused on regional and bilateral issues and ways to activate economic and trade ties between the two countries, Hariri's media office said in a statement on Wednesday. The two men held a joint

press conference afterward where Hariri said: "Lebanon wants a guaranteed safe return of Syrian refugees to their country." The PM also extended gratitude to the Turkish state over the extradition of suspect involved in the January bombing in the city of Sidon.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/241565-hariri-meets-turkish-counterpart-in-ankara>

- **Anti-terror operation in Syria's Afrin has no occupation motive, PM Yıldırım says**

Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım underlined Wednesday that Turkey's ongoing Operation Olive Branch in northwestern Syria's Afrin region has no occupation motive, while commenting on French President Emmanuel Macron's previous statements regarding the counter-terror operation. "It would be enough to look at the area of 2,000 square kilometers (772 square miles) cleared of terrorists along the Manbij, Jarablus and Azez line during Operation Euphrates Shield to understand what we want to do in Afrin," Yıldırım said, adding that any other assessment of the situation was "far away from the truth."

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/01/31/anti-terror-operation-in-syrias-afrin-has-no-occupation-motive-pm-yildirim-says>

- **PYD/PKK terror attack kills teenage girl in Turkey**

A teenage girl was killed and another civilian injured near Turkey's border on Wednesday by attacks from Syrian-based PYD/PKK terrorists. Fatma Avlar, 17, died in hospital from wounds sustained in a cross-border rocket attack in Gultepe, Reyhanli in the border province of Hatay.

More Details:

<http://www.aneews.com.tr/turkey/2018/01/31/pydpkk-terror-attack-kills-teenage-girl-in-turkey>

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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ORTADOĐU STRATEJİK ARAŐTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES
مرکز الشرق الأوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية

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