



MIDDLE EAST WEEKLY

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Middle East in a Week

Regarding international relations and world politics, the Middle East may be the most controversial region in the current times. On the one hand it sits on most of the world's oil reserves, while on the other hand, it inhibits the followers of the most controversial religion in the world, Islam. These matters combined have created a region filled with drastic events. Every day, there are new wars erupting in the region and every day, there are new ways through which the west and the far east try to increase their influence in the region. This region inhibits 411 million people out of which 28 % are under the age of 25 years old. This newsletter tries to give weekly updates on the important issues in the Middle East and combining them with some analysis, hopes to have a role in changing the region's situation to the better.

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A NEW PLAYER IN THE REGION'S NUCLEAR GAME¹

For the past couple of years, Iran's pursuit of nuclear energy has created a global volatility. In such a frenzy, Turkey has decided to enter the game. Turkish and Russian officials laid the foundation for the third reactor of Turkey's first nuclear power plant Akkuyu in the southern coastal city of Mersin on Wednesday. The plant's first reactor unit is expected to be operational in 2023, the centenary of the Turkish Republic, and the remaining units in 2026. Akkuyu is the only nuclear power facility under construction in Turkey but a second project in the Black Sea province of Sinop is expected to kick off this year, reports suggest, if Ankara can find a new partner after Japan's Mitsubishi pulled out last year. Turkey is not the only country seeking nuclear energy in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and Jordan are still considering establishing nuclear power plants. Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are in on it, while Israel is long believed to have a stockpile of nuclear weapons and Iran has the capacity to develop them.



YOUTH EDUCATION CHALLENGES²

Plus the challenges of the daily life, Moroccans are trying their best to overcome the challenge of educating the youth in the country's hinterland. Against the backdrop of one of Morocco's most remote areas, hope for the next generation of rural children comes in the shape of three dedicated teachers – dubbed the “women in the wind”. Teachers around the world face significant challenges every day, from having to discipline students to dealing with a lack of resources. But the three Moroccan women in this documentary – Maryame, Salma and Bouchra – also have to contend with isolation, physical hardship, sexual harassment and separation from family. They are all primary school teachers who have been posted to cut-off rural villages to address the country's educational needs. Far away from the towns and cities where they grew up, life is lonely as they miss loved ones and have few home comforts. Despite this, the women try to remain positive. The Moroccan government has introduced reforms but school dropout rates remain high, particularly among girls in these isolated areas.



JEWS SELLING MUSLIMS' ARTIFACTS³

The Israel's premier museum for Islamic art has recently tried to sell some rare Islamic artifacts to private collectors under the table. It, however, scrapped the planned auction of many rare and precious items after a public outcry over the attempted sale, which had been expected to fetch millions of dollars from wealthy private collectors. In a settlement struck on Wednesday, the Sotheby's auction house agreed to return 268 items from London back to the LA Mayer Museum for Islamic Art in Jerusalem. The agreement ends a saga that drew broad condemnation and threatened to gut one of Israel's prized public art collections. Art experts criticized the attempted sale to private collectors saying it was hidden from the public and violated the museum's founding mission to edify the Israeli public about the Islamic world through art. The items from the museum's collection, including several centerpiece objects and prized antique watches, were slated for auction at Sotheby's in October.



ISRAEL ARRESTING THE GRAND MUFTI⁵

Just recently, Israeli forces have arrested Sheikh Ikrima Sabri from his house. He used to be the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. Israeli police and intelligence teams surrounded the house on Wednesday and asked Sheikh Sabri, who is also a preacher at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, to accompany them, a relative told Anadolu news agency, asking not to be named for security reasons. "The Israelis did not give any reason for his arrest," he said. Israeli authorities have arrested the preacher multiple times in the past. In January, he was banned from entering the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound for several months. On Wednesday, dozens of Israeli settlers escorted by police officers forced their way into the compound, the Islamic Endowments Authority said. Since 2003, Israel has allowed settlers into the flashpoint compound almost on a daily basis with the exception of Fridays and Saturdays. Israel occupied East Jerusalem, where Al-Aqsa is located, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It annexed the entire city in 1980 in a move never recognized by the international community.



SYRIA; A LAND OF WAR⁴

Syria has been suffering the costs of civil war for the past decade. According to the latest reports, the youth of the country are the ones who pay the heaviest price. A new survey by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) of 1,400 Syrian nationals living in Syria or in exile in Lebanon and Germany, highlighted on Wednesday the costs for those aged 18 to 25 of a war that has killed hundreds of thousands, displaced millions more and destroyed schools and hospitals. “One of the shocking results of this survey is that we realised that 50 percent of Syrians had friends or a family member who was killed ... One out of six Syrians had one of their parents either killed or wounded,” Fabrizio Carboni, the ICRC’s regional director for the Middle East, told Reuters news agency. The report coincides with the 10th anniversary of the start of protests against President Bashar al-Assad’s rule that turned into a full-scale civil war. Assad’s military has now regained control of most of the country with the help of Russia and Iran. Nearly half of young Syrians lost their income because of the conflict and almost eight in 10 reported struggling to afford food and other necessities, the report showed.



Editor:

Sahand EP Faez

*Centre for Studies on South
Asia and the Middle East,*
National Chung Hsing
University, Taichung, Taiwan

Email: submissions.cssame@gmail.com

Tel: +886-4-22840310

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