



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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IRAN SEEKING PEACE IN YEMEN¹

Iran's diplomatic representative met Houthi group spokesman in Oman to reach a peaceful resolution for the decade long war in Yemen. Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has reiterated his country's support for a ceasefire in Yemen and a return to talks during a visit to Oman where he met a spokesman for the Houthi rebel group. Zarif's comments on Wednesday came a day after the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, which has been militarily supporting Yemen's internationally recognized government against the Houthis, called on the rebels to cease hostilities and return to the negotiating table. Mohamed bin Salman also struck a conciliatory tone with regional rival Iran, whom the kingdom has accused of supporting the Houthis in the years-long country, saying his country aspired to improve relations with Tehran. Yemen's catastrophic conflict has flared anew in the past two months with a Houthi campaign to seize Marib, the government's last stronghold in the north.



IRANIAN OFFICIAL REACTION TO THE CURRENT LEAK²

A newly leaked tape comprising of Iranian foreign minister regarding a variety of issues over the past two administrations has stirred up some tension. Iran's President Hassan Rouhani has warned against division sown by the country's "enemies" after leaked audio revealed his top diplomat discussing internal power struggles, stirring up a political storm in the country. The president said during a televised cabinet meeting on Wednesday that the classified tape, part of an oral history project aimed at documenting his administration's work, was "stolen" by elements that the intelligence ministry has been tasked with finding. "It was leaked exactly when Vienna is at the height of its success," Rouhani said in reference to ongoing talks in the Austrian capital to restore the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers that the United States abandoned in 2018. "They want to create division inside the country. How can we succeed? How can we lift the sanctions? With unity and integrity."



IRAN-US TENSIONS RISING UP IN THE GULF³

Adding to all the tensions in the Middle East, the US navy fired at the Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in the Gulf. In a statement on Tuesday, the US Fifth Fleet said three IRGC vessels came close to a US Navy patrol ship and a US Coast Guard patrol boat on Monday evening. "The U.S. crews issued multiple warnings via bridge-to-bridge radio and loud-hailer devices, but the IRGCN vessels continued their close range maneuvers," the statement reads. It is the second encounter between US and Iranian naval forces in Gulf waters this month, after about a year without any such incidents. Earlier this week, the US Navy released footage dated April 2 showing a ship commanded by the IRGC cut in front of the USCGC Monomoy, causing the US Coast Guard vessel to come to an abrupt stop with its engine smoking. Iran did not immediately acknowledge that encounter, which resulted in no injuries or damage.



ISREAL MUST BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE⁵

According to the Human Rights Watch, the Israel-Palestine decades long conflict should be solve on a rights-based approach instead of a political-based one. Israel is committing "crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution" against Palestinians and the international community must reevaluate diplomatic relations with the state, a leading human rights group said in a report on Tuesday. The 213-page report from Human Rights Watch (HRW) details how Israel has sought to maintain Jewish-Israeli hegemony over the Palestinian people from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. "Those who strive for Israeli-Palestinian peace, whether a one or two-state solution or a confederation, should in the meantime recognize this reality for what it is and bring to bear the sorts of human rights tools needed to end it." Kenneth Roth, executive director of HRW, said. Israel dismissed the organization's report, calling it "propaganda". "Human Rights Watch is known to have a long-standing anti-Israel agenda, actively seeking for years to promote boycotts against Israel," the foreign ministry said in a statement.



TURKEY ACCUSING US OF DOUBLE STANDARDS⁴

Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan lashed at the latest statement by POTUS which recognized the Armenian Genocide. Biden's historic declaration on Saturday infuriated the US's NATO ally Turkey, which has said the announcement had opened a "deep wound" in relations that have already been strained over a host of issues. In a televised address on Monday, Erdogan said "the wrong step" would hinder ties and said Turkey still sought to establish "good neighbourly" ties with Armenia. "The US president has made comments that are groundless and unfair," Erdogan said. "We believe that these comments were included in the declaration following pressure from radical Armenian groups and anti-Turkish circles. But this situation does not reduce the destructive impact of these comments." The Armenians – supported by historians and scholars – say 1.5 million of their people died in a "genocide" committed under the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Ankara accepts that both Armenians and Turks died in huge numbers as Ottoman forces fought tsarist Russia.



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