



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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PALESTANIANS HAVE THE RIGHT¹

Contrary to global opinion, Israeli forces are pushing Palestinian families who reside in occupied East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood out of their homes. An act which the UN representative consider against the law. Speaking from Sheikh Jarrah on Wednesday, UNRWA commissioner-general Philippe Lazzarini said: "This eviction violates international law and Israel's obligation as an occupying power. For UNRWA, these Palestinian refugees are experiencing a second displacement in living memory." He said as head of the UN agency for Palestine refugees it is his job "to protect and assist Palestinian refugees". Sheikh Jarrah has been the site of continuing demonstrations as dozens of Palestinians living there face forced expulsion in a case filed against them by Jewish settler organizations. Mass protests against their forced dispossession in May quickly spread across historic Palestine and caught the attention of the international media.



ISRAELI VIOLENCE...TILL WHEN?²

In response to Palestinian activism's success in Jerusalem, the Israeli officials decided to show hostility by force. In the protest action that began in Jerusalem Palestinians were one in rejecting the forced evictions and ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem, the infringements on religious rights of Christian and Muslim Palestinians and the brutal bombardment of Gaza. On May 18, Palestinians across historic Palestine closed their businesses and lifted the Palestinian flag, joining an historic general strike against Israeli colonialism. Palestinians were not deterred by the barbaric bombing of civilians in Gaza, nor by the Israeli lynch mobs which attacked Palestinian citizens of Israel, nor by Israel's increasingly violent policies targeting Palestinians in the occupied territories. This unity has terrified the Israeli state. After the ceasefire announced between Israel and the Palestinian resistance factions in Gaza, it launched a revenge campaign, targeting Palestinian citizens of Israel. The campaign, dubbed "law and order", aimed to intimidate and terrorize into silence and submission the Palestinians who dared to take to the streets in a show of national solidarity.



SYRIAN PROTESTS IN DENMARK³

In response to Denmark's decision on deporting Syrian refugees back to Damascus, several Syrians including children, gathered in front of the parliament in protest. Hundreds of Syrian refugees have extended their sit-in demonstration in front of the Danish parliament into a third week, protesting measures aimed at returning them to the war-ravaged nation. In April, Denmark – which does not formally recognize the government of Bashar al-Assad – became Europe's first country to cancel the residency permits of Syrians who hail from the wider Damascus region, which was declared "safe" by Danish authorities. The decision was based on a government report regarding the area around the Syrian capital, Damascus. But 11 of the report's 12 contributors have since withdrawn their assessment and have criticized the government's move. Since May 18, the daily sit-in protest has begun at 10am and ended around 10pm, in the heart of Copenhagen.



ARAMCO SELLING BONDS⁵

The big Saudi Arabian Oil Conglomerate, ARAMCO, is in need of funds for its \$75 Billion dividends, for which it may sell \$5 Billion worth of bonds. The world's biggest energy company has picked around 15 banks to manage a sale of Islamic debt, or sukuk, that could happen this month, according to people with knowledge of the matter. The state-controlled firm may seek to raise around \$5 billion, one of the people said. Aramco is considering a sale of both dollar and local-currency sukuk, the people said. No decision has been made and the firm may put off the deal if market conditions deteriorate. Aramco declined to comment. Several other state energy companies in the Persian Gulf are also mulling Eurobond sales. Qatar Petroleum may issue as much as \$10 billion in the coming weeks, while Energy Development Oman is seeking to raise around \$3 billion. Saudi Aramco's profit soared in the first quarter amid a recovery in global oil and gas markets, though free cash flow remained too low to fully cover its dividend for the period of \$18.75 billion. Almost all the firm's payouts go to the Saudi government, which is trying to narrow a budget deficit that widened to 12% of gross domestic product last year.



SUDAN – RUSSIA NEGOTIATIONS⁴

According to the latest statement of General Mohammad Othman al-Hussein, the chief of staff of Sudanese armed forces, there is a deal on the table between Sudan and Russia. “This deal was signed under the former National Salvation Government,” armed forces Chief of Staff General Mohamed Othman al-Hussein said in an interview broadcast late on Tuesday. He told Sudan’s Blue Nile TV “talks to review the deal to serve Sudan’s interests” had been held with a visiting Russian delegation last week. News about the deal surfaced late last year on the official portal of the Russian government. The deal allows Russia to set up a naval base with up to 300 Russian soldiers, and also to simultaneously keep up to four navy ships, including nuclear-powered ones, in Port Sudan on the Red Sea. In exchange, Russia is to provide Sudan with weapons and military equipment. The agreement is to last for 25 years, with automatic extensions for 10-year periods if neither side objects to it. “We are negotiating a possible review to this deal, to ensure that our interests and our profits are taken into account,” al-Hussein said.



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