



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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NEW PLAYERS IN PALESTINE¹

A surprising byproduct of Israel's current wave of arrests is the birth of a new generation of Palestinian activists. The detentions of Palestinian activists and journalists this time around are re-energizing a long-simmering peaceful resistance and launching a new generation of Palestinian icons fighting to protect their homes, as well as advocating self-determination. In a statement, Israeli police said it launched "operation law and order" to bring rioters to justice and to "maintain public peace". It added so far, "2,142 detainees have been registered". Palestinians, however, said Israeli police arrested those who had been peacefully protesting with the unstated but obvious aim to crush the momentum of their movement, which has picked up pace over the last month. The Israeli police might have proved the Palestinians right as they arrested Muna al-Kurd. The 23-year-old activist had been highlighting an Israeli court's order that her family, and several others, be forcibly evicted from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah – a neighborhood in the heart of East Jerusalem. Her twin brother, Mohammed al-Kurd, was also summoned and questioned by police.

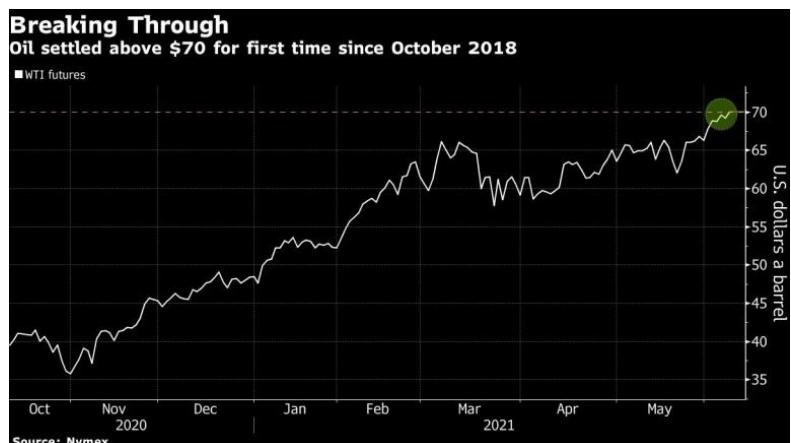


IRAN-ALIGNED IRAQI COMMANDER RELEASED²

According to official reports, Qasim Mahmoud Muslih (an Iran-aligned armed group's commander) was released 8am on Wednesday without prosecution. His supporters greeted him with hugs and kisses on Baghdad's central Jadriya Bridge, taking photos and videos with him to celebrate. Muslih, from the southern holy city of Karbala, was arrested on May 26. The military had said the charges were terrorism-related but did not give details. He is the head of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in Anbar province. Security officials told Reuters news agency at the time that the arrest was linked to attacks on US forces stationed in Iraq. Some media and analysts said it was because of Muslih's alleged involvement in the killing of peaceful pro-democracy activists. His release without prosecution is a blow to those efforts and one of a number of unsuccessful attempts to crack down on armed groups.

OIL PRICES KEEP GETTING HIGHER³

As the news spread around Iran not returning to the global oil market, while the increase in demand from several states, the price of oil keeps increasing. Global benchmark Brent crude futures were up 44 cents, or 0.6 percent, at \$72.66 a barrel at 13:38 GMT, having earlier hit \$72.83, the highest since May 2019. United States benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were 30 cents higher, or 0.4 percent, at \$70.35 a barrel. Earlier, they touched \$70.62, the highest since October 2018. “The supercharged multi-year oil prices are a reflection of the improved oil demand sentiment, and along with it, the expectation that crude and products inventories will significantly be reduced in the second half of 2021 as a post-pandemic new normal of oil consumption sets in,” Rystad Energy’s Oil Markets Analyst Louise Dickson said in a Wednesday note. On Tuesday, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) forecast fuel consumption growth this year in the US, the world’s biggest oil user, would be 1.49 million barrels per day (bpd), up from a previous forecast of 1.39 million bpd.



TALK AND TALK AND TALK⁵

Negotiations between Iran and the world powers with the hope of reviving the JCPOA will resume shortly. Biden administration officials had hoped to conclude an agreement with Iran before the June 18 Iranian presidential election, which could complicate the talks, said Sherman. “I know that the negotiation will start again over this coming weekend,” Sherman said during a virtual event organized by the German Marshall Fund. “I think there’s been a lot of progress made, but out of my own experience until the last detail is nailed down, and I mean nailed down, we will not know if we have an agreement,” said Sherman, who was part of the Obama administration team that negotiated the original agreement with Iran. A host of barriers to the revival of Iran’s nuclear deal remain firmly in place ahead of talks, suggesting a return to compliance with the 2015 accord is still a way off, four diplomats, two Iranian officials and two analysts told the Reuters news agency.

SOUVENIRS OF WAR⁴

The bomb squad in Gaza has been quite busy recently with more than 1,200 missions to neutralize the souvenirs of war. On May 19, shortly after midnight, a reconnaissance missile tore through the roof of the Muhareb family home in Rafah in the south of the besieged Gaza Strip. Two minutes later, an Israeli warplane dropped another missile, which crashed through two storeys of the house, but somehow did not explode. "My brother and his family, who live on the second floor, were all injured from the reconnaissance missile," Waseem Muhareb told Al Jazeera. "My four-month-old baby was in a coma for two days, and my eight-year-old niece Layan was in the intensive care unit for 10 days with burns all over her body." The extended Muhareb family home, inhabited by 36 adults and children, was ruined. The second missile had crashed through one of the children's bedrooms before landing on the first floor. The squad, which operates under the interior ministry, has carried out 1,200 missions to neutralise, defuse and destroy unexploded warheads and dangerous munitions in residential areas of Gaza since May 10, when Israel began an 11-day bombardment of the coastal enclave.



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