

# ARAB DISPATCH

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## **North Africa**

**#Libya:** PM al-Sarraj and General Haftar confirm their willingness to secure Libya elections



Last Sunday, Libyan National Army (LNA) commander Haftar informed the UN envoy to Libya Ghassan Salamé that his forces were ready to secure upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in the country. Meanwhile, the PM of the Government of National Accord (GNA) Al-Sarraj has discussed Libya's political deadlock with Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, highlighting the urgency for a popular vote by the end of the year. These declarations follow the 28th February UN-

backed meeting in the UAE, where the head of Libya’s internationally recognised government and the strong man of Cyrenaica agreed “on the need to end the transitional phase through general elections and on ways to preserve the stability of Libya and unify its institutions” – tweeted the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

To know more about this topic:

- *Jeune Afrique*, “Libye: les enjeux derrière l’accord d’Abou Dhabi entre Fayez al-Sarraj et Khalifa Haftar”, 02/28/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/2NYPPul>
- *Asbarq Al-Ansat*, “Haftar Ready to Secure Libya Elections as Sarraj Visits Qatar”, 03/11/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/2u2rE4W>
- *The Libya Observer*, “Presidential Council head in Qatar to discuss Libya’s political deadlock”, 03/10/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/2CcFC8Q>

## Levant

[#Lebanon](#): Hezbollah calls for donations to combat Western sanctions



On the 9th of March, the Lebanese movement Hezbollah has called for donations from its popular base, in order to counter the financial pressure resulting from Western sanctions. The move follows the UK’s decision on the 25th of February to ban Hezbollah’s political wing as a terrorist group. On that occasion, the British Home Secretary Sajid Javid affirmed the organisation continued to amass weapons in contravention of UN Security Council resolutions, while its support for Bashar al-Assad had

prolonged “the conflict and the regime’s brutal and violent repression of the Syrian people”. By adopting this stance, the UK government aligned its position with the United States that, unlike the EU, has proscribed the Iran-backed group and has recently reinforced the sanctions against it, with its latest raft of measures in November vis-à-vis Hezbollah Iraq networks.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Jazeera*, “Lebanon’s Hezbollah appeals for donations to combat sanctions”, 03/09/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/2F4LKSo>
- *La Croix*, “Comment le Hezbollah résiste aux interdictions”, 03/12/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/2UyCMC9>

## Gulf

[#SaudiArabia](#): Saudi Arabia to further reduce crude oil exports in April, with the U.S. threatening to topple the country as the world’s top petroleum exporter



On the 11th of March, the Saudi Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources Khalid A. Al-Falih has announced that Riyadh plans to lower its crude oil exports down to less than 7 million barrels per day (bpd) in April, while extending output cut well below 10 million bpd, i.e. the amount agreed with OPEC and its partners, including Russia (OPEC+ alliance). As a consequence, state-owned Aramco’s oil allocations for April are 635.000 bpd below customers’ nominations. This second

consecutive month of deep production cuts shows the Kingdom's willingness to support prices, drain a supply glut, and rebalance the market. Meanwhile, the United States are expected to surpass Saudi Arabia later this year in petroleum exports and natural gas liquids, thus becoming the world's leading exporter of oil and liquids. This has never happened since Riyadh began selling oil overseas in the 1950s.

To know more about this topic:

- *Bloomberg*, "Saudi Arabia to Extend Deep Oil Output Cuts Into April", 03/11/19, available at: <https://bloom.bg/2C9EdQb>
- *Daily Mail*, "America is set to overtake Saudi Arabia and become the world's largest exporter of oil for the first time in 60 years", 03/10/19, available at: <https://dailym.ai/2TFtcjF>

## #ArabInsight

**#Algeria:** After three weeks of mass demonstrations against Bouteflika re-election, the ailing President agrees to step down. A look at the protests through the lens of Algerian rap.



Link to YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/IWgo8xUYUn4>

Since the 16th of February, massive demonstrations have taken place in Algeria against President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term in office. Protesters demanded the 82-year-old leader – who has been in power for two decades – to withdraw from the April 18th election. Thousands of citizens filled multiple streets in the capital and other towns across the North African country in what is

considered one of the largest displays of public discontent since the 1954-1962 war of independence from France. On the 11th of March, after three consecutive weeks of protests, Bouteflika made a surprise announcement through a letter addressed to the Algerian people: he will drop his bid for another term and postpone elections to allow for consultation on reforms “for a new generation”.

In the past few days, it was not uncommon to hear the refrain of the song “Algeria” through the country’s streets. This piece of rap, accompanied by an intense video, is representative of young Algerians’ frustration with the socio-political situation in their homeland. On the one hand, it expresses their intimate ties to their country, substantiated by the recurring reference to *Al-watan* (nation, motherland), e.g. “*Nhebak, ya watany*” (“I love you, my Nation”). On the other hand, the author describes a “country divided into pieces”, where citizens – especially the youngest generations – “must wake up”, let their voices be heard, and fight for their rights. The song establishes a comparison between the pre- and post-Civil War (1991-2002) context, noting that – although Algeria is no longer in a state of conflict – its current situation is not brighter. In particular, three main issues are raised in the lyrics, i.e. social injustice, political corruption, and the emigration resulting from a lack of future prospects. These concerns are vividly exemplified in the music video, which combines images of a discredited political elite with visual testimonies of everyday life hardships linked to unemployment and civil rights abuses.

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*\*As a general disclaimer, the article does not necessarily reflect the view of the NATO Defense College Foundation\**