

ARAB DISPATCH

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North Africa

[#Algeria](#) – Mass protests against Algeria's rulers resume as the military says elections are the best way out of crisis



On the 17th of May, hundreds of Algerians poured onto the streets for the 13th consecutive Friday calling for the resignation of the *interim* President Abdelkader Bensalah and PM Noureddine Bedoui, appointed by Abdelaziz Bouteflika days before he stepped down. Protesters rejected the “elections of shame”, i.e. the presidential elections scheduled for the 4th of July. Demonstrators demanded to postpone the forthcoming poll, arguing that effective transitional bodies need to be set up to review the constitution and allow for free and fair elections to take place. On Monday, Algeria’s Army Chief of Staff, Ahmed Gaid Salah, rejected those claims, describing them as “unobjective and unreasonable” and

criticising the attempts to “deprive state institutions of their cadres and denigrate them”. He insisted that the July poll must go ahead and any change to the constitution would be up to a future president.

To know more about this topic:

- *Reuters*, “Algeria election may be postponed, protests continue”, 05/17/19, available at: <https://reut.rs/2waBCT1>.
- *Le Point*, “Algérie : la présidentielle du 4 juillet compromise, quelles options pour le régime?”, 05/19/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2YF8dwc>.
- *Asbarq Al-Ansat*, “[Algeria Army Chief Says Elections Key to Ending Crisis](#)”, 05/20/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2X1VZxy>.

Levant

[#DealOfTheCentury](#) – “This is not a peace plan”: Palestinians reject invitation to US-led conference in Bahrain



On Sunday, the White House announced that Bahrain will host a conference on the 25th-26th June during which the first part of the long-awaited US-sponsored Israel-Palestine peace proposal – the so-called “Deal of the Century” – will be unveiled. According to the official statement, the gathering in the capital Manama will give government, civil, and business leaders a chance to rally support for large-scale investment projects that could become possible with a peace settlement. Palestinian PM

Mohammad Shtayyeh rejected the initiative, arguing that the Palestinian Authority (PA) cabinet was not consulted about the content nor the timing of the economic workshop. Shtayyeh further emphasised that the conference will not address the core political issues of the conflict, i.e. borders, the status of Jerusalem, and the fate of Palestinian refugees. Over the past months, PA officials have repeatedly expressed concerns about Trump administration's alleged attempts to gain support from other Arab countries and pressure them into accepting the US peace package.

To know more about this topic:

- *The Times of Israel*, "Palestinians reject US economic peace summit in Bahrain, say they won't attend", 05/20/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/30wQhWq>.
- *Al Bawaba*, "Palestinians Reject Invitation to 'Deal of the Century' Summit in Bahrain", 05/21/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2HsqZkB>.
- *Al Jazeera*, "This is not a peace plan!: Palestinians shun Bahrain conference", 05/21/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2EmmXbU>.

Gulf

[#SaudiArabia](#) – Riyadh threatens “force if necessary” against Iran and calls for an Arab meeting on current escalation in the region



On the 18th of May, Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Adel al-Jubeir affirmed that the kingdom wants to avert war in the region but stands ready to respond with “all strength and determination” to eventual offensives, adding that the ball is now in Iran's court. The declaration came soon after the mysterious

sabotage of four vessels – including two Saudi oil tankers – off the coast of the UAE and the drone attacks on two oil pumping stations in Saudi Arabia, claimed by the Teheran-backed Yemeni Houthi militias. On the same day, King Salman called for an emergency summit of Gulf leaders and Arab states to be held in Mecca on the 30th of May, aimed to discuss recent “aggressions and their consequences” in the region. Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif has dismissed the possibility of war erupting, stressing that Tehran does not want conflict and no country has the “illusion it can confront Iran”.

To know more about this topic

- *Gulf News*, “Saudi Arabia seeks to avert war in the region: Saudi minister Adel Al Jubeir”, 05/19/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2VDNAib>.
- *Forbes*, “Saudi Arabia Threatens 'Force If Necessary' Against 'Criminal Iranian Regime'”, 05/19/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2EmSr1c>.
- *France24*, “Saudi Arabia calls urgent summit with Gulf and Arab League leaders”, 05/19/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2LYxOPu>.

#ArabInsight

#YemeniWar – Young voices from a broken Yemen: poetry as resistance and recovery



Link to the video: <https://vimeo.com/331660410>

Sung and recited poetry plays a crucial role in Yemeni culture, serving as a social glue in special occasions and in everyday life situations, such as dispute mediation between tribes. As the Yemeni civil war enters its fourth year, the millennia-old tradition is still thriving. Well-known poets and emerging young creatives are exploring the ways art can unite people on different sides of the conflict's many fault lines, process collective trauma, as well as shed light on the human aspects of daily life that are missing from the international headlines. “[In the Land of Shattered Windows](#)” is a recent project

involving nine young poets from different parts of the country writing in the tradition of *balah*, i.e. long poems composed and performed competitively or as part of a dialogue. Through the exchange of audio recordings of original poems via WhatsApp, they communicate alternative narratives of the war to one another and share their desire to be heard by the older generations, both at the national and international levels. The writers deal with specific themes ('windows'), and each 'window' represents one of the issues characterising the Yemeni context. Among the topics are "The young Yemeni – messages to parents, elders, and leaders"; "The struggle of the Yemeni women in times of war"; "The Yemenis opposed to the intervention of Saudi Arabia".

Mukalla [...] / The belief she is the most important gift of God / Even if the cities around her started to fall down [...] / But April came truly this time / With all she would not stand or wish. / It came with fear, / The fear that brought with it the rest of the signs: / The departure of our words, voices, freedom, / Our songs, colours and life. / The arrival of darkness and despair, / Exhaustion and escape, / Burglary and raids, / And death in its all forms. In her composition titled "Over a bridge of fears", the 20-year-old writer Aisha al-Jaedy illustrates the destructivity of war. Through a prosopopoeia, she humanises her city of origin, al-Mukalla, that has been witnessing since April 2015 the fighting between the Iran-backed Houthi rebels and the Saudi-led coalition aligned with the internationally recognised President Hadi. Amid what has been described as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, citizens found themselves caught in a swirl of [...] *identities, facts, people, / And an endless cycle of anticipation*". In this situation, "You must be brave to say you are scared, / And scared enough to look brave", wrote Aisha, referring to those who were forced to go to the front. "Why do they say you are a martyr? / You were just a sacrifice for the feast, argues Reem Al-Shamiry in her lyric "I miss the one I lost", where she represents the voices of Yemeni women. The theme of the 'forgotten war' is recurrent in the verses of the young poets: *This is the war, / Which they removed us from its records, / From the international reports, / The government's database, / The speeches of preachers, / And the prayers of common people*", claimed Aisha al-Jaedy.

But poetry is also conceived as a form of resistance, as a way to express the resilience of the Yemeni society and convey a message of hope. *Look at me, oh my homeland! / I feel you silently, / I carve you in the features of my face, / I draw your streets in the lines of my palm / I pour the water of your rain into my veins / I breathe your blood-soaked mud as it was a perfume / I wear your map as a necklace on my neck [...] / Hold my hand, oh homeland! / Find us a safe shelter! [...] / Hold my hand, and find us a solution! [...] / We will grow up again, / We will plant again, / We will build again.*

Elena Tosti di Stefano

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