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North Africa

#Algeria – The Constitutional Council cancels presidential election



Last Sunday, Algeria's Constitutional Council cancelled the presidential election scheduled for the 4th of July, a move protesters had been demanding for weeks. Indeed, according to demonstrators, holding elections too early would have hampered efforts to sweep away the remnants of Bouteflika's old regime and favour the military, headed by General Ahmed Gaid Salah – a key power-broker overseeing the transition. The Council reached the decision after only two candidates presented themselves, both deemed invalid. Since the vote was postponed indefinitely, it will be now up to *interim* President

Abdelkader Bensalah, the former upper house chairman, to “convene again the electoral body and to finalise the electoral process”.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Arabiya*, “Algeria’s Constitutional Council: July elections impossible”, 06/02/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2IfEp2K>.
- *Le Monde*, “Algérie : le Conseil constitutionnel reporte l’élection présidentielle”, 06/02/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2WnzNBr>.
- *The New York Times*, “Algeria Cancels Presidential Election, Setting Up New Impasse”, 06/02/19, available at: <https://nyti.ms/2XpDSL7>.

Levant

[#Jordan](#) [#DealOfTheCentury](#) – Kushner meets King Abdullah II amid protests



On the 29th of May, Donald Trump’s Senior Adviser Jared Kushner met with Jordan’s King Abdullah II during his regional tour aimed to drum up support for the economic part of the still-unveiled US-sponsored Middle East peace plan, i.e. the so-called “Deal of the Century”. In the meanwhile, hundreds of political and civil activists organised a sit-in near the US embassy in Amman, urging Jordan not to attend the upcoming Bahrain summit – set for the 25th-26th of June – where the first elements of the peace proposal are expected to be revealed. During the meeting, the King delivered a statement from

his palace, highlighting that negotiations should be based on a two-state solution, leading to an independent Palestinian state based on 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital. For the time being, Amman has not yet confirmed whether it will be participating to the Manama economic workshop.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Monitor*, “Why Jordan is silent on Bahrain summit”, 05/29/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2EQiFtq>.
- *Middle East Eye*, “Jordanians denounce 'deal of the century' as Kushner meets King Abdullah II”, 05/29/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2ERBY5v>.
- *The Jordan Times*, “Though our challenges may vary, we share same destiny — King”, 05/31/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2HT3MIF>.

Gulf

[#Qatar](#) – Doha expresses criticism over the Mecca summit outcomes



On the 30th of May, Mecca hosted two emergency meetings called by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz in light of increasing tensions with Iran. Riyadh extended the invitation to Doha, marking the first landing of a Qatari jet in Saudi Arabia since June 2017, when the Kingdom, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt cut diplomatic, trade, and transport ties with Qatar and imposed a sea, land, and air blockade on the country, claiming it supported terrorist and sectarian groups aimed to destabilise the region. After the meeting, Qatar’s Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani declared it had reservations about hard-line statements made during the summits, saying the participants “condemned Iran but did not refer to a moderate policy to speak with Teheran”. He also argued that the summit

"adopted Washington's policy towards Iran and not one that takes the neighbourhood into consideration". Moreover, the Minister questioned the unity called for by Saudi Arabia and the UAE amid the ongoing blockade against his country.

To know more about this topic:

- *Middle East Monitor*, "Qatar PM to make rare trip to Saudi Arabia for emergency summit", 05/29/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2Wdq2Rp>.
- *Al Jazeera*, "Qatar expresses reservations over Mecca summit outcome", 06/03/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2XsKX4y>.
- *Bloomberg*, "Qatar Criticizes Mecca Summits as Hopes for Reconciliation Fade", 06/03/19, available at: <https://bloom.bg/2ESXBTf>.

#ArabInsight

#MeccaSummits – A unified front against Iran? An insight into the different narratives in the Arab press about the Saudi-sponsored emergency meetings

In a 48-hours period last week, Saudi Arabia hosted in Mecca the 14th conference of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and two emergency summits of the Arab League and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), called by King Salman bin Abdulaziz in reaction to increasing tensions with Teheran. As discussed in the [last issue](#), the gatherings of the 30th of May were organised in light of recent drone strikes against an oil pumping station close to Riyadh – claimed by the Teheran-backed Yemeni Houthi militias – and the sabotage of four commercial vessels, including two Saudi oil tankers, off the coast of the UAE. They also followed rising US rhetoric *vis-à-vis* the Islamic Republic. In the past few days, Arab and international journalists have paid special attention to these three events, notably the emergency summits. This week, we provide a short analysis of the MENA and Gulf newspapers' different narratives about the meetings based on two articles published on *BBC Arabic*, titled respectively ["Does 'confronting Iran' require three summits in Mecca?"](#) and ["Arab newspaper wonder: what after the Mecca summits?"](#).

On the one hand, as expected, Saudi Arabia and UAE headlines hailed the initiatives, urging the formation of a unified Arab front against Teheran, that will be crucial to restore regional security. Before the summits, local newspapers showed confidence about their positive outcome. For instance,

the Riyadh-affiliated *Asbarq al-Awsat* put on the front page “The Arab security is one”, while the Saudi edition of *Al Jazeera* wrote “Gulf and Arab solidarity against Iranian terrorism”. According to the Saudi commentator Khaled al-Sulaiman, writing for *Okaz*, the convocation of the meetings signals that “the region is at the crossroads between the abyss of a destructive clash or a decisive action for security and stability in the region. The latter requires action and solidarity, not mere statements and speeches”. Similarly, Hamoud Abu Taleb, editorialist for the same journal, sent a clear message to the invited countries, claiming “if some of you think that it is not useful to stand up against Iran, declare it courageously, in order for us to know who you are. In front of such existential threat, remaining neutral is a form of treachery”. Soon after the summits, the Saudi press described the initiatives as a triumph of vision and political insight, and highlighted a “new beginning under the banner of solidarity”. As reported by *Al-Riyadh*, “the Arab and Islamic nations have decided to change for the better, overcome past divisions, and turn the page”, for they “came out with a comprehensive position against Iran”.

On the other hand, various commentators pointed out that confronting Teheran “does not require three summits in the holy city of Mecca, because the issue is too controversial and will hardly reach any Islamic, Arab, or even Gulf consensus” – as stated Abdel Bari Atwan, the Palestinian editor-in-chief of the Arab world news and opinion website *Rai al-Youm*. Likewise, in the Jordanian newspaper *Ad-Dustour*, several editorials stress that this kind of summits have rarely succeeded in solving the issues and crises which have afflicted the Arab League and the GCC nations. Therefore, the final statements of the emergency meetings appeared to be confined to a rhetoric condemnation of Iran’s behaviour. Arab unity remains a mirage, with the Islamic world being divided along old and new fault-lines. In this respect, many local and international commentators showed doubts about the idea of an “Arab NATO” to counter Iran, which would require the militaries of the six GCC countries, plus those of Egypt and Jordan, to work closely with each other. Finally, linked to internal divisions is the ongoing boycott of Doha by Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, Manama, and Cairo. The Qatari daily *Al Sharq* contends that Foreign Minister’s attendance at the meeting shows the country’s willingness to engage in dialogue. Yet, as the diplomatic freeze enters its second year, the blockade seems to be indefinitely postponed, undermining unity within the Gulf Cooperation Council.

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