

ARAB DISPATCH

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North Africa

#Libya – UNSC unanimously extends arms embargo for one year



On Monday, the UN Security Council unanimously extended the arms embargo on Libya, allowing inspection of ships suspected of flowing weapons off the coast of the country for one more year. Last May, in a report to the UNSC, the Secretary General of the United Nations António Guterres raised deep concern about the persistent flow of weapons to Libya, highlighting that the current military operations in the North-African state have been fuelled by the incoming arms via the sea, among other routes. During the meeting, Germany, France, and UK representatives reiterated that there is no military solution to the conflict, hence all parties should restart the UN-sponsored political dialogue in

order to guarantee stability in Libya. Meanwhile, Khalifa Haftar forces show no sign of withdrawal, although the Libyan National Army (LNA) has remained unsuccessful in capturing the capital Tripoli from the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) ever since fighting began on the 4th of April.

To know more about this topic:

- *The Libya Observer*, “UN Security Council extends arms embargo in Libya for one more year”, 06/10/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2RwiYx>.
- *L'Orient-Le Jour*, “Libye: l'ONU confirme l'embargo sur les armes, pas d'intensification du contrôle”, 06/10/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2WrgxhD>.

Levant

[#DealOfTheCentury](#) – Palestine considers ICC complaint against US Ambassador to Israel



On the 9th of June, the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates said it will consider filing a complaint against the US Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, at the International Criminal Court (ICC) over his recent comments on the long-awaited “Deal of the Century”. The move comes after Friedman affirmed that some degree of Israeli annexation of the West Bank would be legitimate in an [interview](#) published by the New York Times on Saturday. His remarks elicited a strong reaction from Palestinian politicians. The Secretary General of the PLO, Saeb Erekat, described the

Ambassador's words as "an extension of the policy of the US administration, which is fully biased towards the occupation and its expansionist colonial policies". The US is set to reveal the economic component of the Middle East peace plan on the 25th-26th of June in Bahrain. Yet, it is not clear when the political aspect of the deal – which is expected to exclude a two-state solution – will be unveiled.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Jazeera*, "Palestine considers ICC complaint against US envoy Friedman", 06/09/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2X2VaHH>.
- *The Times of Israel*, "Palestinians weigh ICC complaint against US envoy for backing Israeli annexation", 06/09/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2WA5asF>.

Gulf

[#GulfTensions](#) – Qatar accuses Saudi Arabia and the UAE of blackmail and destabilising the region



Last Sunday, during a briefing in London, Qatar's Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, affirmed that a Saudi and Emirati plan to impose "stability" in the region by supporting authoritarian governments and military councils throughout African and the Arab world was a recipe for more terrorism, conflict, and chaos. In particular, he accused Saudi Arabia and the UAE of interfering to stifle popular movements in Sudan, Libya, and Somalia, with the aim to install regimes sympathetic to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. Al-Thani pointed out that the unresolved two-year diplomatic crisis was starting to fuel other disputes in the Horn of Africa and in the sub-Saharan area, notably because some countries "have even been blackmailed to follow the same policy against Qatar".

Moreover, he once again expressed his reservations about the outcome of the recent emergency summits in Mecca, arguing that Saudi and UAE policies aimed at isolating Iran are not working.

To know more about this topic:

- *Gulf News*, “UAE urges 'frank revision' of Qatar’s policies”, 06/07/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2KHq0Pz>.
- *Middle East Eye*, “Qatar foreign minister critical of Saudi, UAE effort to impose ‘stability’ on region”, 06/09/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2KIqyEQ>.
- *The Guardian*, “Qatari official accuses Saudis of blackmail and destabilising the region”, 06/10/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2ReWPVD>.

#ArabInsight

#DealOfTheCentury – Shrouded in mystery: is the climate conducive to the US’ long-awaited Middle East peace plan?



A cloud of secrecy still hovers over the US-sponsored Middle East peace plan, known as the “Deal of the Century”. Yet, after repeated postponements, the ‘architect’ of the proposal – Trump’s senior adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner, surprisingly announced that the economic aspect of the package will be revealed during a workshop in Bahrain, to be held next 25th-26th of June. The event, titled “Peace to Prosperity”, was launched by Kushner to encourage investment in the Palestinian territories as the first part of the plan to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. With just two weeks to go until the

Manama conference, uncertainty hangs over who will be attending the event; what will be discussed; and, notably, the feasibility of the proposal. This week, we provide a short analysis aimed to assess the extent to which the climate is conducive – or not – to Trump administration’s plan. To this end, we will take a cue from an article by the Jordanian journalist Fahd al-Khaitan, entitled “[The Bahrain workshop and the Deal of the Century at stake](#)”, published in the Arabic daily *Al Ghad* on the 10th of June.

Several factors suggest that the still-unveiled plan is in trouble waters. [As previously discussed](#), the lack of support in the Palestinian, Arab, and Western circles casts doubt on the viability of the deal even before its launch. In the first place, it is worth recalling that a large part of the international community did not support Trump’s unilateral move to recognise Jerusalem Israel’s capital, to end aid to the United Nations Palestine Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and, in late March, to declare the Israel’s sovereignty over the Golan Heights. This latter move has been widely seen as anticipating the content of the US peace proposal, as it would set a precedent to be applied the West Bank as well. In this context, the EU and its Member States have continued to reaffirm their commitment to a two-state solution. This posture was recently reaffirmed by German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas during a meeting with his Jordanian counterpart Ayman Safadi last Sunday. Moreover, in its final *communiqué* at the Mecca summit on the 31st of May, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) reiterated "rejection of any proposal for peace settlement that does not accord or conform with the legitimate, inalienable rights of the Palestinian people". The already tense relationship between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and US officials was aggravated last weekend after US Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, told the New York Times that the country has the right to annex some portions of the West Bank. A few days before, in a rare television interview, Kushner had questioned the Palestinians’ ability to practice self-governance without Israeli interference.

Last but not least, Israel is currently caught in a political paralysis as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed to put together a coalition government from the parties elected to the Knesset last April. Israel is thus preparing for a second round of elections, set for the 17th of September. Against this background, the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in an unguarded moment, observed that the much-awaited US policy could well be “inexecutable”, regardless of the political developments in Israel.

Nonetheless, Trump’s senior adviser still appears highly engaged on the issue, while paying careful attention not to disclose any detail of the peace package. Indeed, he embarked on a diplomatic

campaign intended to garner support from the EU and the Arab countries and encourage them to join the Manama workshop. In the previous weeks, he visited Amman, Rabat, and Tel-Aviv and then headed to the Western capitals. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain said they will attend; Egypt and Morocco just confirmed their participation; after some hesitation, King Abdullah II announced on Tuesday that Jordan will attend the event. The country is in a particularly sticky spot: on the one hand, it could use its slice of the billion in investment that the conference claims it will bring to enhance its stressed economy; on the other, its population is roughly half Palestinian. As expected, the PA urged all involved parties to boycott the workshop and all major Palestinian businessmen have so far rejected their invitations, condemning the event as a farce for not addressing the economic impact of Israeli occupation.

In light of this situation, close observers do not exclude the postponement of the conference itself. What is more certain is that the political component of the deal will not be unveiled until the new Israeli elections and the consolidation of a government coalition. In the meanwhile, as the 2020 US election season moves into a higher gear, Trump's enthusiasm for peace-making is likely bound to wane.

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