

# ARAB DISPATCH

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## **North Africa**

**#Libya** – Haftar says offensive on Tripoli will go on despite UN pressure



Libya's eastern commander Khalifa Haftar, whose LNA forces are fighting to take Tripoli from militias allied with the internationally-recognised government (GNA), has dismissed the initiative put forward by the GNA's leader Fayez al-Sarraj to end the crisis. Last week, the PM had proposed the organisation of a national conference aimed to gather "all Libyan parties and members from every area who call for a peaceful solution". Instead, Haftar vowed to press ahead with its offensive against the capital, started on the 4th of April. The commander, who has so far secured control over much of the rest of the

country – including strategic oil fields – also declared his intention to dissolve the UN-backed authority and form a unity government once he seizes power in Tripoli, setting the stage for the formation of a new constitution drafting assembly. General Haftar reiterated his position after a meeting with the Head of UNSMIL Ghassan Salamé last Saturday, during which the two parts discussed the reasons that led to the war, the consequent humanitarian crisis, and ways possible to reach a transition to a political solution in Libya.

To know more about this topic:

- *Bloomberg*, “Libyan Strongman Haftar Says Offensive on Tripoli Will Go On”, 06/20/19, available at: [bloom.bg/2WXAkpi](https://www.bloom.bg/2WXAkpi).
- *The Libya Observer*, “UN envoy to Libya visits Haftar in Al-Rajma, eastern Benghazi”, 06/22/19, available at: [bit.ly/2KD8Wva](https://bit.ly/2KD8Wva).
- *El Watan*, “Guerre de Tripoli : L’ONU n’arrive pas à réconcilier les belligérants libyens”, 06/24/19, available at: [bit.ly/2xiQq29](https://bit.ly/2xiQq29).

## Levant

[#Syria](#) [#ISIS](#) – UN Human Rights Chief: 55,000 linked to Daesh in Syria and Iraq to be tried or freed



On the 24th of June, UN Human Rights Chief Michelle Bachelet affirmed that 55,000 captured ISIS fighters, including foreigners and their families detained in Syria and Iraq, should be tried or freed. This number includes suspected foreign fighters from nearly 50 countries and 11,000 family members, currently facing “deeply sub-standard conditions” at the Al-Hol camp, in North-Eastern Syria. Opening a three-week session of the Council in Geneva, Bachelet highlighted that “foreign family members should be repatriated unless they are prosecuted for crimes in accordance with international standards” and that “accountability through fair trials protects societies from future radicalisation and violence”. For the time being, the US, France, and Netherlands have each repatriated a small number of women or children from North-Eastern Syria. In this respect, the UN Human Rights Chief urged “all states to assume responsibility for their nationals, and to work together to provide resources to help the relevant authorities and actors in Syria and Iraq to address urgent humanitarian needs.”

To know more about this topic:

- *Asbarq Al-Ansat*, “UN's Bachelet says 55,000 linked to ISIS in Syria, Iraq should be tried or freed”, 06/24/19, available at: [bit.ly/2KJe3tR](https://bit.ly/2KJe3tR).
- *France 24*, “L'ONU exige le rapatriement des proches des jihadistes en Syrie et en Irak”, 06/24/19, available at: [bit.ly/2Fys09z](https://bit.ly/2Fys09z).

## Gulf

[#GulfTensions](#) – Pompeo rallies Saudi and UAE support against Iran as the UNSC urges “maximum restraint” around the region



Four attacks on tankers near the Strait of Hormuz; assaults on oil facilities and an airport in Saudi Arabia; Teheran's decision to surpass the uranium stockpile limit set under the JCPOA; Trump's decision to deploy 1.000 more troops in the Middle East; the downing of a US "spy drone" by Iranian forces – these are just a few of a series of events that have retched up tensions in the Gulf in recent weeks. In this context, Donald Trump called off an attack on Iran on the 21st of June just as the US was "cocked and loaded" to strike. On Monday, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met with King Salman in Jeddah, where he reiterated that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are "two great allies in the challenge that Iran presents" that will contribute to "build out a global coalition" against the Islamic Republic. In the meanwhile, UN Secretary General Guterres has urged "all sides to show nerves of steel" in order to "avoid any further sorts of provocation". Similarly, the 15 Security Council members prompted concerned parties and all countries in the region to "exercise maximum restraint" and address differences "peacefully and through dialogue".

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Jazeera*, "Iran-US tensions: All the latest updates", 06/21/19 – daily updated, available at: [bit.ly/2J59syN](https://bit.ly/2J59syN).
- *Gulf News*, "Pompeo meets Saudi rulers on Iran crisis", 06/24/19, available at: [bit.ly/2X0ZTum](https://bit.ly/2X0ZTum).
- *UN News*, "Security Council urges 'maximum restraint' around Gulf region as Iran and United States trade diplomatic blows in New York", 06/24/19, available at: [bit.ly/2X1Xlwd](https://bit.ly/2X1Xlwd).

[#ArabInsight](#)

[#DealOfTheCentury](#) – An insight into the outcomes of the Manama workshop



After weeks of evasive declarations, protests, and media speculation, the US has revealed the economic component of the long-awaited “Deal of the Century” during the “Peace to Prosperity” workshop, hosted by the Bahraini capital Manama on the 25th-26th of June. As anticipated, the two key-players – Palestinian and Israeli officials – are not participating to the two-day conference, while Jordan, Egypt, the UAE, Morocco, and Qatar dispatched Finance ministry representatives; Saudi Arabia is represented by the Minister of Economy and its sovereign wealth fund chairman. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Bank, and International Monetary Fund joined the meeting, as well as the UN humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian territories. Today, we provide an insight into the ongoing debate the latest revelations about the Middle East peace-plan, taking a cue from an article published by the Arabic edition of *France 24*, titled “Bahrain conference: The Americans present the economic aspect of the ‘Deal of the Century amid Palestinian boycott”.

On Tuesday, White House Senior Adviser and ‘architect’ of the plan Jared Kushner opened the two-day event by stating that an agreement on an economic pathway forward was a “necessary precondition” for Israeli-Palestinian peace. As such, the \$50 billion proposal takes an economy-first approach and a business-like orientation: it envisages the creation of 179 local projects bankrolled by a “master fund” that would cover numerous domains, ranging from water and agriculture to education and healthcare. Out of the total, about \$27.5 would be directed to the Palestinian territories – i.e. the West Bank and the Gaza Strip – \$7.4bn would go to Jordan, \$9.1bn to Egypt, and \$6.3bn to Palestinians in Lebanon. Within 10 years, the plan aspires to double the size of the Palestinian economy, create one million new jobs, and halve the poverty rate.

On the second day of the Manama workshop, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir expressed support for Washington’s economic plan and told France’s newspaper *Le Monde* that the US initiative “is not about buying peace (...) It is never about forcing the Palestinians to accept an agreement they do not like and linking it to accepting something in return for something else”. Among the other participants, IMF chief Christine Lagarde affirmed that the West Bank and Gaza urge “job intensive” growth, hence “one of the really good aspects of the plan is that it identifies some of the industrial and economic sectors that will be conducive to jobs”. Commenting the meeting from New York, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reiterated on Tuesday that it is important “to pursue peace efforts to realise the vision of two states (...) living side-by-side in peace and security”. In the meanwhile, Palestinians are continuing to organise demonstrations across the West Bank in protest against the US-sponsored gathering and the participation of Arab delegations. In this context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates described the deal as a “second Balfour Declaration”.

Concerning the reaction of international and regional analysts, many have noticed that the 40-page plan is void of any reference to the current political context, as no mention is made to the words “occupation”, “equality”, and “blockade”. As reported by *Al Jazeera*, Zaha Hassan, a visiting fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, noticed that donors will not put up “the significant outlay of funds called for under the plan in an uncertain political environment”. She further criticised the proposal as a “marketing brochure” made up of “old initiatives advanced by previous administrations which were never executed because of Israel's refusal to give the needed permissions, and allow movement and access of people and goods”. Besides, Hassan predicted that any new Israeli coalition government – which will be formed after the second round of elections in mid-September – is likely to call for the annexation of Area C (62% of the West Bank) needed for the energy and transportation components of the plan, thus precluding “meaningful sovereignty for Palestinians in the territorial unit”. In this respect, several observers highlighted that the concept of a “Singapore on the Mediterranean” is not feasible without a unified governance of the territories, ruled since 2007 by the rival Fatah and Hamas factions. Furthermore, some remarked that, while Jordan and Egypt could be willing to receive billions of dollars in international investments, other neighbouring states – especially Lebanon – will hardly accept that financial carrot, as it is linked to the facilitation of permanent resettlement of Palestinian refugees. On the other hand, a few analysts argue that, since past peace initiatives have failed, it is time for a new approach. “Since the beginning of the Oslo accords, the hegemonic paradigm was that the 'national' interests of the Palestinians were the first priority – above individual, social and economic interests” – told Kobi Michael, a Senior Fellow with the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University, to *Al Jazeera*. “What we see in Bahrain is a manifestation of a new paradigm(...) Arab leaders – together with Israeli businessmen, Palestinian businessmen, Americans and Europeans – are looking for other options to paint a new horizon for Palestinians and the entire region.”

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