

ARAB DISPATCH

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North Africa

[#Algeria](#) – Algerian opposition groups call for polls in six months



On the 5th of July, tens of thousands of Algerians poured onto the streets of the capital to celebrate their country's independence from French rule (1962) and continued to call for a new democratic leadership for the 20th consecutive Friday. Former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigned in early April after weeks of nationwide demonstrations. An already delayed presidential election was postponed again early last month from a planned date of the 4th of July by interim President Abdelkader Bensalah. In this context, he proposed to create a new "entity" to arrange the elections, and promised that both the government and military would not take part. On Saturday, political parties,

civil society representatives, and national personalities held a meeting dubbed the "National Forum for Dialogue", outside the orbit of Bensalah's planned talks. In the final statement of the gathering, the group has proposed “free and pluralistic elections in a period of six months”.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Jazeera*, “No to dictatorship!: Algerians rally on independence day”, 07/05/19, available at: bit.ly/2NIZyIL.
- *Le Monde*, “Manifestations monstres en Algérie pour demander le départ du chef d’état-major de l’armée”, 07/05/19, available at: bit.ly/2G568CX.
- *Al Arabiya*, “Algeria opposition groups call for polls in six months”, 07/07/19, available at: bit.ly/2YKy7iK.

Levant

[#SyriaWar](#) – Germany rejects US demand for increased military presence in Syria



On the 5th of July, the US Special Representative for engagement in Syria requested Germany to increase its military presence in Syria as the US plans to move its own troops out of the country in the near future. Angela Merkel’s chief spokesperson, Steffen Seibert, said on Monday that Berlin would not send additional ground troops, saying Germany has already made a “significant and internationally acknowledged contribution” and adding that “the government intends to continue with its ongoing measures in the framework of the anti-IS coalition, then that means no ground troops”. The country

currently provides reconnaissance jets, a refuelling aircraft, and other non-combat assistance to the Kurds forces. The parliamentary mandate for the anti-ISIS mission runs out on the 31st of October and may be extended by the Bundestag. According to local and international newspapers, the CDU leader and possible Merkel's successor Annagret Kramp-Karrenbauer is prepared to negotiate Berlin's contribution in Syria, several MP's in the SPD – which is part of the executive – are against the extension of the mission.

To know more about this topic:

- *Bloomberg*, “German Government Rules Out Sending Ground Troops to Syria”, 07/08/19, available at: bloom.bg/2LceYDi.
- *Deutsche Welle*, “Syria: Germany rejects US demand for ground troops”, 07/08/19, available at: bit.ly/2xDuZJr.

Gulf

[#YemenWar](#) – UAE to partially withdraw from Yemen after consultation with Saudi Arabia



The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced on Monday its intention to start reducing the number of its troops throughout war-torn Yemen. Military sources from the Yemeni international recognised government attributed the decision to a “redeployment” plan adopted for “strategic and tactical reasons”, adding that Abu Dhabi is moving from a “military-first” to a “peace-first strategy”. The UAE is said to have completely evacuated Al Khawkhah camp south of the key port of Hodeidah, handed it over to Yemeni forces a few years ago, and withdrawn part of its heavy weaponry from the

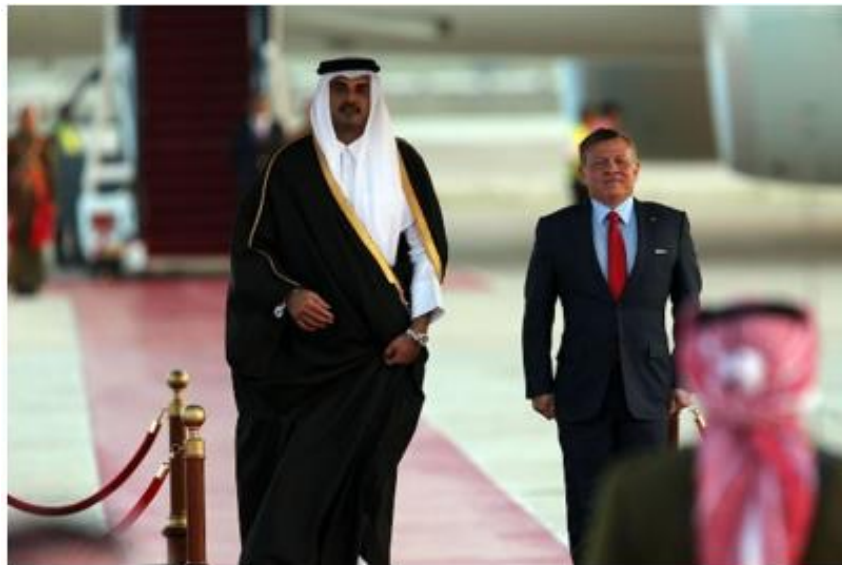
area. The UAE source emphasised on his country's continued support for the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen against the Houthi rebels, saying the decision on troops' movement had been discussed extensively with Riyadh. The move comes amid a standoff between the US and Iran, after heightened tensions in recent weeks. According to many commentators, the UAE would prefer to have military forces equipment on hand should such tensions further escalate in the Gulf.

To know more about this topic:

- *Gulf News*, "Redeployment of UAE troops in Yemen both strategic, tactical: Official", 07/08/19, available at: bit.ly/2XCVQF5.
- *The Guardian*, "Yemen: UAE confirms withdrawal from port city of Hodeidah", 07/09/19, available at: bit.ly/2JBHbzR.
- *Middle East Monitor*, "Yemen: UAE withdraws troops from Al Hudaydah after months of fierce battles", 07/09/19, available at: bit.ly/2JzBqme.

#ArabInsight

#QatarCrisis – Distancing itself from the Saudi-UAE axis, Amman restores diplomatic ties with Doha



"We are establishing full diplomatic relationship with Qatar": with these words, Ahid Suwaydat, Jordan's Director of the Consular Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, announced the

restoration of ties between Amman and Doha, two years after the former downgraded its relations with the latter due to pressure from the Saudi-led block. Indeed, in June 2017, Jordan recalled its ambassador to Qatar, siding with an axis composed of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain, which imposed a land, sea, and air blockade of the country, claiming it supported terrorist and sectarian groups aimed to destabilise the region. This week, we provide a short insight into this issue taking a cue from different local sources, among which an article published on the 7th of July by the Arab news platform *Arabi21*, titled [“The return of the Ambassadors to Amman and Doha: Why Jordan contravened the embargo?”](#).

Interviewed by *Arabi21*, the political analyst Munther al-Hawarat stated that the return of the Qatari Ambassador is unlikely to “affect Jordan’s relations with the Gulf countries, as Jordan has failed to be a successful mediator in the crisis during its presidency of the Arab Summit. Therefore, maintaining good relations with all states may allow Amman to be an efficient intermediary”. He further stressed that Jordan is concerned with restoring peace between the conflicting sides, as “the current circumstances require a unified efforts against the dangers threatening the Gulf region, such as the escalation in the Strait of Hormuz and the increasing tensions between Iran and the US”. Similarly, Jordanian former Deputy Prime Minister, Mamdouh al-Abadi, said the country should “stand at an equal distance from all [its] Arab brothers, whether they are right or wrong”, adding that “the time has come for Jordan to prove its independence and neutrality by embracing a more moderate foreign policy, away from political alliances”. The head of the Middle East Studies Centre (MESC), Jawad al-Hamad highlighted that Amman is adopting a “new philosophy” based on two elements: in the first place, to preserve its interests away from regional rivalries; second, the country is eager to diversify its Arab, Islamic, and international options in order to avoid pressures from any party. Al-Hamad also noted that Amman’s stand towards Doha was different from the other countries’ position, as “the kingdom has only taken symbolic measures [and this] has facilitated the resumption of relations between the two states in a permanent way”.

In fact, diplomatic and – in particular – economic ties, have not been interrupted during the years of blockade, during which trade delegations have concluded cooperation agreements. According to data released by the Jordan Chamber of Commerce, the volume of commercial exchanges between the two countries is close to \$400 million a year, with the trade balance leaning towards the emirate, from which Amman imports inputs for mineral and chemical products. Moreover, in the wake of an economic crisis and popular protests in June 2018, Deputy Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani offered an aid package to Jordan worth \$500 million, as well as about 10.000 job opportunities in

Doha for young Jordanians. This latter move was seen as part of Qatar's 'soft power diplomacy', aimed at driving the kingdom away from the emirate's regional foes.

The restoration of diplomatic ties raises an additional question: What is the relation between Amman's decision and the position of some Gulf states *vis-à-vis* the so-called Deal of the Century [see Arab Dispatch n° [14](#) and [16](#)], that the kingdom has rejected? The restoration of diplomatic ties raises an additional question: What is the relation between Amman's decision and the position of some Gulf states *vis-à-vis* the so-called Deal of the Century [see Arab Dispatch n° 14 and 16], that the kingdom's authorities have rejected? In this regard, al-Abadi affirmed that "Jordan is gradually withdrawing from the Saudi-UAE-led axis to get rid of the pressure exerted on it with respect to the US-sponsored peace package". In the past months, King Abdullah II complained about such intense external pressure coming from Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, that attach political conditions to their assistance. Against this background, the Jordanian analyst Oraib Rantawi told [Al Jazeera](#) that Amman felt disappointed about the burgeoning Saudi-Emirati-Israeli alliance that bypasses its interests, notably concerning the Palestinian issue.

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