

# ARAB DISPATCH

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## **North Africa**

**#Libya** – UN Secretary General warns about the risk of “full civil war”



On the 29th of August, UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, declared that he fears Libya will escalate in “full civil war [...], unless action is taken in the near term”. Indeed, since early April, forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar are carrying out an offensive to seize Tripoli from the internationally recognised government headed by Fayeze al-Sarraj. The fighting on the outskirts of the capital has so far left more than 1.000 people dead and displaced 120.000 civilians. On this occasion, Guterres further reiterated the need for support from the international community in finding a political solution to the

conflict. He called for strict adherence to the 2011 arms embargo, raising concerns about the influx of weapons to the country, as well as foreign interferences in the conflict. In this respect, UN Envoy to Libya, Ghassan Salamé, recently declared that “interferences (...) encourage opposing parties to keep fighting”. Yet, he does not see “the necessary unity” within the UNSC to sanction these behaviours.

To know more about this topic:

- *Le Figaro*, “Le chef de l'ONU craint qu'une «guerre civile» embrase la Libye”, 08/29/19, available at: [bit.ly/34aa2oz](http://bit.ly/34aa2oz).
- *Middle East Online*, “UN chief fears Libya will end up in 'full civil war'”, 08/30/19, available at: [bit.ly/2NQvFVp](http://bit.ly/2NQvFVp).

## Levant

[#Lebanon](#)– UNIFIL mandate renewed as tension between Lebanon and Israel escalates



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On the 28th of August, the Lebanese army fired at two Israeli drones in southern Lebanon, as tension mounts between the two countries. Indeed, the move comes a few days after an alleged Israeli drone hit a suburb in southern Beirut, while another exploded nearby. Lebanese President, Michel Aoun,

qualified the Israeli attack as a “declaration of war” that justified a military response. Hezbollah’s leader, Hassan Nasrallah, denounced the attacks as an “act of aggression” and promised a retaliation. On the 1st of September, the Shia militant group launched an attack on Israeli military positions and drawn heavy return fire in the first cross-border clash for years between the two parties. In the meanwhile, the UN Security Council had renewed on Thursday the UNIFIL mandate, that monitors compliance by both Lebanon and Israel with the 2006 peace agreement.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Jazeera*, “Lebanese army fires at Israeli drones near border”, 08/28/19, available at: [bit.ly/2ZqqLoT](https://bit.ly/2ZqqLoT).
- *The Jerusalem Post*, “UNSC renews mandate for peace keepers at Israeli-Lebanese border”, available at: [bit.ly/2PnUwSL](https://bit.ly/2PnUwSL).
- *The Guardian*, “Israel and Hezbollah trade cross-border fire for first time in years”, 09/01/19, available at: [bit.ly/2lCnq2M](https://bit.ly/2lCnq2M).

## Gulf

[#Yemen](#) – UAE-Saudi Arabia rift deepens as government forces re-enter key city of Aden



On the 28th of August, forces loyal to Yemen's internationally recognised government have re-entered the key southern city of Aden, which was seized by the Southern Transitional Council (STC) separatists earlier this month. The fighting has brought to light a rift within the pro-government Saudi-UAE-led military coalition fighting against the Shia rebel Houthi militias. Indeed, while Saudi Arabia backs the Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, the UAE supports the secessionists who seek an independent southern Yemen. On Thursday, Hadi denounced the UAE intervention, urging Riyadh to stop the Emirati support for separatists. Soon afterwards, the UAE's foreign ministry rejected the accusations, declaring that the air raids were aimed at "armed groups led by members of terrorist organisations".

To know more about this topic:

- *France24*, "Yemen government forces recapture key city of Aden from southern separatists", 08/28/19, available at: [bit.ly/2ZCrPBs](https://bit.ly/2ZCrPBs).
- *Middle East Eye*, "Yemeni government claims control of Aden as secessionist forces collapse", 08/29/19, available at: [bit.ly/2zv3Rxp](https://bit.ly/2zv3Rxp).
- *Al Jazeera*, "Hadi urges Saudi intervention to stop UAE support for separatists", 08/29/19, available at: [bit.ly/2LfwDr1](https://bit.ly/2LfwDr1).

[#ArabInsight](#)

[#DealOfTheCentury](#) – Selling illusions? What is behind the long-delayed Middle East peace proposal?



Almost two years have gone by since the Trump administration issued the first statements about the so-called “Deal of the Century”. For the time being, a cloud of secrecy still hovers the US-sponsored Middle East peace package, allegedly aimed to settle definitely the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Its economic component was unveiled during the “Peace to Prosperity” workshop, hosted by the Bahraini capital Manama at the end of June. In a nutshell, the \$50 billion proposal envisages the creation of a global investment fund to lift the Palestinian and neighbouring Arab states’ economies, as well as a five-billion-dollar transportation corridor to connect the West Bank and Gaza. As the official revelation of the political aspect of the long-awaited plan is being repeatedly postponed, the surrounding context continues to be characterised by media speculation, evasive declarations, and boycott by the Palestinian authorities and civil society. As of now, the White House announced that the political component will not be released until the second round of Israeli elections, set for the 17th of September, which are aimed to end a political paralysis triggered by PM Benjamin Netanyahu’s failure to form a coalition government after the April elections.

In an article published on the online information platform *Arabi21* last 30th August, titled “[Deal of the Century: Ghosts and Illusions](#)”, the Palestinian writer and professor Mohsen M. Saleh analyses the “deliberate game of ambiguity and postponement” played by the US government. According to the author, the American behaviour indicates that there is no real “deal” proposal, much less an “historic” one. Therefore, the United States are doing nothing but “selling illusions”, by resorting to a rhetorical vocabulary and empty slogans. The aim would be to take advantage of such an uncertain situation, rumours, and leaks to “create a Palestinian and Arab environment that is psychologically adapted to the requirements of [a mere business-oriented] plan”, that hides other objectives. In this regard, Saleh highlights two aspects. First, he notices that, although the agreement should be between the parties concerned (Palestinians and Israelis), the two key-players have not been offered anything official so far, nor they have participated to the Manama conference. Knowing that the content of the proposal would be unacceptable for the Palestinians, the US has adopted “the tactic of circumventing them by communicating with other Arab regimes, i.e. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Jordan, most notably with the so-called ‘axis of moderation’”. As a result, the Palestinian side would remain isolated and it would be easier to “unilaterally impose a ‘deal’ on it”. At the same time, the Trump administration is working to “integrate Israel into the Arab environment and normalise its official relations”. Second – and linked to the previous point – the US would be acting in accordance with the will and conditions set by Israel, “seeking to create a scenario on the ground that the Arab and international actors will accept over time”. Examples of this strategy are the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, the aid suspension to the UNRWA and, in late March, the declaration of Israel’s sovereignty over the Golan

Heights. This latter move has been widely seen as setting a precedent to be applied to the West Bank as well, as to “liquidate” the issue and exclude the the prospect of a Palestinian autonomy and a two-state solution.

**Elena Tosti Di Stefano**

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