

# ARAB DISPATCH

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## **North Africa**

**#Algeria** - Army chief and the PM call for Bouteflika to be declared unfit to rule



On the 26th of March, the head of Algeria's army Ahmed Gaid Salah qualified the protesters' demands as "legitimate" and called for President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to be declared "unfit to rule". The following day, the newly-appointed PM Ahmed Ouyahia recommended the resignation of Bouteflika "with the aim of smoothing the period of transition". According to Salah, the solution lies in Art. 102 of the Algerian constitution, which stipulates that in the case of the President's inability to carry out his duties due to a serious or chronic illness, the head of the national assembly should take his place for a period of no more than 45 days. The next step is for the Constitutional Council to formally declare Bouteflika unfit for office, a decision that

members of Parliament's lower and upper house need to ratify by a two-thirds majority. During the past two weeks, the army and senior figures of the ruling FLN and of coalition parties had increasingly distanced themselves from the ailing politician, who announced on the 11th of March that he would not be seeking a fifth consecutive term. Yet, the postponement of April election and his decision to remain in office until the adoption of a new constitution had triggered renewed mass demonstrations.

To know more about this topic:

- *Middle East Monitor*, “Army chief asks for Algeria’s Bouteflika to be declared unfit for office”, 03/27/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/2CI5x8u>.
- *The Guardian*, “Calls grow in Algeria for Abdelaziz Bouteflika to be declared unfit to lead”, 03/27/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/2WvMN3P>.
- *Le Monde*, “En Algérie, une rupture franche entre l’armée et Abdelaziz Bouteflika”, 03/26/19, available at : <https://lemde.fr/2Ynnx1g>.

## Levant

#Syria - The SDF's victory in Baghouz marks the end of the territorial caliphate



After more than four years from al-Baghdadi's proclamation of the Islamic State's caliphate, ISIS has been defeated at its final stronghold of Baghouz, in eastern Syria. On the 23rd of March, the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) – a Kurdish-led militia which includes Arab, Syriac, and Turkmen units – announced the “total elimination of [the] so-called caliphate”, that once spanned a third of Iraq and Syria. The SDF's offensive against Da'esh's last bastions in the Euphrates valley had

started on the 10th of September. As noted by several analysts and international policy-makers, the physical collapse of the IS is a monumental military accomplishment, however the fight against violent extremism is far from over. Not only the group still maintains a scattered presence and sleeper cells across the region, but the population evacuated from its latest vestiges largely remains unrepentant and radicalised. What is more, ISIS' ideology is still potent and susceptible to inspire terrorist attacks worldwide. Therefore, a military approach is no more sufficient, and the international community should formulate a comprehensive strategy aimed to address all the dimensions of the phenomenon.

To know more about this topic:

- *CNN*, ISIS has lost its final stronghold in Syria, the Syrian Democratic Forces says, 03/23/19, available at: <https://cnn.it/2OmGx8t>.
- *Middle East Eye*, "Islamic State 'caliphate' defeated after fall of Baghouz, says US-backed SDF", 03/23/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/2HGx8Lt>
- *Le Monde*, "Syrie : avec la chute de Baghouz, l'EI perd son dernier territoire", 03/23/19, available at: <https://lemde.fr/2YB31KO>

## Gulf

#Qatar #UAE - Qatar considers UAE's nuclear plant as a threat to Gulf stability



In a letter to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Qatar's Foreign Ministry argued that the Barakah nuclear power plant, which is under construction in the United Arab Emirates, poses a serious

threat to regional stability and the environment. It further calls for the Vienna-based organisation to create a framework to ensure the safe operation of nuclear energy in the Gulf. On the same day, the UAE rejected such claims by affirming its commitment to the highest standards of nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation. This move comes at a time when Qatar's relations with its neighbours are already strained. In fact, in June 2017, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain severed diplomatic, trade, and transport ties with Doha over allegations of terrorism support.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Jazeera*, “Qatar: UAE nuclear plant threat to Gulf stability, environment”, 03/20/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/2FnMh0S>.
- *Reuters*, “Qatar asks IAEA to intervene over 'threat' posed by UAE nuclear plant”, 03/20/19, available at: <https://reut.rs/2FsFUdU>.

[#ArabInsight](#)

[#Yemen](#)- Trapped in civil war: four years on



As the Yemeni civil war enters its fifth year, no end seems to be in sight. On March 25, the online newspaper *Yemen Akhbar* released an article titled “Four years of war: Have you given hope to the Yemeni people or increased their misery?”, where the author discusses the two main positions among national stakeholders with regard to the conflict. By way of reminder, the war is being waged between Hadi's internationally-recognised government – backed by

a Saudi-led military coalition – and the Houthi movement, which champions Yemen’s Zaidi Shia minority.

On the one side, partisans of the Riyadh-led coalition – which currently includes, *inter alia*, all the GCC members except Oman and Qatar – hail the efforts to prevent Iran from taking control of the country by means of the Houthi militia. In particular, they praise the expulsion of the Shia rebels from Aden, achieved through the support to the southern secessionist movement al-Hirak, as well as the ongoing attempts to seize the strategic port of Hodeidah. On the other side, those who are against the war denounce its catastrophic humanitarian consequences, underling the harmful impact of the Arab alliance’s intervention on the Yemeni soil. At present, according to the UN, about 15 million people are at risk of starvation, while the country’s economy has shrunk by 50 percent. In this respect, the United States and the U.K. have come under increased criticism for their relationship with the Saudi crown, notably regarding arms sales and the U.S. military assistance to the coalition in Yemen. Ultimately, the opponents of the war note that jihadi military organisations, i.e. al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the local affiliate of the Islamic State (IS), have taken advantage of the chaos generated by the conflict to seize territories in the south and carry out deadly attacks. Although the author does not take an explicit stand on the issue, he/she is seemingly inclined to the latter viewpoint. The article closes with a call to end the fighting, as to begin a meaningful, sustained, nationwide peace process.

[The article is available in Arabic at the following link: <https://bit.ly/2TVnPOe>]

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