

# ARAB DISPATCH

*Arab Dispatch - a project by the NATO Defense College Foundation*

**Issue n. 6**

***11<sup>th</sup> –17<sup>th</sup> April 2019***

## **North Africa**

[#Lybia](#) – al-Sisi meets Haftar as conflict rages in Tripoli



On Sunday 14th of April, the Egyptian President al-Sisi met in Cairo General Haftar, who is under strong international pressure to halt his Libyan National Army's military campaign against Tripoli, where the internationally-recognised Government of National Accord headed by Fayez al-Sarraj is seated. The Libyan commander, who casts himself as a foe of "extremism", has vowed to continue his offensive until Libya is "cleansed" of "terrorism". Similarly to the UAE, Egypt publicly supports UN-led peace efforts in the country, while being seen as one of Haftar's closest regional allies. At the outset of the offensive, the country joined the international community in condemning the military move. Yet, soon after the pair's meeting, a statement from al-Sisi's office "confirmed Egypt's support for efforts to

combat terrorism and extremist groups and militias”. Sunday was the day the UN had hoped to hold the Libyan National Conference, aimed at developing a ‘road map’ towards political reconciliation.

To know more about this topic:

- *Reuters*, “Egypt's president meets Libyan commander Haftar in Cairo”, 04/14/19, available at: <https://reut.rs/2UIR8oN>.
- *France 24*, “Libyan commander Haftar meets Egypt's Sisi as fighting erupts near Tripoli”, 04/15/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2XdBm0S>.

## Levant

[#Palestine](#) – New Palestinian government sworn in amid factional tensions



On the 13th of April, Mahmoud Abbas, who heads the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, swore in a new government led by Mohammed Shtayeh, a long-time ally from his Fatah party. Shtayeh’s administration replaces a technocratic government which had the nominal backing of Hamas and all other Palestinian parties. It comprises solely Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) factions, primarily Fatah, while it excludes Hamas, the Palestinian movement controlling the blockaded Gaza Strip since 2007. A few PLO’s leftist secular parties, such as the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, refused to take part, calling for a unity government of all factions. In this context, Hamas said the move would “enhance the chances of separating the West Bank from the Gaza Strip in a practical step toward the implementation of [Donald Trump’s] ‘deal of the century.’”.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Jazeera*, “Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas swears in new government”, 04/13/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2VMaFjo>.
- *Middle East Eye*, “Abbas loyalists dominate new Palestinian government”, 04/13/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2V0qki2>.

## Gulf

[#Yemen](#) – Yemeni Parliament members loyal to President Hadi meet for the first time since the outbreak of the war



Last Saturday, members of Yemen’s Parliament loyal to the internationally-recognised government – which is notably backed by Riyadh – gathered for the first time since the civil war broke out in 2015. President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi joined the meeting, that took place in the loyalist province of Hadhramaut, in eastern Yemen. “This extraordinary session is held in an historic moment as we stand in a crossroad between choices of war and peace”, told Hadi to the 145 members (out of 301) attending the meeting, which was aimed at consolidating his government’s legitimacy disputed by the Shiite Houthi forces. Both sides are under international pressure to implement the UN-brokered ceasefire deal agreed in Stockholm last December and to prepare for a wider political dialogue that would end the four-year-old conflict.

To know more about this topic:

- *Bloomberg*, “Yemen Parliament Members Loyal to Hadi Hold First Meeting”, 04/13/19, available at: <https://bloom.bg/2V85pJQ>.
- *Al Jazeera*, “Yemen's Hadi attends rare parliamentary session”, 04/13/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2IB0uuA>.

## #ArabInsight

#IsraeliElections: What will be the impact of Netanyahu’s re-election on the Israeli-Palestinian issue?



Following the April 9th elections, Benjamin Netanyahu obtained the backing of a majority of parliament members to form a new government. The Israeli PM is heading towards a record fifth term in office, confident of being able to form his new cabinet with religious-rightist parties. On the 15th of April, the Lebanese journalist Sam Menassa published on the pan-Arab newspaper *Asbāq Alamsat* an article titled “Israeli elections and the path towards the erosion of the dream of a Palestinian state”, where he critically analyses the result and potential consequences of the recent vote on the Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

In the first place, the author expresses his disappointment over the recently concluded electoral campaign. He highlights that, at other times, the Israeli-Palestinian issue would have prompted a serious debate among national parties, as the approach to the conflict has been for decades the main fault line (right-left) in Israeli politics. This time, the Likud’s message was categorical and opposed to

any attempts to resume talks about the creation of a Palestinian state. On the other side, the centrist Blue and White alliance led by Benny Gantz maintained an ambiguous position on the matter.

As far as the outcome of the elections is concerned, Menassa raises concerns about Netanyahu's relationship with Trump, who is seemingly overturning decades of US foreign policy in the peace process. Indeed, the US President declared the contested city of Jerusalem Israel's capital in 2017 and, most recently, recognised the country's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, captured from Syria in 1967. According to many – and to Netanyahu himself – this latter move sets a precedent which would apply to the West Bank as well. Finally, the long-awaited “Deal of the Century”, a US-sponsored peace plan, is widely expected to exclude a two-state solution.

*In fine*, the Arab countries are not exempt from criticism. On the one hand, the author recognises that the Arab world is living its “most difficult and delicate stage in modern history”, characterised by fragmentation and political collapse, which partially explains the de-prioritisation of the Palestinian issue. On the other hand, he tellingly labels the “Deal of the Century” an “Arab-Israeli deal”, alluding to some countries' warming relations with Israel, notably to counter Iran's influence in the region.

[The article is available in Arabic at the following link: <http://bit.ly/2Pb4ovg>]

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