

ARAB DISPATCH

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North Africa

#Lybia – The UN Envoy for Libya warns against backing Haftar amid divisions within the Security Council



Last Monday, the UN Envoy for Libya, Ghassan Salamé, warned countries against backing Khalifa Haftar. He stressed that the Eastern commander besieging Tripoli since the 4th of April “is no Abraham Lincoln, he is no big democrat” and his political agenda is not supported by most Libyans. Salamé is visiting European capitals in attempt to secure a consensus for a ceasefire and the resumption

of peace talks, as Western and Arab countries remain divided over how to tackle the situation. In particular, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Russia publicly back Haftar, while France – that officially supports al-Sarraj’s internationally recognised government – has been accused of playing both sides. For years, the US had advocated a political solution for the Libyan civil war and this position remained official policy until last week, when Washington threatened to veto a UK-drafted UNSC resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire. The sudden change of policy followed a Trump meeting with Egyptian leader al-Sisi and a phone conversation with the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Al Nahyan.

To know more about this topic:

- *The Guardian*, “Libya: EU officials hope Trump will pull support for Haftar”, 04/23/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2Ldhv0Q>.
- *Bloomberg*, “Trump Backed Libyan Strongman’s Attack on Tripoli, U.S. Officials Say”, 04/24/19, available at: <https://bloom.bg/2XVTHA4>.
- *France 24*, “Offensive du maréchal Haftar en Libye : l'ONU met en garde la ‘tentation de l'homme fort’”, 04/29/19, available at : <http://bit.ly/2LecfKl>.

Levant

#ISIS – Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi may have reappeared in a video for the first time in five years



Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the elusive leader of the Islamic State, appeared on an 18-minute video message released by ISIS media wing al-Furqan on Monday. If authentic, it would be his first appearance in a video since July 2014, when he delivered a sermon at the Great Mosque al-Nuri, in Mosul. That speech marked the rise of the jihadi group and its self-declared “caliphate” in Iraq and Syria. It is unclear when the footage was filmed, but al-Baghdadi affirmed that the “battle for Baghouz is over”, referring to Daesh’s final bastion in eastern Syria, liberated in late March. The man also praised recent Easter bombings in Sri Lanka, saying they were carried out in revenge for the killing of IS’ fighters. Moreover, he referenced recent political events, including Netanyahu's election victory in Israel and the resignation of Algeria's president Bouteflika. In his address, al-Baghdadi reiterated that the caliphate was conquered, but not abandoned. As a proof of this, he welcomed the *bayat* (oath of loyalty) of new groups emerged in Burkina Faso and Mali.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Jazeera*, “ISIL chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi appears in propaganda video”, 04/29/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2V3zGKJ>.
- *Foreign Policy*, “The Post-Caliphate Caliph”, 04/29/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2GOh0EM>.
- *Le Monde*, "Le chef djihadiste Abou Bakr Al-Baghdadi réapparaît et entérine la nouvelle stratégie de l'EI", 04/30/19, available at: <https://lemde.fr/2V6MwYw>.

Gulf

[#YemeniWar](#) – London meeting to discuss Yemen’s fragile peace process



On the 26th of April, UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt gathered in London with his Saudi and UAE counterparts – respectively, Adel Al-Jubeir and Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan – as well as the US Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Satterfield. The talks aimed to discuss the next steps in the United Nations-led peace process in Yemen and the ways to support the efforts of Special Envoy Martin Griffiths. Ahead of the meeting, Hunt declared that “this is a horrendous conflict and it is taking too long to turn the ceasefire agreed in Stockholm into a durable path to peace”. Last December, during UN-sponsored talks in Sweden, Yemen’s warring parties agreed to a truce in the key port city of Hodeidah, the main entry point for 70 percent of imports and humanitarian aid to the country. Yet, earlier this month, the UNSC expressed “grave concern” about the non-implementation of the deal. This group of countries has met on several occasions to examine the issue, most recently last February in Warsaw.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Jazeera*, “London meeting to discuss 'next steps' for Yemen peace process”, 04/26/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2WhBvjN>.
- *The Guardian*, “Jeremy Hunt attempts to break Yemen peace process stalemate”, 04/26/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2GR9icX>.

[#ArabInsight](#)

[#Algeria](#) – Creativity as political expression: an insight into the slogans of the Algerian protests



Ironic, irreverent, poetic: the innumerable slogans emerged during the Algerian protests express in a creative way popular demands for freedom and change, mainly coming from the youngest generations. As demonstrators took to the streets for the 10th consecutive Friday, *AlJazeera* published on the 29th of April an article titled “The slogans of Algeria’s mobilisation...more than [simple] statements, more like a Constitution”, where the author analyses the evolution of the protesters’ slogans according to the different stages of the latest political developments in Algeria.

On the first day of protests, the 16th of February, demonstrators demanded the 82-year-old President Abdelaziz Bouteflika – who had been in power for two decades – to withdraw from the April 18th elections. Slogans were clear and concise, as well as sarcastic and mordant: “No to the fifth term in office”; “Algeria is not your property”; “*J’ai testé ce régime et je n’ai pas maigri, alors je change de régime*”, i.e. “I tried this regime [*régime*” in French also means “diet”] and I did not lose weight, so I change it”.

After an increasing number of citizens embraced the movement, rallying cries became more focussed on the concept of “Freedom”. “Freedom, freedom, freedom is first in our hearts”. These words, shouted in chorus during the protests and tagged on the country’s walls, are taken from [Liberté](#), a song by the Algerian rapper Soolking, released on the 14th of March. Similarly, the piece of music [Libérez l’Algérie](#) is one of the symbols of the ongoing demonstrations. Among the slogans, the powerful “You have buried us alive and left the dead in power”; and “*Ils peuvent détourner nos votes mais pas notre liberté*”, namely “They can rig our votes, but they cannot overthrow our freedom”.

The final blow for Bouteflika came when the Army Chief of Staff Ahmed Gaid Salah asked the Constitutional Council to declare him unfit to rule. On the 2nd of April, the President decided to step down. Just a few days before, he had announced the formation of a caretaker government. Bouteflika has been replaced by Abdelkader Bensalah, head of the upper house of Parliament, as *interim* president for 90 days. In this transitional context, Algerian citizens keep up pressure on old guard elites: “The B’s must go” – they chant in the country’s streets – “We demand change, not reshuffle”; and “we don’t want a half-revolution!”.

[The article is available in Arabic at the following link: <http://bit.ly/2GJoB7x>]

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