

ARAB DISPATCH

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North Africa

#Algeria – As protesters keep up demand for political rehaul, Algeria military jails Bouteflika's influent brother



On the 3rd of May, Algerian protesters poured onto the streets for the 11th consecutive Friday, keeping up their calls for an overhaul of the political system. They demanded PM Bedoui and *interim* President Bensalah – who is serving for 90 days until the July 4th elections – to step down. Demonstrators have also rejected the army's self-proclaimed role in protecting the country. Indeed, during the past weeks, the military chief of staff Gaid Salah has sought to win the confidence of

Algerian citizens, notably by encouraging an anti-corruption crackdown that saw investigations against former officials and the arrests of several businessmen. On Sunday, the ex-President's influential brother Said Bouteflika and intelligence generals have been jailed for "plotting against the authority of the state". The younger Bouteflika was seen as the country's *de facto* ruler after his brother suffered a stroke in 2013. According to many commentators, this last move will not be enough to appease protesters.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Jazeera*, "‘You must go’ Algerians tell leaders at mass demonstration", 05/03/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2Y5P1HI>.
- *Euronews*, "Brother of former Algerian president Bouteflika placed in custody by military judge", 05/06/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2H6sMfi>.
- *Le Point*, "Algérie: les réactions mitigées après les dernières arrestations", 05/06/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2WsU7NW>.

Levant

[#IsraeliPalestinianConflict](#) – After a week-end of violence, Israel and Gaza militants agree to cease-fire



In the early hours of Monday morning, a cease-fire agreement was reached between Israel and militant factions in the Gaza strip, ending two days of intense fighting that led to the death of twenty-nine

Palestinians and four Israelis. Violence broke out on Friday, when Israel and the Palestinian group Islamic Jihad traded fire. Over the next two days, about 600 rockets were launched into Israel from the Strip, with the Israeli military retaliating with more than 320 airstrikes. The violent week-end saw the worst escalation between the two sides since a 50-day war in 2014. Soon after Hamas and Islamic Jihad indicated a readiness to restore the fragile truce, the IDF lifted all protective restrictions imposed near the Gaza area during the flare-up. The cease-fire was brokered by Egypt, Qatar, and UN officials. Although its exact terms were not made public, the deal seemingly includes the easing of limits on the fishing zone off the coast of Gaza, as well as improvements in the electricity and fuel services situation.

To know more about this topic:

- *Le Monde*, “Escalade meurtrière entre l’armée israélienne et les factions armées à Gaza”, 05/04/19, available at: <https://lemde.fr/2DVjwbE>.
- *The New York Times*, “Fragile Cease-Fire Takes Hold Between Israel and Gaza After Weekend Attacks”, 05/06/19, available at: <https://nyti.ms/2WAiLfl>.
- *Haaretz*, “Palestinian Report: Israel and Hamas Reach Cease-fire; Israeli Army Lifts Restrictions”, 05/06/19 [live updates], available at: <http://bit.ly/2WsRFH3>.

Gulf

[#Qatar](#) – Doha to send \$480m to the West Bank and Gaza after truce with Israel



On the 7th Of May, Qatar’s Foreign Ministry announced that the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani had ordered the transfer of \$480 million to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, on the heels of a

dramatic flare-up between the two sides last week-end. Of the total amount, \$300 million will be directed to health and education projects run by the Palestinian Authority, with the remaining \$180 million earmarked for UN programmes and renovation works to improve electricity services. Earlier on Monday, Israel said it would allow for the delivery of \$30 million to the Gaza Strip from Doha as part of a ceasefire agreement with Hamas. According to several analyst, the Qatari support for Gaza falls within the country's desire to strengthen its political role in the region. In this context, the US withdrawal of funding to Gaza and the UN organisation dedicated to providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinians throughout the Middle East (UNRWA) led the emirate to step in in recent years.

To know more about this topic:

- *The Jerusalem Post*, "Qatar will allocate \$480 million to the West Bank, Gaza", 05/07/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2DV3gYl>.
- *Al Jazeera*, "Qatar to send \$480m to West Bank, Gaza after truce with Israel", 05/07/19, available at: <http://bit.ly/2PPNX81>.

#ArabInsight

#ISIS – The 'post-Caliphate caliph': an insight into al-Baghdadi's first video appearance since 2014



On the 29th of April, the elusive leader of the Islamic State al-Baghdadi appeared in a propaganda video released by ISIS media wing al-Furqan. If authentic, it would be the first time he was seen publicly since July 2014, when he delivered a sermon at the Great Mosque al-Nuri, in Mosul. That speech marked the rise of Da'esh and its self-declared "Caliphate" in Iraq and Syria. Below is an analysis of his 18-minute address based on an insightful article published on the 3rd of May by the Jihadist media specialist Mina al-Lami on *BBC Arabic*, titled "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi: What are the messages conveyed by his last appearance?".

The clip shows al-Baghdadi sitting cross-legged in a nondescript location, with a full and greyer beard, talking to a few men with blurred faces. Commentators were quick to associate this picture to the last known images of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the then al-Qaeda second-in-command, sitting on the floor in a windowless room with pale lights, a weapon at hand; or to Osama bin Laden, during his years as a fugitive. It is unclear when the video was filmed, but the man makes reference to the battle of Baghouz and other recent events, in particular the Easter attacks in Sri Lanka and the protest movements in Algeria and Sudan.

On the first point, al-Baghdadi affirms that "the battle for Baghouz is over", referring to IS' final stronghold in eastern Syria, liberated in late March by the Syrian Democratic Forces. In the footage, the reclusive leader attempts to minimise the defeat by asserting that "the battle of Islam and its people against the Crusaders and their followers is a long one" and that "jihad will continue until doomsday". By listing the name of the organisation's fighters – mainly foreigners – and emphasising their "steadfastness", he stresses on the transnational nature of the jihadi cause, calling for the affiliates in other parts of the world to persevere. In this respect, al-Baghdadi mentions the series of attacks carried out by ISIS branches, saying that 92 operations have taken place in eight countries. Most notably, he welcomes recent bombings in Sri Lanka, saying they were carried out in revenge for the killing of IS' fighters in Baghouz and praising the presence of Europeans and Americans among the victims. One of the reasons why he felt it imperative to appear on camera is seemingly linked to the doubts expressed in the media and elsewhere about the role played by Da'esh in these attacks, as its capability to partner with a local group has been widely put into question.

As previously mentioned, another major issue raised by Abu Bakr is the mass the demonstrations in Algeria and Sudan, which led to the overthrow of long-standing rulers Bouteflika and al-Bashir. In a clear attempt to exploit the events, he argues that "there is no point in uprooting the former regime. New tyrants may appear worse than the existing ones" and reminds the people in both countries that "the only method that would work with these tyrants is waging jihad for the sake of Allah". In this way, he apparently seeks to avoid the pitfalls suffered by al-Qaeda in the early months of the Arab Uprisings,

when its leadership was caught off guard by the events.

To conclude, in light of the material collapse of the so-called “Caliphate”, al-Baghdadi clearly seems less determined to follow the old state model, insisting instead on the transnational nature of the struggle. His sudden appearance is aimed to serve both as a moral boost for the remaining IS militants and as a catalyst for lone-wolf terrorists or small groups to act. He thus welcomes the *bayat* (oath of loyalty) of new groups emerged in Burkina Faso, Mali, and the DRC. Winning territorially is no longer paramount, as the priority is to carry forward the battle of ideology: “Allah ordered us to lead the jihad, not to win”.

[The article is available in Arabic at the following link: <https://bbc.in/2LH76e7>]

Elena Tosti di Stefano

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