

ARAB DISPATCH

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North Africa

#Tunisia - Kais Sayed elected as Tunisia's new President



Sunday 13th of October Kais Sayed, a 61 year old retired law professor, won a landslide victory in Tunisia's presidential elections. With a total turnout of 55%, Mr. Sayed won 73% of the votes casted thus defeating his rival Nabil Karoui in the second round of Tunisia's presidential elections.

Mr. Sayed was backed, after the first round, by a variety of political groups going from the left to the moderate Islamist party Ennhada. Mr. Sayed ran on a social conservative platform favouring death penalty

and opposing homosexuality, his campaign centred as well on the need to renovate a political system perceived as corrupt and inefficient by the majority of the population.

Although the new president declared to a crowd of supporters that: “[What I have done is a new revolution](#)” he will need to find a political majority in an extremely fragmented parliament where the largest party, Ennahda, won only 52 out of 219 seats in the parliamentary elections that were held on 6th of October. Moreover, the President’s powers in Tunisia’s new political system are extremely limited making it even more important for Mr. Saied to find some sort of common ground with the Prime Minister that will be elected by parliament.

To know more about this topic:

- *Reuters*, Hailing 'new revolution', political outsider Saied elected Tunisia's president. 14/10/19, available at: <https://reut.rs/2MMCXHj>
- *Al Arabiya*, The former professor out to remake Tunisian politics. 14/10/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/35KPVOK>
- *Le Monde*, La victoire du conservateur Kais Saïed à la présidence tunisienne est lourde d'interrogations. 14/10/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/2BIKK9Y>

Gulf

[#Saudi Arabia](#) [#United Arab Emirates](#) – President Putin’s visit to Saudi Arabia and The United Arab Emirates



Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates last week signing oil agreements and discussing regional security. A series of multimillion-dollar deals signed in Riyadh on Monday sealed Putin's first official visit to Saudi Arabia since 2012. Putin signed more than 20 agreements covering sectors such as oil and other energy industries, space and satellite navigation.

The key deal was an agreement to increase cooperation in the OPEC+ group in order to strengthen the oil market stability. During his tour in the Gulf Region President Putin also signed agreements worth more than \$1.3bn in Abu Dhabi.

Putin's visit was also centred around security issues with his spokesman Dmitry Peskov telling reporters in Riyadh that "[A substantial exchange of opinions took place, on regional problems.](#)" The discussions were centred on the Turkish intervention in Syria, the War in Yemen and the growing tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

To know more about this topic:

- *Arab News*, Raft of multimillion-dollar deals seal Putin's visit to Saudi Arabia, 14/10/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/2IZgcin>
- *BBC News*, Saudi Arabia warms to Russia's embrace, 16/10/19, available at: <https://bbc.in/2MQJZLs>
- *DW News*, Putin courts investments in trip to Saudi Arabia, 14/10/19, available at: <https://bit.ly/32h2QFJ>

Levant

[#Syria](#) – Turkey Launches its Peace Spring Operation against Kurdish Forces in Northern Syria



On October 9, following Trump's announcement on America's withdrawal from northern Syria, Ankara launched its Peace Spring military operation in the Kurdish held area. It began with a series of airstrikes against Kurdish units, shortly followed by a ground offensive carried out primarily by the FSA, a Turkish-backed militia composed mainly of Syrian expatriates.

The operation's objective is to establish a buffer zone in northern Syria in order to protect the Turkish border. Thus, in Erdogan's view, the offensive is seen as another chapter in the war against the PKK, a separatist Kurdish group in Turkey strongly linked to the Syrian Kurdish forces. The creation of a safe zone within Syria is also seen as a way for Ankara to move back to Syria the millions of refugees that have fled to Turkey during the war.

The world reactions to this attack were generally of condemnation. European countries approved a moratorium on arms sales to Turkey, the United States, after giving way to the Turkish offensive condemned the level of violence that followed the start of the Peace Spring operation. Russia, while maintain contacts with Turkey, brokered a deal between the YPG and Assad's government that permitted the Syrian army to occupy a series of strong points along the northern border.

To know more about this topic:

- CNN, Everything you need to know about Turkey's military offensive in Syria, 11/10/14, available at: <https://cnn.it/2OZBmka>
- *The Economist*, Turks cheer Erdogan's war against Syrian Kurds, 15/10/19, available at: <https://econ.st/33LjdLf>
- *The New York Times*, In 'Cave-In,' Trump Cease-Fire Cements Turkey's Gains in Syria, 17/10/19, available at: <https://nyti.ms/2VQKc5n>
- *BBC News*, Russia's Putin: From pariah to Middle East power broker, 17/10/19, available at: <https://bbc.in/2oTyNW9>

#ArabInsight

by Elena Tosti Di Stefano

#Syria - Operation "Peace Spring": invasion or self-defence? A look into the Arab press and social media perspectives



In recent days, Turkey's incursion into north-eastern Syria has triggered heated debate among the Arab public. This week, we provide an insight into the different positions on the matter through an analysis of the Arab press, online information platforms, and social media outlets.

As noted in [an article published by BBC Arabic](#) on the 13th of October, it seems that – as a general trend – Egyptian and Saudi journalists have so far adopted a critical stance towards Turkey's military offensive in Syria, while Qatari commentators have shown a less condemnatory attitude.

The former position is exemplified by [Khaled Miri's editorial](#) entitled "Sultan of Blood", appeared last Saturday on the Egyptian newspaper Akhbar Al Youm. Starting from a harsh critique of Erdoğan's approach to domestic affairs, the author goes on stating that "the Turkish President has not only lost his humanity, but also his mind" as a result of "his illusions of greatness" and his attempts to "save his declining popularity at home". In an article published by the Saudi newspaper Okaz, [available online on Youm7](#), Hani al-Dhaheri accuses the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) of having supported jihadi groups in northern Syria in their fighting against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) – particularly the mainly-Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) – by using "the false slogan of countering terrorism and protecting the Turkish border". To corroborate this argument, he makes reference to other Turkish military interventions, such as the 2018 Operation "Olive Branch" in the majority-Kurdish Afrin District of north-west Syria.

As far as Doha's position is concerned, it is worth recalling that Qatari Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, recently declared that Turkey's move "is not expansionist" as it represents a reaction to an "imminent threat" from Kurdish groups on its Syrian border. In this respect, Qatari analyst [Adel Abdullah al-Mutairi, writing on Arabi21](#), asserts that "the Syrian Kurds, under the leadership of the PKK, believed that the dream of the Kurdistan state could be realised in light of the deteriorating Syrian and Iraqi scenarios and the availability of U.S. support; however it seems that such dream turned into a nightmare". Al-Mutairi qualifies Syria as a "failed state", characterised by the proliferation of terrorist armed groups along the Turkish border, that is "already inflamed by the PKK". Against this background, Turkey could not have waited until the threat had reached its territory and citizens". The journalist also criticises the reaction of the Arab League (AL), saying it has so far failed to take a unified and effective stance on Syria beyond the rhetoric. In this sense, he points the finger at the 12th October emergency meeting in Cairo, where almost all AL Foreign Ministers described Ankara's military action as an "invasion" and "blatant aggression" which violate international law and threaten the security and stability of the region.

As remarked in another [article appeared on BBC Arabic](#), the Arab League's response has prompted mixed reactions among social media activists and Arab world personalities on Facebook and Twitter, whereas official media in the Arab countries – except for Qatar – have unanimously praised the meeting's final statement. Some users reject the justifications provided by Ankara and welcome the current Arab stance, highlighting that the latter will play an important role in Syria's readmission into the Arab League. Others find ironic the "sudden awakening" of the Arab states, as well as their "sudden love" for Syria, claiming that the AL has been silent on several other occasions.

More in general, social networking sites launched hashtags denouncing or praising operation “Peace Spring”. On the one hand, we may find strong condemnatory expressions, such as [#سوريا_اكراد_بييد_اردوغان](#) [Erdogan_Yubid_Akrad_Suriah], namely “Erdogan eliminates the Kurds in Syria”; on the other hand, a number of Arab social media users manifested their support to the military campaign through the hashtag [#السلام_نبع](#) [#Nabaa_Salam] – i.e. “Peace Spring” –, stressing the need to protect Turkish citizens’ security and to secure safe areas for the Syrian population.