

# ARAB DISPATCH

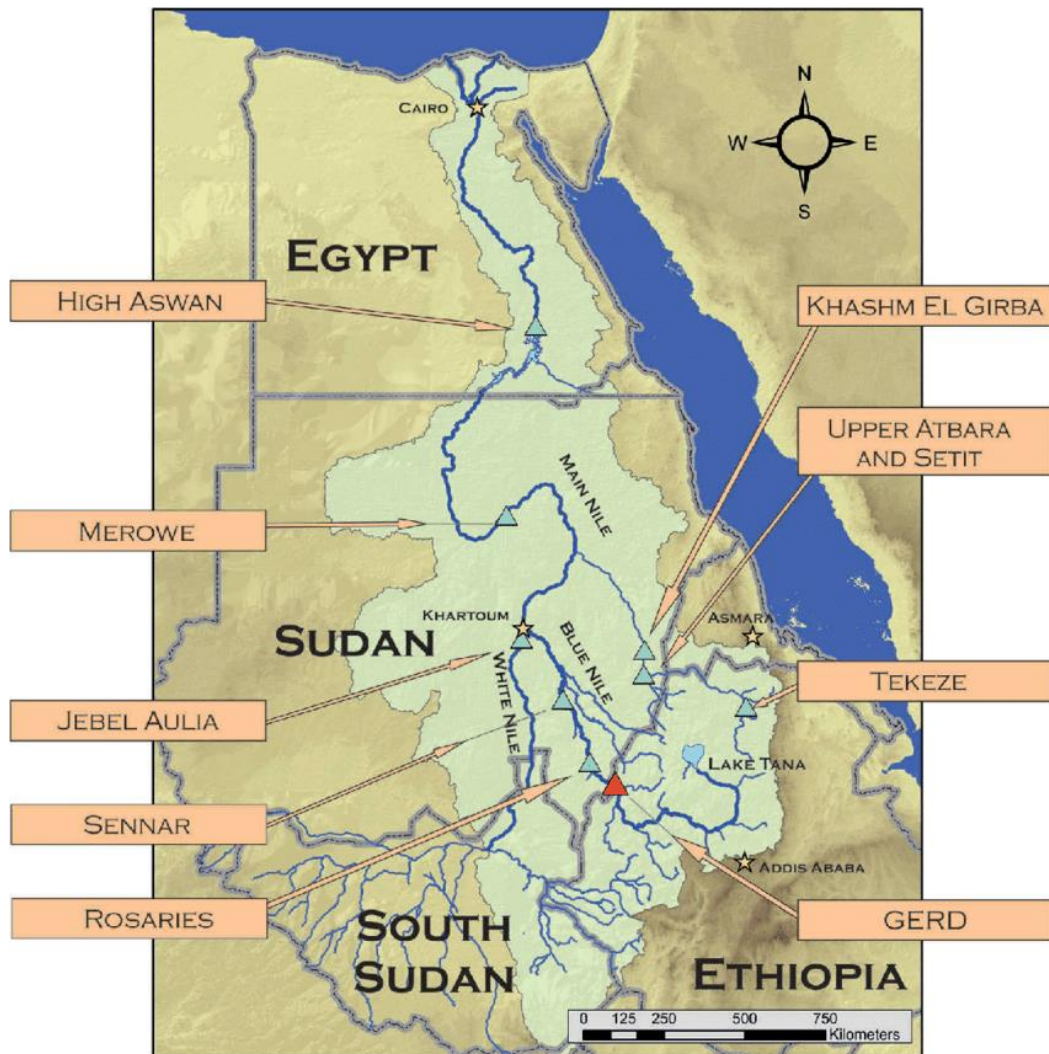
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## North Africa

### #Egypt – Stalled negotiations over the GERD



*Source: Water International*

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, after several days of tripartite negotiations, over the delay in filling the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Ethiopia decided to go ahead with his plan and to start filling the hydroelectric dam although the construction is still in progress.

The Nile basin encompasses 3,18 million km<sup>2</sup> of Eastern Africa, including 11 nation-states. It has two major tributaries, the Blue Nile and the White Nile that cross Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt. The Blue Nile flows from Ethiopia to Sudan, contributing to its agriculture-based economy, and it joins the White Nile in Khartoum all the way down into Egypt. The GERD, built in 2011 on the upper reaches of the Nile River, with no prior consultation with the other two countries involved, has the capacity to hold 88 % of the annual flow of the Nile River and will control the water flow of Sudan and Egypt.

Once in operation, the GERD, will provide 65 million Ethiopians with electricity, promising an incredible industrial development for the country. On the other hand, it will certainly affect Sudan and Egypt, that rely on the Nile for 90% of their water, with a significant impact on their agriculture-based economy. Ethiopia sees the GERD as essential for its electrification and economic development, while Sudan and Egypt, that lack on freshwater, fear it will significantly reduce their essential water supplies with repercussion on local economy and eventually on migratory flows.

Negotiations over the regulations and the implementation of the dam between Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia, have significantly intensified last month, together with an important escalation of tensions after Ethiopia announced its intention to start filling the hydroelectric dam during the rainy season, decision that was strongly rejected by Egypt.

Egypt has proposed several alternatives regarding provisions in times of drought, the annual filling, operations and technical rules, however the negotiations, between the Ministers of Water of Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia, with the supervision of the African Union and attended by European and American observers, did not reached an agreement.

If the disputes over the implementation of the dam and its regulation do not reach a political solution, the entire region will be destabilized, not to mention that Egypt is a pivotal fragile country for the stability of the MENA area and for international trade.

*To know more about this topic:*

- *Atlantic Council*, Nile Basin's GERD dispute creates risks for Egypt, Sudan, and beyond, 10/07/20, available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/nile-basins-gerd-dispute-creates-risks-for-egypt-sudan-and-beyond/>
- *Arab News*, Dam talks 'at crossroads' after Egypt rejects Ethiopian plea, 11/07/20, available at: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1703346/middle-east>
- *Asbarq al-Awsat*, GERD talks continue to solve disputed issues, 11/07/20, available at: <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/2383031/gerd-talks-continue-solve-disputed-issues>
- *Asbarq al-Awsat*, Nile Countries Agree to Restart Talks, Delay Filling GERD, 27/06/20, available at: <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/2357066/nile-countries-agree-restart-talks-delay-filling-gerd>
- *Water International*, Cooperative filling approaches for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, 05/16, available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/302977907> Cooperative filling approaches for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

## Levant

### #Palestine – Creeping settlements before the official annexation of the West Bank



*Source: Associated Press News*

According to the International Middle East Media Center, Israeli settlers are seizing further portions of the West Bank, ahead of the annexation plan announced at the end of June.

The source has reported that Israeli settlers are illegally taking portions of the West Bank and the Jordan Valley belonging to Palestinians, under the protection of the army. Group of settlers set up tents next to already existing settlements and near the Israeli army camp.

At the north of the Jordan valley, settlers have occupied an area near Khirbet Al-Farisiya and raised the Israeli flag. Palestinians have reported that at the northern town of Asira-Shamaleiah, north of Nablus, a settler placed a mobile house and set up tents while the Israeli troops were informing residents living in the area that those lands belong to Israel. This scenario has been repeatedly reported from several Palestinians.

Moreover, the report stated that the Israel Land Authority will implement a 240 settlement units project, called “Greater Jerusalem” in the already occupied East Jerusalem. The project will consist in the construction of skyscrapers, housings, hotels and commercial stores. The Council of Settlements has also announced a further project for the construction of 164 new settlement units, to be incorporated to the already existing settlement of Nave Daniel in south Bethlem.

Despite the Palestinian, Arab and international pressure, Israeli officials have signalled their determination to go ahead with the annexation plan. Since the announcement of the annexation plan by the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel has implemented a series of measures to further expand the Israeli authority over Palestine, seizing lands, implementing new settlement projects and building roads to better link settlements.

*To know more about this topic:*

- *Palestine News Network*, Settlers building new settlement outposts under army protection, 13/07/20, available at: <http://english.pnn.ps/2020/07/13/settlers-building-new-settlement-outposts-under-army-protection/>
- *Asbarq al-Awsat*, Israeli settlers expand to seize more West Bank territory, 12/07/20, available at: <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/2384991/israeli-settlers-expand-seize-more-west-bank-territory>
- *Reuters*, Israel builds new Jerusalem road that will link settlements as government weighs West Bank annexation, 15/06/20, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-road-exclusive/exclusive-israel-builds-new-jerusalem-road-that-will-link-settlements-as-government-weighs-west-bank-annexation-idUSKBN23M1LM>
- *IMEC News*, Israel Announces 164 New Illegal Settlement Units in Bethlehem, 05/07/20, available at: <https://imemc.org/article/new-illegal-israeli-settlement-units-announced-in-bethlehem/>
- *Daily Sabah*, Israelis continue demolishing Palestinian homes in occupied territories despite pandemic, 09/07/20, available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/mid-east/israelis-continue-demolishing-palestinian-homes-in-occupied-territories-despite-pandemic>

## Gulf

### #Saudi Arabia – UK-Saudi Defence Ministers' talks to strengthen relations



*Source: Ajelen News*

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, the Defence Minister of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Khalid bin Salman, and his British counterpart, the Defence Secretary Ben Wallace, discussed their relations in the defence field and their willingness to further strengthen their partnership to enhance regional and international security.

Those talks happened just after the United Kingdom introduced human rights sanctions against individuals, including twenty Saudi officials closed to Sheikh Mohammed bin Salman, involved in the murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi. However, these sanctions did not affect the partnership between the two countries in the field of defence. Unsurprisingly, just a week before, UK has decided to resume weapons exports to Saudi Arabia, despite last year's legal dispute between the British government and the Campaign Against the Arms Trade, that led the UK government to suspend selling arms to the Saudi-led coalition involved in the Yemen war. The sales are a vital cash flow for British defence industry.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss has declared that there is no clear risk that the arms sales will be used in the war, and she added that Saudi Arabia has the capacity to comply with international humanitarian law.

Andrew Smith, Media Coordinator and spokesperson of the Campaign Against Arms Trade, expressed his concern on the decision to resume arms exports to Saudi Arabia precisely given the high risk that UK-made arms will be used in Yemen.

*To know more about this topic:*

- *Daily Sabah*, UK to resume Saudi arms sales despite Yemen concerns, 07/07/20, available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/uk-to-resume-saudi-arms-sales-despite-yemen-concerns>
- *The Independent*, UK arms sales to Saudi-led coalition up by almost 50 per cent, despite arms trade treaty, 24/12/2019, available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-saudi-arabia-arms-sales-yemen-war-weapons-treaty-oxfam-a9258166.html>
- *The Guardian*, UK on collision course with Saudis over new human rights sanctions, 06/07/20, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2020/jul/06/dominic-raab-to-announce-uk-sanctions-against-human-rights-abusers>
- *Al Jazeera*, UK to resume Saudi arms exports despite Yemen war concerns, 07/09/20, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/uk-resume-saudi-arms-exports-yemen-war-concerns-200707184144766.html>
- *Al Arabiya*, Saudi Vice Defense Minister receives call from British counterpart, 08/07/20, available at: <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/world/2020/07/08/Saudi-Vice-Defense-Minister-receives-call-from-British-counterpart.html>

## #ArabInsight

By Maria Bagnara

### #Tunisia – Prime Minister Fakhfakh steps aside



*Source: Asharq al-Awsat*

The Tunisian Prime Minister, Elias Fakhfakh, has presented his resignation to the President Kais Saied, only five months after his nomination (15/07/2020).

His resignation, came immediately after a meeting held at the Presidential palace attended by the Prime Minister, the leader and co-founder of the Islamic party, Harakat an-Nahda, (Renaissance Movement), Rashid Ghannushi and the secretary of the Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (the Tunisian General Labour Union), Nureddin Taboubi. According to the newspaper [El Khabar](#), Qais Saied asked Elyes Fakhfakh to officially submit his resignation.

This decision was most likely based on the increasing tension between the PM, who belongs to the at-Takattul ad-Demuqrati (Forum Democratic) and Ennahda movement, the biggest party in his coalition. The PM announced his intention to conduct a cabinet reshuffle, clearly to remove Ennahda's ministers from the Parliament. Ennahda has repeatedly accused Fakhfakh of corruption and ask to create a commission to investigate on an alleged conflict of interests. The movement has recently tabled a no-confidence motion against him by submitting a request of withdrawing confidence signed by 105 deputies out of out 219, to bring the government down, motion that has been rejected by the President who is



not willing to open any consultation over the formation of a new government, adding that, consultations over a new Prime Minister will be held only if Fakhfakh will present his official resignations.

Given the political crisis, President Kais Saied had extensive discussions with the parties over the political dispute, during which he urged them to solve any controversial in accordance with the constitution. He added that the state and its people stand above any political dispute and justice must be allowed to go through without compromising the dignity of individuals.

According to the Tunisian Constitution, the President has now a week to appoint a new prime minister, who will form a new government within two months, with parliamentary election taking place at the end of October.

The last parliamentary elections held in October 2019 have showed a highly divided parliament with parties struggling to obtain the majority and led by Ennahda, that obtained 54 seats out of 217.

Observers commented that this political crisis might indicate that the government coalition is fading and this might lead smaller parties, like Nidaa Tounes (Call for Tunis), to re-emerge.

*Sources:*

- *Asbarq al-Ansat*, استقالة رئيس الحكومة التونسية إلياس الفخفاخ ( Resignation of the Tunisian Prime Minister Elyes Fakhfakh), available at: <https://aawsat.com/home/article/2391926/-استقالة-رئيس-الحكومة-التونسية-إلياس-الفخفاخ>
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- *El-Khabar*, رئيس الحكومة إلياس الفخفاخ يقدم استقالته لرئيس الجمهورية (The Tunisian Prime Minister, Elyes Fakhfakh, presents his resignation to the President of the Republic) <https://www.akhbaralaan.net/news/arab-world/2020/07/15/-تونس-رئيس-الحكومة-إلياس-الفخفاخ-يقدم-استقالته-لرئيس-الجمهورية>
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