

ARAB DISPATCH

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North Africa

#Egypt – Cairo ratifies the strategic maritime deal with Athens



Source: Al Arabiya – Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry and his Greek counterpart Nikos Dendias

On the 10th of October, Egypt ratified the strategic maritime deal signed with Greece on the 6th of August.

The agreement between the two countries demarcates Egypt's maritime sea boundaries with Greece and creates a shared economic zone for oil and gas drilling. The agreement, described by Athens and Cairo as a new stage in their bilateral relations, comes in response to the Memorandum of Understanding

(MoM) signed by Turkish and the Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) in November 2019 that establishes maritime boundaries between the two countries, giving Ankara the pretext for gas exploration and oil drilling operation in waters that are claimed both by Ankara and Athens.

Given the recent dispute between Turkey and Greece over maritime boundaries' disagreement, the deal signed by Egypt and Greece will counterbalance Turkey's activities in the Mediterranean Sea and Turkey's "Blue Homeland" doctrine, that includes the defence of Turkey's maritime boundaries as no less important than land boundaries.

It is obvious that implementing the maritime deal also aims at reinforcing existing multilateral agreements in the Mediterranean involving by Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and supported by the United Arab Emirates.

As highlighted by The Institute for National Security Studies, the ongoing dispute in Eastern Mediterranean does not only reflect the desires of Egypt and Turkey to become energy hubs in the region, but it also reveals a competition for the political leadership in the Middle East, with Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Egypt united against the threat of political Islam represented by Qatar and Turkey.

Turkey already disappointed for being excluded in the energy agreements implemented by the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), established by Egypt, Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Jordan and Israel in January 2019, called the Cairo-Athens deal null by declaring that the "*supposedly-delimited area lies within the Turkish continental shelf*". Moreover, Ankara condemns the Athens-Cairo maritime deal for violating the maritime rights of Libya.

To know more about this topic:

- *The Arab Weekly*, East Med Gas Forum turns into regional organisation, in blow to Turkey, 23/09/20, available at: <https://thearabweekly.com/east-med-gas-forum-turns-regional-organisation-blow-turkey>
- *KNEWS*, Ankara slams Greece-Egypt maritime deal, 07/08/20, available at: <https://knews.kathimerini.com.cy/en/news/ankara-slams-greece-egypt-maritime-deal>
- *INNS*, A Red Line for the Blue Homeland? The maritime border demarcation agreement between Greece and Egypt, 25/08/20, available at: <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/egypt-greece-agreement/>

- *Daily Sabah*, Egypt's el-Sissi signs maritime deal with Athens, 10/10/2020, available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/egypts-el-sissi-signs-maritime-deal-with-athens/news>

Levant

#Lebanon – Former Prime Minister Saad Hariri runs for the next parliamentary elections



Sources: The National – Former Prime Minister Saad Hariri

On the 9th of September, the former Lebanese Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, announced his intension to run the next parliamentary elections and eventually to lead the next government.

Lebanon is going through a severe political crisis. In less than one year the country faced repeated resignations from prime ministers that felt unable to solve a pre-existing economic crisis, exacerbated by the devastating blast that hit Beirut's port on the 4th of August, with 200 casualties and thousands of homeless people.

French president Emmanuel Macron said during his visits to Beirut that France and other international organizations will not provide any financial aid until the new government will implement political reforms and tackle internal corruption.

Mustapha Adib, former prime minister called to form a new cabinet, following Hassan Diab's resignation, quit on the 26th of September due to an impasse over a non-partisan cabinet, suggested by the French initiative for a new government free sectarianism and ethnic groups' pressures.

The next parliamentary elections will be the third attempt in only one year to nominate a Prime Minister.

However, the announcement of Saad Hariri as a possible candidate to run the elections was indeed a surprise for many Lebanese. Hariri in fact, resigned in October 2019 after huge unprecedented anti-government protests against corruption and dire living conditions.

Moreover, the former prime minister is well known for its ties with the main Shiite parties, Hezbollah and Amal, and his nomination as a prime minister could bring them in the next government.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Jazeera*, Lebanon PM-designate steps down amid impasse over gov't formation, 26/09/20, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/26/lebanon-pm-designate-resigns-amid-impasse-over-govt-formation>
- *Daily Sabah*, Lebanon struggles to name new PM after failed efforts, 07/10/20, available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/mid-east/lebanon-struggles-to-name-new-pm-after-failed-efforts>
- *Al-Monitor*, Lebanon's Hariri says he's Definitely a candidate to lead government again, 09/10/20, available at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/10/saad-hariri-lebanon-prime-minister-macron-cabinet-beirut.html>
- *Daily Sabah*, Lebanon's Hariri positions himself for comeback amid efforts to for govt, 09/10/20, available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/mid-east/lebanons-hariri-positions-himself-for-comeback-amid-efforts-to-form-govt>

Gulf

#United Arab Emirates – UAE and Israeli Foreign Ministers hold meeting in Berlin



Source: The New Arab – The Foreign Ministers of Israel, Germany and UAE at the Holocaust memorial in Berlin

On the 6th of October, the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan and his Israeli counterpart, Gabi Ashkenazi, held a meeting in Germany during which they discussed future bilateral developments and visited the Holocaust memorial in Berlin.

It is first meeting at Foreign ministers' level since the Abraham agreement, signed by their countries on the 15th of September at the White House.

The German Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, who organised the visit, remarked the importance of the meeting, adding that the two countries are advancing the peace process in the region. He also highlighted that this first step is changing perspectives in the region with specific reference to Bahrain (that also normalised relations) and to Saudi Arabia, moving in the same direction and opening already its airspace to direct flights from Tel Aviv to Abu Dhabi.

The FM also expressed his hopes for a revival of the Israeli-Palestinian process. This declaration was met with considerable coldness by the Palestinian leaders, who did not respond to a previous notification of

the Emirati-Israeli meeting and to the offer to convey any specific message from their part. That said, Germany's role as honest mediator in the region is quietly rising.

Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, who was the first representative of an Arab country to visit the Holocaust memorial in Berlin, declared on the site that the Middle East “*is witnessing a new chapter on its path towards freedom and peace*”. Before leaving the site, the UAE foreign minister wrote in Arabic on the visitors' book that his country is committed to values of tolerance, coexistence and acceptance of others and that the Holocaust tragedy will never happen again.

This was a significant gesture, considering that this is a very sensitive argument in many Arab countries, and that some of them even deny the tragedy or do not touch the argument in schools and academic environments.

To know more about this topic:

- *Gulf News*, UAE, Israel foreign ministers in historic first meeting at Berlin Holocaust Memorial, 06/10/20, available at: <https://gulfnews.com/photos/news/in-pictures-uae-israeli-foreign-ministers-visit-berlin-holocaust-memorial-before-historic-meeting-1.1601988162578>
- *Axios*, UAE's Foreign Minister visits Holocaust memorial with Israeli counterpart, 06/10/20, available at: <https://www.axios.com/uae-foreign-minister-visit-holocaust-memorial-6b6707a3-aaf9-4fb7-a399-e1d180f96a50.html>
- *Israel Hayom*, UAE foreign minister visits Holocaust memorial vows never again, 07/10/20, available at: <https://www.israelhayom.com/2020/10/07/uae-foreign-minister-visits-holocaust-memorial-vows-never-again/>

#ArabInsight

By Maria Bagnara

#ArabLeague – The death of the Arab League



Source: The Daily Sabah – Arab League’s meeting session in Cairo

On the 7th of October, the Arab League raised a lot of criticism on Arab Media, after six of its members refused to take the rotating presidency of the organisation.

Almost one third of its members refused to chair the organisation and condemned the Arab League for rejecting the draft resolution proposed by Palestine against the so-called Abraham Agreement, the normalising deal signed by the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Bahrein with Israel on the 15th of September.

As reported by [Al-Quds Al-Arabi](#), following the latest dilemma, the Council of the Arab League (مجلس جامعة الدول العربية - Majlis Jāmi‘at ad-Duwal al-‘Arabiyya), the main institution of the organisation, called on Arab people to consider the organisation as a “كيانًا ميتًا” – “*death entity*” incapable to intervene on Arab matters and to defend the Palestinian cause.

In this regards the head of the Arab Council and former Tunisian President (2011-2014), Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, expressed all his disappointment over the Arab League in a statement published on his [Facebook page](#) titled اعلان وفاة الجامعة العربية – announcement of the death of the Arab League. On his

Facebook post the former Tunisian president called on Arab people to consider the League as a dead entity that *انتهى في العقول والقلوب ولا أمل يرجى في اصلاحه وإحيائه مادام واقعا تحت سلطة الدكتاتوريات العربية العميلة – is no longer in our hearts and minds. There will be no hope for the league as long as its administration falls under the authority of Arab dictatorships that moved away from the values, aspirations and expectations of its people.* At the end of its statement he called on Arab people to create an alternative Union to replace the dead “Arab League”, a new entity *التمسك بحقوق الشعب الفلسطيني ورفض كل أشكال التطبيع والتبعية - in accordance to the rights of Palestinian people, rejecting any sort of normalisation and subordination.*

Besides, the Arab League was already facing the final curtain when it shown no commitment in supporting Lebanon, one of the founder states of the Arab League back in March 1945, terribly hit by the devastating blast on the 4th of August. It is remarkable that the first move in support of Lebanon and Lebanese people, after the horrific blast, came not from any of the League’s members but from France.

According to [Al Jazeera](#), the delegation of Palestine, headed by the alternate ambassador to the Arab League, Muhannad al-Aklouk, on the 10th of September presented a draft resolution to the Arab League asking its members to reject the normalisation agreement. However, the draft met the disapproval of a group of Arab countries, leading the Palestinian Foreign Minister, Riyad al-Maliki to quit its chairmanship of the Arab League meetings.

Palestine was the first country to relinquish the presidency of the Arab League meetings. Libya, Qatar, Kuwait and Lebanon followed straight after. Syria, that was recently readmitted to the organisation, followed the Palestinian move.

The Palestinian cause has always represented a red line within the Arab League. Back in 1979, when the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat signed the Camp David peace agreement with Israel, becoming the first Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, the response of the Arab League was immediate and inflexible. Egypt got suspended from the Arab League, the headquarter of the organization was transferred from Cairo to Tunis, while the Arab States cut their diplomatic ties with Egypt and recalled their ambassadors.

Palestinian factions strongly condemned the position of the Arab League. The spokesperson of Palestinian Liberation Organisation (منظمة التحرير الفلسطينية - Munazzamat at-Tahrir al-Filastīniyyah), stated, as reported by [Al-Sharq](#), that *إن قرارات الجامعة العربية أصبحت مرهونة للإرادة الأمريكية والصهيونية – indeed any decision within the Arab League is mortgaged by the will of the Us and the Zionists.*

Also Mohammed al-Hindi, member of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (حركة الجهاد الإسلامي في فلسطين - Harakat al-Jihād al-Islāmi fī Filastīn) strongly accused the organisation of abandoning the Palestinian cause by saying that *إن الجامعة العربية تمثل اليوم دولاً تتخلى عن فلسطين وتعانق إسرائيل وترفض إدانة التطبيع – today the Arab League represents only countries that get rid of Palestine and embrace Israel refusing to condemn the normalisation process.*

Naturally the Islamic Resistance movement HAMAS (حركة المقاومة الإسلامية) Harakat al-Muqāwamah al-’Islāmiyyah) has severely condemned the position taken by the Arab League.

The spokesperson of the movement, Hazem Qaseem, wrote on his [Twitter](#) page *من المؤسف اسقاط الجامعة العربية لمشروع قرار يدين اتفاق التطبيع بين الامارات والكيان الصهيوني، فعدم قدرة الجامعة على اصدار هذا القرار يغيري حكومة – the Arab League’s decision to reject the draft resolution condemning the normalisation agreement between the UAE and the Zionists, will prolong the Israeli occupation and endorse the American administration to continue implementing the removal of the Palestinian cause.*

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