



ARAB DISPATCH

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NORTH AFRICA #Algeria #Morocco

Algeria ends gas supplies to Morocco

On the 31st of October, amid escalating diplomatic tensions with Morocco, the Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, announced that the country will not renew the pipeline contract with Morocco and ordered to the national-state-owned oil company, Société Nationale pour la Recherche, la Production, le Transport, la Transformation, et la Commercialisation des Hydrocarbures (SONATRACH), the cessation of all the commercial relations with the Kingdom.

The decision is the culmination of recently announced plans to end the Gaz-Maghreb-Europe (GME) pipeline deal, due to expire at the end of October.

The GME pipeline delivers 13,5 billion cubic metres from Algeria to Spain and Portugal passing through Morocco.

Even though Morocco and Algeria closed their border in 1994, both countries have been benefitting from the GME pipeline since 1996.

Algeria, Africa's biggest gas exporter has been using the pipeline to deliver gas to Spain and Portugal, while Morocco received around 1 billion cubic metres of gas per year, half of which as transit fees. With the amount of gas received by Algeria the Kingdom produces 10% of the country's electricity.

Algeria and Morocco have a long history of tense relations over border

demarcation and regional influence issues. Furthermore, Algeria supports and has hosted in the past the Polisario Front, the liberation movement founded in 1971, by the Sahrawi people claiming the Western Sahara, currently under Moroccan administration.

Last year tensions between the two countries have significantly intensified after the Trump's administration recognised Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara and, in return, Morocco normalised diplomatic relations with Israel.

In August, Algiers accused Rabat of "hostile actions" and of supporting the separatist movement of the Kabylie region, the Mouvement pour l'Autodétermination de la Kabylie (MAK).

On the 22nd of September, after months of heightened tensions between the two North African countries, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, decided to close the airspace to all Moroccan planes and, both countries increased their military deployments along the border, raising fears of a renewed border war.

According to some analysts, it is unlikely that the tensions between the two

neighbouring countries could lead to a military confrontation. Morocco most probably will not react to Algeria's provocative decision to cut gas supplies in order to maintain reasonable relations with its Western partners. Meanwhile Algeria, witnessing an unprecedented economic crisis due to the energy prices downturn along with popular pressure, is indeed internally benefitting from the dispute with Morocco and exploiting the "hostile enemy" to gain domestic credibility and, most significantly, to reinforce its military.

However, as stated by the energy expert Roger Carvalho, "Using gas deliveries as an economic weapon is not a good calculation in the long term for Algeria".

In fact, in order to ensure its commitment with Spain, Algeria announced that the gas supply would be carried out through the Medgaz undersea pipeline, that has a capacity of 8 billion cubic metres per year, half of Algerian gas exports to Spain. Hence, using the Medgaz undersea pipeline to halt Morocco's gas supplies, will certainly deprive Algeria of significant gas sales revenue while will have a marginal impact on Morocco.

Diplomatic crisis between Algeria and Morocco threatens gas supplies to Spain

Agreement to supply gas via Morocco expires in October



Source: RFI

To know more:

- *The Arab Weekly*, Algeria-Morocco standoff alarms Spain amid threat to gas supplies, 30/09/21, available at: <https://the arabweekly.com/algeria-morocco-standoff-alarms-spain-amid-threat-gas-supplies>
- *Atalayar*, Algeria faces up to commitment to supply gas to Spain, 30/10/21, available at:

<https://atalayar.com/en/content/algeria-faces-commitment-supply-gas-spain>

- *Morocco World News*, Algerian President orders termination of contract for gas pipeline crossing Morocco, 31/10/21, available at: <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/10/345277/algerian-president-orders-termination-of-contract-for-gas-pipeline-crossing-morocco>

Russia rethinks its overall strategy in Syria

As reported by Worldview Stratfor on the 21st of October, after six years since its military intervention in Syria, Russia is showing willingness to bring the war-torn out from international isolation.

Since its intervention in the conflict, in 2015, the Kremlin has avoided pushing Damascus into negotiations with the oppositions on the ground and, on the contrary, has militarily supported Syrian main strategy: retaking territories from the rebels.

However, as a matter of fact, at this stage of the conflict the rebel territories are either under the Turkish administration or protected by the United States with few chances for Syria to make new gains, hence Russia's decision to change its strategy.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration showed less appetite for a political or military US involvement in Syria, compared to the former Trump administration that ended its

activities with the 2019 Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act.

While before Arab leaders were sceptical about engaging with the Syrian government, due to the risk of sanctions, now some Arab countries are advancing their diplomatic relations with Damascus to achieve different goals.

Nevertheless, after Washington's exit from Kabul Arab leaders are expecting a similar scenario in Syria and preparing for it. Oman, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates have recently reopened their embassies in Syria and have sent to the country medical aid to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. Other Gulf countries followed shortly after, to win influence, lead the reconstruction process and, most significantly, to interfere in the Syrian long-standing partnership with Iran.

While reconciling with Syria, Arab countries will most likely need to reach an agreement with Russia.

The recent withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan might also persuade Biden to engage with Russia before leaving Syria, a move that will make the Kremlin gain international recognition of its interests in Syria while the Russian President Vladimir Putin will emerge as the only winner in Syria.

With this scenario in mind, one is not surprised by Russia's much needed

rethink of its overall strategy and the Kremlin's recent diplomatic efforts to bring Bashar Al-Assad out from international isolation.

Western countries have recently credited Russia for pushing Damascus to implement the UN-led constitutional reform process, launched in 2019, to facilitate the country's political solution to the ten-year-long civil war.



Source: France 24

To know more:

- *Carnegie*, Reassessing Russian Capabilities in the Levant and North Africa, 31/08/21, available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/08/31/reassessing-russian-capabilities-in-levant-and-north-africa-pub-85222>
- *Chatham House*, Middle East prepares for the US to exit Syria, 02/09/21, available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/09/middle-east-prepares-us-exit-syria>
- *Worldview*, To Improve Syria's Image Abroad, Russia Gently
- *Twists al Assad's Arm*, 21/10/21, available at: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/improve-syria-s-image-abroad-russia-gently-twists-al-assad-s-arm>

GULF #UnitedArabEmirates

Dubai announces industrial investments in Jammu and Kashmir

On the 18th of October Dubai signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the Indian-administrated Kashmir.

The agreement was signed between the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the Dubai's Government at the Raj Bhawan in Srinagar to boost industrial developments and to implement Dubai's future investments in IT towers, multipurpose towers, real

estate and logistic and healthcare infrastructure.

The MoU represents the first development agreement signed by a foreign party in a very sensitive region.

In 2019 the Jammu and Kashmir, a Muslim-majority region, distinct from India, with its own identity, constitution and flag, was deprived of its semi-autonomous status by India

and divided in two territories, Jammu-Kashmir and Ladakh.

Jammu-Kashmir are ruled by New Delhi but claimed in full since 1947 by both India and Pakistan.

Since 2019, the Jammu and Kashmir territory witnessed violent popular unrests against New Delhi's government.

The agreement was hailed by the Indian government and welcomed by the Indian Trade Minister Piyush Goyal. The industrial and economic development that will follow might indeed bring more stability and security to the region. Additionally, the MoU could potentially pave the way for further foreign investments.

On the other hand, some analysts believe that behind New Delhi's move there is a clear attempt to get international legitimacy on the Kashmir file throughout its strong bilateral cooperation with the United Arab Emirates. Back in 2019, the

United Arab Emirates supported India's decision to revoke Kashmir's special status and decided not to interfere in the dispute between Pakistan and India.

According to the former Pakistani Ambassador to India, Dr Abdul Basit, the signing of an MoU with a global financial centre, such as Dubai, is a major success for India and a setback for Pakistan.

According to the Ambassador this represents a clear message to the world that Pakistan has no more *locus standi* on Kashmir.

Furthermore, Pakistan's claims over Kashmir were widely supported by the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), an alliance of 56 Muslim countries in which the UAE play an important role. Dubai's Industrial investments in the Jammu and Kashmir might indeed affect the OIC's position to the disputed territory and other Muslim countries might even follow Dubai's move.



Source: Dawan

To know more:

- *Deutsche Welle*, Why Dubai plans to build infrastructure in Kashmir, 28/09/21, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/why-dubai-plans-to-build-infrastructure-in-kashmir/a-59620265>
- *Arab News*, New Delhi says Dubai has signed deal to build infrastructure in Indian-administrated Kashmir, 21/10/21, available at: <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/1950661/middle-east>
- *India Today*, Dubai sign pact to build infrastructure; former Pakistan's high commissioner hails it as major success , 21/10/21, available at: <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-dubai-sign-pact-build-infrastructure-former-pak-high-commissioner-hails-major-success-1867284-2021-10-21>

ARAB INSIGHT

#Egypt

Egypt lifts the state of emergency

On the [25th of October](#) the Egyptian president, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, lifted the nationwide state of emergency in place since the 10th of April 2017, after a twin suicide bombing against a church in Egypt's coastal city of Alexandria and a church in the Nile Delta city of Tanta during the Christian Palm Day.

After the two deadly church bombings the Egyptian President imposed the state of emergency in order to “fight terrorism” and, since then, it has been renewed every three months.

The [state of emergency](#) in Egypt is certainly not new as it is not new its removal. Since 1914, during the British occupation, Egypt amended extraordinary laws to ensure security but de facto these laws ensured arbitrary power to the leadership.

The emergency law was later enacted in 1958, authorizing the President of the Republic to announce the state of emergency under specific circumstances, for a period of three months, renewable once. The state of emergency was then suspended during President Anwar Sadat and reimposed after his assassination, by Hosni Mubarak in 1981 to fight Islamism and the Muslim Brotherhood's opposition.

The removal of the state of emergency was one of the main demands during the 2011's pro-democracy protests that ousted President Mubarak. The state of emergency was then partially lifted by his successor, the Muslim Brotherhood's member and democratically elected Mohammed Morsi who stated, back then, that the country did not need any extraordinary law adding that under the Muslim Brotherhood the existing laws were sufficient.

Reimposed in August 2013 following the massacre of Mohammed Morsi's supporters by army forces under the command of General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi during the sit-ins in al-Nahda Square and Rabaa al-Adawiya Square, it was extended in 2014 to the Sinai Peninsula following a suicide car bombing.

The latest nationwide state of emergency was then declared in April 2017 and, since then, repeatedly renewed to counter the health crisis driven by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Source: The Times of Israel

The state of emergency gives to the President and security forces wide, almost illimited, powers and the authority to take exceptional decisions depending on the “emergency”. Under the state of emergency, the authorities can detain suspects and dissidents unconditionally with an unlimited pretrial period, monitor private communications, ban gatherings and evacuate areas, all with little or no judicial review. Through this means the leadership can limit the freedom of movement and freedom of expression by monitoring newspapers and publications or even by shutting down internet in the country.

Needless to say, many authoritarian regimes have been imposing unconditionally the state of emergency “to fight terrorism” or any other enemy created by the regime’s propaganda thus, citizens have been living under a state of emergency for decades. The emergency law offers authoritarian regimes the opportunity to overcontrol their citizens and, most significantly, to pinpoint opposition movements and eliminate their leaders as threats to the country’s stability and security.

Even though the end of the State of Emergency has been hailed by the Egyptian President as a proof of stability and welcomed positively by the international community many human rights activists remain sceptical and consider the President’s decision mainly a [cosmetic move](#) to gain credibility on an international level and to ease Western criticism regarding the country’s human rights situation.

As a matter of fact, Egypt is witnessing a major economic crisis and, with such a booming population, is in extreme need of financial aid that the United States will not provide unless the country doesn’t improve its human rights conditions.

[According to human rights lawyers](#), many extraordinary laws adopted under the Emergency State have been transferred under anti-terrorism laws, therefore their application does not require the state of emergency and the executive authorities will still have the capability to arrest people without any accountability.

According to the human rights activist and Human Rights Watch researcher, [Amr Magdi](#), President al-Sisi has cancelled the state of emergency on paper but in practice there are still many laws that perpetuate the same practices even without the state of emergency. According to the researcher, lifting the nationwide emergency state is a positive first step but certainly not sufficient. Main points to be addressed regard: a stifled political life, a raft of laws to be

reformed, the fight against corruption in the judiciary and the indiscriminate use of unconditional arrest by security forces.

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