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للأبحاث الاستراتيجية



# Weekly **wire**

'The MENA Region: Shared Insecurity in the Era of Multipolarity Taskforce'



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## **EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

### ***A Special Summit Kicked Off in Brussels***

A special summit among the EU member countries kicked off in Brussels. During the summit, the growing tension in the Mediterranean, relations with Turkey, protests in Belarus, and problems concerning Nagorno-Karabagh, and economic cooperation with China will be discussed. The top discussion is expected to be on the relations with Turkey and rising tension in the Eastern Mediterranean.

According to an EU official's declaration, all options are on the table. However, officials are not expected to declare sanctions on Turkey on Friday as the union is divided into two blocks. On the one hand, the first block that includes Southern Cyprus and Greece, with the support of France and Austria, wishes to activate sanctions. On the other side, Germany openly declared that it does not side with the sanction option. Moreover, Italy, Spain, and Malta seem to have apparent drawbacks regarding the option, while the Baltic countries with Hungary and Poland do not support the sanctions.

### ***German Chancellor Angela Merkel Objects Sanctions on Turkey***

As a reflection of her dislike to the idea of sanctions, Angela Merkel, during the meeting of the 2021 state budget of Germany, said that Turkey did a very good job regarding the refugee issue. Moreover, Merkel warned the Greek and the Cypriot sides regarding their desire for sanctions on Turkey by saying that Turkey is a NATO ally and they have versatile relations with Turkey.

### ***President Erdogan Has Sent a Letter to the EU Member Countries***

A couple of days ago, the Turkish president Erdogan had sent a letter to all the EU member countries and asked them to change their policies towards Turkey. Furthermore, in the letter, Erdogan called on the EU countries to stop their unconditional support to Greece's and Cyprus' maximalist claims in the Eastern Mediterranean.

### ***US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo Visited Greece***

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Greece. In his speech in a NATO base located in Crete Island, Pompeo said that he was "deeply concerned" about the recent escalation between Turkey and Greece. Moreover, he urged both sides to start exploratory talks.

## ARMED NON-STATE ACTORS

### ***Egypt tries to mobilize Arab countries to take action against Turkey's influence in Syria***

While the tension between Egypt and Turkey seemed to be easing recently, Egypt is trying to convince Arab states to struggle against Turkey's presence in Syria. Cairo's efforts are backed by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, and Iraq. Moreover, Egypt supports Syria's return to the Arab League and seeks to benefit from the tensions between other Arab states, while Turkey is expanding its influence from Libya to Iraq. A new bloc against Turkey is being shaped within the Arab countries, and Egypt takes the lead-backed by UAE and Saudi Arabia mostly- in this political polarization.

### ***The pressure on Hurras al-Din is increasing in Idlib***

After Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) broke its ties with al-Qaeda, Hurras al-Din emerged as al-Qaeda's branch in Syria. Since then, as two rivals, HTS and Hurras al-Din have been competing for territory, weapons, and recruits. Many experienced fighters defected from Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham and joined other armed factions. Moreover, over the past period, a growing number of prominent figures and high-ranking fighters affiliated with Hurras al-Din have been targeted by the US-led international coalition. Additionally, HTS maintains its silence concerning the strikes. The group's silence cast doubts on its project in Idlib. HTS is seen as taking advantage of the current situation since it has been through a transformation process. In comparison, some other armed factions and Jihadi groups accuse HTS of providing intelligence for the drone strikes. Yet, there is no concrete evidence to confirm this claim.

### ***Pro-Iranian Militias target Erbil of Iraq's Kurdistan region***

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) declared that Iran-linked armed factions within the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) launched rockets aiming at coalition forces at Erbil International Airport. Six missiles were fired, according to the statements made by officials. However, no casualties were reported. While Iraqi Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani supports the Iraqi Prime Minister al-Kadhimi's plan to outlaw armed groups and protect foreign missions, the pro-Iranian factions keep targeting Western and US presence in Iraq. The last attack was launched following US warnings to pro-Iranian groups and al-Kadhimi's speech, indicating that the Iraqi government would take action against armed groups. The attack targeted Erbil International Airport illustrates paramilitary forces' intention to escalate the tension. However, backed by Sistani, the Iraqi central government seems to continue its plan to disarm armed groups.

## REGIMES IN TRANSITION

### Lebanon

#### ***Lebanon Prime Minister-designate Mustapha Adib Resigned Due to the Deadlock in Cabinet***

Prime Minister-designate Mustapha Adib announced his resignation after a political deadlock ensuing from the insistence of the Shiite duo, Hezbollah and Amal movement, on selecting the Minister of Finance. After Adib's resignation, Saad Hariri declared that he would not be the new candidate for Prime Ministry.

The resignation will deepen the political and economic crisis of the country.

French President Macron accused political leaders of the collective betrayal of Lebanon and targeted Hezbollah, saying: "There's a question that needs to be asked to Hezbollah and ourselves. Is it really a political party, or does it proceed just in a logic dictated by Iran and its terrorist forces?"

European High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy expressed the EU's disappointment and demanded the Lebanese political elites to collaborate to secure the needed international aid.

#### ***Netanyahu Claimed Hezbollah is Storing Arms in Beirut Near Residential areas***

In his speech at the United Nations General Assembly, Netanyahu claimed that Hezbollah has a "secret" arms depot in the Janah area near Beirut close to a Gas Company, gas station, and civilian housing. Netanyahu urged the Lebanese to protest this, warning that the next explosion will be there. However, after this speech, Hezbollah officials gathered many people and journalists in Janah to prove the accusation's falsity.

### Tunisia

#### ***President Saied Rejected the Appointments by Mechichi***

President Saied rejected the appointments made by the Prime Minister Mechichi of high-ranking officials on the grounds that they are affiliated with the former regime. Some considered this move to be yet again an "overstepping" of the president over the authorities of the PM, while others criticized the PM for appointing figures of the former regime.

### ***New Parliamentary Alliance Established by Tunisian Opposition***

A former Leader of Nidaa Tunis, Rida Belhaj, announced on September 28, 2020, the formation of a new parliamentary opposition coalition, named “al-Amal Coalition,” with the Democratic Current and Amal Tounes Party. The negotiations are ongoing with two other breakaway parties from Nidaa Tounes: Machrouf Tounes and Beni Watani parties, as well as Afek Tounes, to join the coalition. Belhaj also stressed three pillars for collective leadership: encouraging the youth to participate and shape politics, establishing a center for political studies, and relying on direct communication with Tunisians. They also criticized Ennahda for being a consensual dictatorship.

## **Sudan**

### ***Prime Minister Hamdok Considered the Normalization with Israel as a Complicated Issue***

Prime Minister Hamdok considered the normalization with Israel to be a “complicated” matter requiring debate within the country, following heightened public concern that Sudan will be normalizing ties with Israel in exchange for economic aid and its removal from the US list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. Hamdok asserted that the removal of Sudan from the terrorism list is an independent matter.

Sudan has suffered for years from economic sanctions after being put on the terrorism list during al-Bashir’s rule in 1993.

## **Algeria**

### ***Court Sentenced Certain Members of the Kouninef family, Having Ties with Bouteflika***

The Kouninef family, associated with the businessmen circle around the former president Bouteflika, was indicted for corruption in a court decision on Wednesday, September 23, 2020. The court sentenced the family members between 12-20 years in prison and ordered the confiscation of all the family’s financial assets. The Kouninef family, which owns the construction firm KouGC Group, landed highly profitable deals exceeding the value of one billion dollars during Bouteflika’s presidency.



#### **ABOUT AL SHARQ STRATEGIC RESEARCH**

A think tank that looks to undertake impartial, rigorous research to promote the ideals of democratic participation, an informed citizenry, multi-stakeholder dialogue and social justice.

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