

Weekly <sup>wire</sup>



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

NOVEMBER 20, 2020

## EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

### ***The Turkish President Erdoğan paid a visit to Varosha***

On Sunday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Varosha on the 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus's foundation. In his visit, the Turkish President clearly stated that any plan that does not include Turkey or TRNC would not bring peace and stability. The Greek side rejected the Annan Agreement for the unification of the island and did not want to sit at the table with us and despite the steps taken by the Turkish side, promises given by the EU are not kept, and both administrative and financial support is not provided to the TRNC, said the Turkish President. The President also highlighted the importance of a two-state solution and said that there are two nations and two states in Cyprus, so the solution should be in this manner.

### ***The Turkish Defense Ministry announced the numbers regarding the violations that occurred in the Mediterranean***

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of November, the Turkish Defense Ministry announced the numbers regarding the violations that occurred in the Mediterranean by the Greek side. According to the announcement, Greece violated the Turkish airspace 42 times and maritime limits seven times in October. Moreover, the announcement underlined that there were 15 incidents of aircraft being harassed. Additionally, in the same month and the Greek navy ships visited the demilitarized islands 192 times, violating the international agreements.

### ***Athens aims at buying F-35 fighter jets***

Athens has made an official request to buy 18 to 24 brand-new or secondhand of the American F-35 fighter jets through an official letter written by Theodoros Lagios, the director-general of Armaments and Investments of the Greek army. This move is seen as a response to the Turkish acquisition of the Russian S-400 missile systems. The move is of importance as it came right after the announcement of the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis about the purchase of 18 Rafale fighter jets from France. The Greek Prime Minister said they agreed with France concerning purchasing six new and 12 secondhand twin-engined Rafales from Paris.

### ***Turkey's fears concerning sanctions revived***

Turkey is once again facing the danger of sanctions from the European Union. With the Turkish seismic vessel's return to the Mediterranean's disputed areas and the reopening of Varosha town, the tensions between Greece and Turkey revived. According to the statement of the French MEP Nathalie Loiseau, "there are no more member states left that don't consider the issue of Turkey a serious one."

## **THE LIBYAN CRISIS**

### ***Libyan parties agree to hold national elections on December 24, 2021***

The United Nations announced that political parties in Libya had reached an agreement to hold national parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2021, reviving hopes for an end to years of conflict in the country.

The Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya, Stephanie Williams, said in a video conference at the United Nations Headquarters in New York that the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum members agreed to hold the national elections on December 24, 2021.

### ***The Turkish Ministry of Defense confirms the continuation of military training in Libya***

The Turkish Ministry of Defense affirmed its continued support for the Government of National Accord, referring to multi-faceted relations that go back to 500 years of common history, as described.

The Turkish Ministry of Defense said in a tweet on "Twitter" that cooperation with "Al-Wefaq" in Libya comes within the scope of the training, collaboration, and military consultations agreement, confirming the continuation of "advanced surveillance training" for those it described as "members of the Libyan armed forces."

***French Total is looking to expand its investment base in Libya***

The National Oil Corporation said in a statement that it had discussed with the French company Total, “the corporation’s tireless efforts to raise production capacity and increase production rates to the highest levels. Total’s desire to expand its investment base in Libya was also discussed.”

The corporation said that its President, Mustafa Sanallah, said in an online meeting with the head of Total Exploration and Production for the Middle East and North Africa, Stephane Michel, that Libya’s oil production reached 1.25 million barrels per day.

The statement added that Michel stressed the company’s readiness to “provide support and build bridges of cooperation with its strategic partner, the National Oil Corporation.”

***Oliver Owcza calls Aguila Saleh to discuss the situation in Libya***

The Chairman of the Tobruk-based House of Representatives, Aguila Saleh, received a phone call from the German ambassador to Libya Oliver Owcza on November 18, according to the media office of the House of Representatives.

The Speaker of Parliament discussed with the German ambassador the ongoing regional, political, and local developments in Libya, and touched upon the results of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum that was held in Tunis, and the role the House of Representatives will play in the upcoming elections that will take place in December of 2021.

***Libyan rivals agree to unify forces to secure Libya’s oil fields***

Libya’s warring sides have agreed to unify forces to safeguard oil fields in Libya. The agreement followed the United Nations-sponsored talks with the head of the country’s National Oil Corporation (NOC) held on Monday in Brega, part of the coastal area known as the Oil Crescent.

“Today in this historic location, at this historic moment, we launched a process to unify the petroleum facilities guards,” Stephanie Williams, the acting head of the UN’s Support Mission in Libya, told reporters in Brega.

## ARMED NON-STATE ACTORS

### ***ISIS reorganizes in the SDF-controlled areas in Syria***

ISIS's sleeper cells intensify its attacks in Syria's Deir Ez-Zor province, under the control of SDF. ISIS launches a mix of attacks targeting SDF fighters and SDF-affiliated figures in the region. These sleeper cells also carry out assassinations, hit and run attacks, and bombings against not only armed operatives but against secular figures, alcohol consumers, etc. The discrimination and exclusion against the Arab tribes pose a problem, and ISIS takes advantage of the anger among the Arab tribes against the SDF. The sleeper cells in the region benefit from locals and obtain information on checkpoints, military posts, and people affiliated with the SDF. Although the Arab tribes do not appreciate ISIS, they seek revenge against the SDF.

### ***Erbil and Baghdad came together for the Sinjar Agreement***

Officials from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Iraqi Federal Government came together to discuss the Sinjar Agreement's implementation. The UN officials also joined the top-level negotiations. Hundreds of Yazidis demand the agreement to be implemented immediately to return to their homeland. The agreement aims to remove all the armed factions from Iraq's Sinjar region and deploy the Iraqi security forces as the only armed force in the region. Various armed factions exist in the region, including Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), the Shingal Resistant Units (YBS), federal police, Ezidkhan Protection Forces, and Peshmerga.

## REGIMES IN TRANSITION

### Tunisia

#### ***Protests in El Kamour Intensified After the Arrest of Local Leader***

On November 17, the tension in El Kamour, in Tunisia's southern oil-rich state of Tataouine, has increased after the arrest of the general coordinator of El Kamour sit-in, Dhaou El-Ghoul. Dozens of protestors set fire to wheels in the city center while chanting for the release of El-Ghoul. On November 7, an agreement was signed between the Tunisian government and demonstrators of Tataouine to stop the protests, which have been ongoing since 2017 to demand employment opportunities in the oil and gas pumping stations in the region.

### Sudan

#### ***Russia Announced a New Naval Base Project in Sudan***

On November 16, President Vladimir Putin announced Russia's plan to establish a naval base and logistics center in Sudan, to host nuclear-powered vessels and up to 300 military and civilian personnel. This plan increases the Russian military capability to operate in the Indian Ocean and Africa and is considered the first of a kind in the continent since the fall of the Soviet Union. Sudan will provide the land for the base for free.

#### ***Sudan Received 20,000 Refugees from Tigray Region during Last Week***

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, more than 20,000 refugees have crossed to Sudan from Ethiopia's Tigray region after the military confrontation with local separatist powers. Approximately 4,000 individuals are fleeing to Sudan each day, and there is only one emergency relocation site with the capacity of 6,000 individuals.



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

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