

The Early Phoenix

A first look at today's most notable stories from the Middle East, selected by ACLS experts

26 January 2023

IRAQ

1. [**The Iraqi "Tashkeel Al-Wartheen" Militia Claims Responsibility for the Attack on U.S. Base in Southern Syria \(Syria TV\)**](#). An Iraqi militia with strong relations to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and the Quds Force claimed responsibility for the three drone attacks that targeted al-Tanf base which [houses American forces](#) last week.
2. [**Thousands of Iraqis Protests in front of The Central Bank in Baghdad Against the Falling Exchange Rate of The Dollar \(Al Jazeera\)**](#). The protesters said that the continued depreciation of the dinar against the dollar left Iraqi citizens with additional burdens and caused confusion in the local market and a state of stagnation.
3. [**Federal Court Blocks the Government From Sending Money to Kurdistan Regional Government \(Al Iraq News\)**](#). A member of the Iraqi Parliament, Mustafa Jabbar Sanad, announced in a press conference on Wednesday that he had won a lawsuit to stop the Council of Ministers from transferring funds to the Kurdistan Region to pay monthly salaries of employees and workers in the public sector there. Sanad said that "the Federal Supreme Court decided to annul all decisions related to transferring funds to the Kurdistan Region in violation of the law and the constitution."

SYRIA

4. [**Turkiye Clarifies the Future of Its Forces in Syria and the Fate of The Refugees \(Aleppo Today TV\)**](#). Regarding reports about the Syrian regime's demands that Turkey withdraw its forces from Syria, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said his country does not wish for additional emigration of Syrians, but rather wants to ensure the return of those currently living in Turkey, provided that it is a voluntary and safe return after fulfilling necessary conditions.
5. [**Commercial Crossing Will Open Between Syrian Democratic Forces and the Syrian National Army in Northeast Syria \(Aleppo Today TV\)**](#). A commercial crossing that overlooks the M4 international highway is expected to open within 15 days. Sources on the ground said the SDF side of the crossing will be managed by Russian forces. Earlier this month, the Syrian Interim Government also announced it would be reopening the Awn Al-Dadat crossing between Jarabulus and Manbij.

6. [German and Syrian Organizations Tell Stories of Syrians who Documented Chemical Crimes in Syria \(Syria TV\)](#). The Global Institute for Public Policy in Berlin launched a podcast entitled "No Place to Hide", which tells the stories of individuals who documented the chemical crimes committed by the Syrian regime against civilians in a number of Syrian cities. [The Nowhere to Hide podcast](#) tells the extraordinary stories of those who dealt with these chemical attacks, and those who risked their lives to tell the world what was happening.

TURKEY

7. [Amid NATO Row, Finland Approves First Military Exports to Türkiye since 2019 \(Daily Sabah\)](#). The move comes amid a spat that saw Türkiye on Tuesday indefinitely postpone upcoming talks with Finland and Sweden on their application to join the military alliance after a weekend protest in Stockholm that drew condemnation from Ankara.
8. [Russia Attacks Turkish Ships in Kherson Port in Ukraine \(Hurriyet\)](#). Turkish ships at anchor in Ukraine 's Kherson port were damaged by Russian missiles on Wednesday.

IRAN

9. [Iran Retaliates by Imposing Sanctions on EU, UK \(Tasnim News\)](#). In response to new European Union and UK sanctions against Iran, the Iran foreign ministry imposed fresh sanctions on dozens of EU and British officials and entities for supporting terrorism...The people and entities in the list of sanctions will be denied a visa to visit Iran, their accounts and transactions in Iranian financial and banking systems will be blocked, and their assets within the jurisdiction of the Islamic Republic of Iran will be blocked as well.
10. [Iran's UN Ambassador Denies Iran Has Transferred Weapons to Yemen \(Tehran Times\)](#). "The Islamic Republic of Iran has never transferred weapons to Yemen in violation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions. Iran has always upheld its international obligations and any claim to the contrary is totally rejected," stated the letter addressed to the President of the UN Security Council.
11. [Iran Has Amassed Enough Material for 'Several Nuclear Weapons,' Says IAEA Chief \(CNN\)](#). Uranium enriched to more than 90% can be weaponized. Iran has 70 kilograms (154 pounds) of uranium enriched to 60% purity and 1,000 kilograms to 20% purity, according to International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi.

THE GULF

12. [**Four Million Captagon Pills Seized in Saudi Arabia**](#) (*Al Sharq Al Awsat*). Saudi Security Forces in cooperation with their Qatari counterparts announced the seizure of 4,091,250 pills of the amphetamine narcotics in the Riyadh region.
13. [**Qatar and Italy Launch the vessel "Al-Falak," Unique in Size and Capabilities in the Gulf**](#) (*Al Jazeera*). A transport and strategic military ship unique in terms of its size and capabilities in the Gulf was inaugurated at the Fincantieri factory in the Italian city of Palermo. *Al-Falak* will be the main vessel of the Qatari Naval Forces, with air defense, transportation, and helicopter landing capabilities.

ISRAEL/PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

14. [**TV Report Claims Joint US-Israel Air Drill will Bomb Mock 'Iranian Nuke Sites' in Negev**](#) (*Times Of Israel*). As part of the ongoing "Juniper Oak" drill between the Israeli Air Force and United States Central Command, American B-52 strategic bombers will drop live ammunition on targets in southern Israel on Wednesday. On Tuesday evening, Channel 12 news, without citing a source, said the targets in the Negev Desert would simulate Iranian nuclear sites. The network said the bombers would drop 100 tons of bunker-busting explosives, also without citing any source.
15. [**Ben Gvir Defies Netanyahu's Pledges about the Temple Mount**](#) (*Al Sharq Al Awsat*). Despite promises made by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Amman that there would be no change in the status quo of the Temple Mount, the Minister of National Security in Netanyahu's own government, Itamar Ben Gvir, announced that Netanyahu's commitment to Jordan's King Abdullah would not prevent him from visiting the Temple Mount.
16. [**UNRWA Employees Go on Strike to Demand Salary Increase**](#) (*Al Nahar*). Schools, clinics, and some municipal services were closed in refugee camps in the West Bank on Wednesday, as employees went on strike for a third day amid mounting funding cuts to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which pays their salaries. About 3,700 employees in the West Bank participated in the strike, demanding an increase in the salaries of all workers by 200 Jordanian dinars (\$281.81) per month from UNRWA.

LEBANON

17. [**A Harbinger of a Judicial Crisis: Lebanese Public Prosecutor Orders Release of All Those Arrested in the Beirut Port Explosion Case—and Charges the Judicial Investigator**](#) (*Al Jazeera*). On Wednesday, the Public Prosecutor in Lebanon, Ghassan Oweidat, ordered the release of all those arrested in the Beirut port explosion case, after the judicial investigator in the case, Tariq Al-Bitar, announced the resumption of his investigations nearly 13 months after they were suspended...Oweidat also charged Bitar for "rebellion against the judiciary and usurpation of power," indicating that Bitar should not have resumed the investigation of the case this week.
18. [**Washington Will Channel \\$72 Million Via the UN to Pay Salaries for Lebanese Security Forces**](#) (*Al Nahar*). US Ambassador to Lebanon Dorothy She announced the details of the financial support in the presence of the Lebanese Army Commander, Joseph Aoun, noting that the program will disburse \$100 in cash per month for six months to members of the Lebanese Army and the Internal Security Forces. The Lebanese currency has lost about 97 percent of its value against the dollar since the collapse of the country's financial system in 2019, which led to a decrease in the monthly salary of most members of the security forces to about \$80.

LIBYA

19. [**Italian Prime Minister Visits Dabaiba As Bashagha Warns and Threatens**](#) (*Al Hadath*). Dabaiba's Libyan National Unity Government will meet with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in Tripoli, in a visit that the rival Parliament-designated Prime Minister, Fathi Bashagha, warned against. The Bashagha government also expressed its surprise at Meloni's visit to the "outgoing government" in Tripoli, warning of a "mysterious" oil deal between the two parties.