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Regional Updates

December 2016 | No. 19



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CYPRUS

On 7 November, the Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı and his Greek Cypriot counterpart Nicos Anastasiades met in Mont Pèlerin in Switzerland to start the new round of peace talks, which mainly focused on the security and territorial issues under the auspices of U.N. Special Advisor for Cyprus Espen Barth Eide. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed his full support and called on the international community, especially guarantor countries Turkey, Greece and the United Kingdom to support the leaders as they make efforts to reach peace as he opened the new round of talks. In his speech, the Secretary-General also indicated that the prospect of a solution in Cyprus is within reach. According to the UN News Centre, reunification talks that lasted for five days generated “significant progress”. The leaders of the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities decided to reconvene on 20 November in Switzerland.



On 9 November, Greek Cypriot Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides met with his Greek and Lebanese counterparts in Beirut to conduct a meeting in the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy. The ministers also touched upon the energy cooperation in the region.

Upon the request of Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades, the peace talks resumed in Switzerland from where they were left on 20 November. However, the two-day negotiation process failed to reach an agreement on the territorial adjustments. A statement was issued by the U.N. spokesperson in Cyprus saying “despite their best efforts, they have not been able to achieve the necessary further convergences on criteria for territorial adjustment that would have paved the way for the last phase of the talks”. A five-party summit is being planned to be held in December between the Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders, Turkey, Greece and the UK to particularly focus on the security issue.

“What we have been blessed with here in Cyprus is 19 months of no real crisis” said Espen Barth Eide after his meeting with Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders held on 28 November. He added that, “we had a few small disputes but there was no real break...this isn’t a break either. But it is probably the most significant setback we had since May 2015”. He further added that he believed the two leaders were very much aware of this.

REGIONAL UPDATES: EGYPT

EGYPT

On November 2, according to Amnesty International, Egyptian human rights defender Malek Adly was stopped from boarding a flight to France without any reasons as stipulated by law. This adds to the rights' group concerns about the state of human rights under current President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.



A number of Egyptians protested on the streets of Alexandria calling for the resignation of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi amidst the latest government austerity measures. This is per the New Arab report on 4 November.

The Gulf News reported that an Egyptian Judge, Ahmad Abu Al Fotouh who tried former president Mohammad Morsi in 2015 survived an assassination attempt when a parked car exploded as his vehicle drove by. On the other hand, Mohammed Morsi's death sentence has been overturned by an Egyptian appeals court according to the Agence France-Presse. The Court of Cassation ordered that Morsi be retried on charges of partaking in prison breaks and violence against policemen during the 2011 uprising which toppled longtime president Hosni Mubarak

Pursuant to souring relations, Saudi Arabia has halted fuel shipments indefinitely to Egypt. Meanwhile, on 7 November, Egyptian Petroleum Minister Tarek Al Molla attended an oil conference in Abu Dhabi where he said he was not going to Iran, appearing to contradict a report that he was on his way to Tehran to strike new oil deals.

The Egyptian army has announced that it had killed 14 armed militants during a raid in several targets areas in North Sinai. This brings the total number of militant deaths in November to 40 according to Ahram.

Towards the end of November, the Egyptian government appealed a court ruling that annulled the controversy surrounding the transfer of two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia. According to Anadolu reportage, the latest case was brought forth by Egypt's State Lawsuits Authority. The appeal is the second attempt after an initial bid was rejected in the beginning of November .

REGIONAL UPDATES: LIBYA

LIBYA

On 1 November, the New Arab reported that, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has now officially set up a military base in Al-Marj to support the operations of Colonel Khalifa Haftar in eastern Libya. Haftar is a marshal and principal commander in eastern Libya with several forces loyal to him. He has refused to recognize the UN-backed Government of National Accord led by Prime Minister Fayeaz al-Serraj.



According to the UNHCR at least 239 people died in the migrant shipwreck off Libya's coast on 3 November.

The International Crisis Group has branded the Libyan Political Agreement a failure and called for a renegotiation which shall include Khalifa Haftar.

Irrespective of initial reports that the United States had stopped bombing in Sirte, on 7 November it renewed authorization to continue air strikes against the Islamic State in Sirte after a 3-month blitz failed to propel the UN-backed government's Bunyan Marsous forces to victory against the Islamic State.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has said it aims to make the investigation of atrocities that has occurred in Libya a priority in 2017, according to Chef Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda.

The Libya Herald reported that, at least 20 people and over 35 people have been killed and wounded respectively in clashes between rival tribes of Awlad Suleiman and Qaddadfa. The latter is the tribe of Muammar Gaddafi, former ruler of Libya.

Presidency Council head and Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord Fayeaz al-Serraj granted an interview to the British Foreign Office Office in London.

In his interview he explained why his leadership had failed to achieve progress on the ground and spoke about their battle with militias and attempts in building a national army. He lamented the current difficulties he faces with Khalifa Haftar, the eastern Libya Commander, Ageela Saleh and the House of Representatives; the hardship of the Tripoli Central Bank as well as the oil sector.

On the current situation in Libya, he indicated that there are currently four spoilers. Mr. Haftar is a spoiler engaging in military escalation, Mr. Ageela engages in political maneuvering and blockages as the head of the House of Representatives, Mr. Saddik Elkaber and his blocking of financial and economic issues and Sheik Saddiq ghariani also has religious fatwas. "I am working with four types of spoilers," he said. "Some have money, others have army, others have media and another has religious authority", he added.

REGIONAL UPDATES: SYRIA

SYRIA

According to the Syria Report the number of Syrians seeking asylum in the whole of Europe has surged to 1.2 million. Of this number 867 thousand applied in the EU, Norway and Switzerland. Turkey already hosts over 2.7 million Syrian refugees.

The UN Humanitarian Adviser Jan Egeland has warned that, eastern Aleppo is running out of food. However, irrespective of Russia's international backlash with regards to its bombing campaign in Syria which inextricably exacerbates food shortages, it is said to deliver 100 thousand tons of wheat as humanitarian aid to the Syrian government.



On 2 November, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced that rebels must leave Aleppo. The rebels were set to have 10 hours and two corridors to evacuate whilst six other corridors were outlined for civilians, the sick and wounded were to leave first amidst continued suspension of Russian airstrikes according to Syria Deeply. Meanwhile, desperate civilians and armed rebels were reported to have no choice but to accept help from jihadists according to Khalid Khoja, a negotiator with the High Negotiations committee (HNC), an umbrella group of opposition factions.

Meanwhile, per Syria Direct, Syrian government forces have taken two hilltop villages of Tal Kurdi and Tal Sawan in Damascus after days of fighting with the largest rebel faction in Eastern Ghouta, Jaish al-Islam. Aside this, the UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura has warned that a complete military victory for Syrian president Bashar al-Assad in lieu of a political peace deal will expose Syria and Europe to terrorism.

On 3 November, U.S-backed Syrian Democratic Forces said they will not accept Turkish involvement in the battle against the Islamic State in Raqqa, according to Reuters.

On 11 November, per Al Jazeera report, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his country will not allow Iran to base itself militarily in Syria.

In a unanimous vote, the U.N. Security Council has extended its toxic gas probe in Syria for another year. In addition to this, the European Union has extended its sanctions on Syria, this includes smart sanctions on 8 Syrian officials.

Pursuant to the resumption of airstrikes in eastern Aleppo, the Bayan Children's Hospital was badly damaged according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Buttressing this, the World Health Organization (WHO) and eastern Aleppo's health directorate have said that airstrikes have prevented all hospitals in rebel-held areas from operating.

REGIONAL UPDATES: SYRIA

The Syrian government also on 21 November refused an Aleppo truce proposed by Staffan de Mistura.

The UN emergency relief coordinator Stephen O'Brien has told the Security Council that, nearly 1 million people are living under siege in Syria with people being isolated, starved, bombed and denied medical attention.

According to Iran's Veterans Affairs office, more than 1000 recruits sent to Syria by Iran have been killed in the war.

Al Jazeera report in November also indicates that, the Syrian Military has announced a new volunteer-based commando force encouraging volunteers interested in achieving final victory against terrorism to apply.

On 29 November, rebels lost all of Northeast Aleppo with 16,000 people displaced according to the Agence France-Presse. Rami Abdulrahman, director of Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said this has been one of their worst defeats since the war began.

Towards the end of November, the U.S. Central Command issued a statement indicating its airstrikes in Syria and Iraq had killed 64 civilians between September 10 and November 20 irrespective of feasible precautions taken.

The Anadolu Agency has reported that since mid-November, over 990 civilians have been killed with a further 2,500 injured by regime attacks on opposition-dominated parts of Aleppo.

Global Political Trends Center (GPoT Center) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research institution established under the auspices of Istanbul Kültür University in 2009.

GPoT Center was founded with the aim to support reconciliation and non-violent solutions to international as well as domestic issues through dialogue. Our mission is to contribute to stability, democratization and peace through organizing multitrack diplomacy meetings, conducting innovative and independent research, and encouraging informed debates in the media on key issues affecting Turkey and the world.

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