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Regional Updates

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REGIONAL UPDATES: CYPRUS

CYPRUS

October 2016 was a very active month for diplomacy in Cyprus. Following the United Nations General Assembly meetings in New York in the end of September, Turkish Cypriot Leader Mustafa Akıncı and his Greek Cypriot counterpart Nicos Anastasiades started the third round of the peace talks on 4 October. Mustafa Akıncı said they would work to minimize the separation points and



pointed out to mid-2017 for a referendum to be held in the island in order to vote on the peace deal. The third round of the peace talks are expected to concentrate on issues of economy, EU-Cyprus affairs, governance and power-sharing matters as well as the property issues.

On 9 October, Greek Cypriot Leader Nicos Anastasiades in a rally in Morphou touched on the residency issue and said that the leaders from both sides agreed and secured the right of every Cypriot citizen to choose for himself or herself the place they would reside and work with equal rights before the law.

On 11 October, Mustafa Akıncı gave a speech at the 23rd World Energy Congress in Istanbul. In his speech, he highlighted that ‘Share for Peace’, which is the main theme of the Congress, can only be achieved in the Eastern Mediterranean if Cyprus takes an active role. He said “should we reach a solution to the Cyprus Problem, a United Federated Cyprus will be able to contribute to matters of international energy security and energy access”.

On 28 October, Federica Mogherini, the European Union (EU)’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security, said that the peace in Cyprus is extremely important for the region as it needs hope and trust in diplomacy and political solutions and expressed the EU’s full support and encouragement for the peace talks.

In the end of the month, both Cypriot leaders decided to conduct talks at the Mont Pèlerin resort in Switzerland. The talks will be held between 7-11 November 2016 and will touch upon the security and territorial issues.

REGIONAL UPDATES: EGYPT

EGYPT

On 1 October, Albawaba News reported that, a newly-emerged militant group, Hasm movement claimed responsibility for an assassination attempt on Zakaria Abd El-Aziz Azmy, Egypt's Deputy Prosecutor-General in New Cairo.



On the other hand, on 2 October, the Irish Times reported that, the trial of Ibrahim Halewa, the Irish man who was arrested and detained during protests against then-president Mohamed Morsi had been adjourned for the 15th time.

On illegal immigration, the Libya News also reported that, Egyptian border security forces foiled an attempt by 89 Egyptians and 4 Sudanese to enter Libya through Egyptian western borders.

On 7 October, according to the Middle East Monitor, Sudan signed a 'comprehensive strategic partnership agreement' with Egypt. The deal is said to aid cooperation in the fields of industry, agriculture, higher education and public health. This was done when Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir met with his Egyptian counterpart, Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi in Cairo.

In other developments on 8 October, the Indian Express reported that; an Egyptian court has held its first hearing on a government appeal against a lower court ruling in June that rescinded an agreement to hand over control of two key Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi Envoy to the UN, Abdullah al-Muallami on 9 October, dubbed Egypt's stance kowtowing to Russia on a UN resolution about Syria as 'painful'. Russia together with three countries including Egypt (an Arab League-member country), vetoed a French-drafted UN Security Council Resolution on Syria which demanded an end to air strikes and military flights over Aleppo. The positions of Senegal and Malaysia were much closer to the agreed Arab League decision according to Muallami, per Al Arabiya report. In response to the vote, the head of Egypt's delegate to the UN, Ambassador Amr Abu Atta said, Egypt supports all efforts to end the tragedy in Syria, however, the vote was based on the failure of the two sides of the security council to reach a permanent decision.

Subsequent to the vote, Basma Qathmati, a member from the Saudi-backed High Negotiation Committee (HNC) comprising 34 opposition groups, encouraged Washington to unilaterally move to disallow Russia from continuing its targeting of civilians in Aleppo. Additionally, Egypt Daily News reported that; the vote has erupted tensions between Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Following Egypt's vote, the Ministry of Petroleum said Aramco, a governmental Saudi oil company, had suspended its oil aid to Egypt; however, the five-year agreement between them is still in effect.

On 22 October, Egypt Daily News reported that an Egyptian criminal court had ascertained a 20-year prison sentence given to former Egyptian president, Mohamed Morsi for inciting violence during demonstrations in 2012 in the first final verdict. Eight other defendants were sentenced to

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prison terms of up to 20 years pursuant to the refusal of their appeals. Defendants include Asad Al-Shikha, Morsi's former deputy chief of staff, Ahmed Abdel Atty, former head of president's office, Mohamed El-Beltagy, leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood, outspoken Islamic preacher Wagdy Ghoneim and Essam El-Erian, deputy head of the now-banned Muslim Brotherhood's Justice and Freedom Party. The court, however, ordered a re-trial for supreme guide of Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Badie and other defendants against a life in prison sentence for taking part in violent acts near Istakama mosque in Giza in which 9 people died in 2015.

REGIONAL UPDATES: LIBYA

LIBYA

In the beginning of October, Magdalena Mughrabi, Deputy Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at Amnesty International, reported that, the lives of hundreds of local and foreign civilians in Benghazi's Ganfouda neighborhood were in danger following months of blockade and air bombing by Dignity Operation militia groups.



On 3 October, a ministerial meeting held on Libya in Paris by the French government failed to make any significant progress on the crisis in the country as no Libyan participants were invited. There were however, representatives from UAE, UK, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Spain and Turkey. It is reported according to the Libya Herald that, they discussed about a possible role for Khalifa Hafter, the east Libya military leader who has failed to recognize the UN-backed administration. On 5 October, Italian foreign minister Paolo Gentiloni opined that, Khalifa Hafter should have an 'appropriate role' in managing Libya's security.

The United Nations Security Council on 6 October, extended its authorization for Member states to intercept vessels on the high seas suspected of being used for illicit activities, for a further period of one year. Meanwhile, Libya has rejected a European Union proposal to build a migrant camp on its soil to control migration through the Mediterranean. The Libyan Foreign Affairs Minister Mohamad Taher Siala, expressed their position on the matter at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe meeting in Vienna according to AFP News.

On 12 October, Libya's Constituent Assembly boycotters rebuked the United Nations Missions in Libya (UNSMIL). The boycotters insisted that, they shall continue refusing the Salalah draft because it was illegal and divides the Libyan nation. Martin Kobler, UN Envoy in Libya however, promised to correct the mission's previous mistake according to the Libya Observer. In other developments, after five months in Libya, UN Allied Forces have announced a fresh push on Sirte according to Tunisialive News.

In mid-October, the UN and the US condemned a coup attempt led by Khalifa al-Ghwell, a former prime minister in Libya that saw the capture of vital government buildings as both rebels and officials scrambled to win the support of Tripoli's powerful militias, according to The Guardian.

On 17 October, the Presidential Guard said it no longer supports the Libyan Political Agreement. The Presidential Guard said, the Libyan Political Agreement signed in Skhirat, Morocco, was reached to reinstate the military rule after four decades of dictatorship. It further added; it would now back the General National Congress according to the Libya Observer. They also indicated that; the UN installed Presidency Council has failed to provide basic needs for the people and win Libyan consensus while security and economic crises have deepened since its arrival in Tripoli. Meanwhile, the High Council of State has vowed to arrest the defected members of the Presidential Guard while

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council member Abdul-Rahman Al-Shatar, confirmed the council is still operating and it would relocate in another headquarters to implement the political agreement.

According to the Libya Herald on 25 October, Saudi Arabia is set to announce Libya reconciliation talks in the next few days.

Towards the end of October, UN Special Envoy Martin Kobler and former Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete, the African Union's High Representative to Libya, joined Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit in Cairo, for a trilateral meeting aimed at streamlining policies on Libya between the three bodies. The three bodies are said to be working on steps to break the current political gridlock and promote dialogue between the various parties, particularly in obtaining international and regional support for the Libyan Political Agreement according to the Libya Observer.

REGIONAL UPDATES: SYRIA

SYRIA

In the beginning of October, Wall Street Journal reported that Syrian regime forces backed by Russian airstrikes alongside Iranian-aided militias continued their advance towards Aleppo.

Meanwhile, the UK-based monitoring group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights indicated that, Russian airstrikes had killed 9,364 people including 906 children in Syria in its one-year anniversary of following the Syrian conflict.



On the other hand, the United States has suspended talks with Russia, a key ally of the Syrian government according to the BBC. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein nonetheless, cautioned Russia against the use of incendiary weapons in Syria according to the UN Human Rights Council.

According to the Al-Monitor, the Russian Ministry of Defence; has ascertained that Moscow has sent an S-300 air defense missile system to its naval base in Syria.

The US Secretary of State, John Kerry has indicated per Reuters early-October report that, peace efforts in Syria will continue without Russia.

On 6 October, at least 21 people were killed in a bomb attack by the Islamic State near the Syrian-Turkish border. According to Syria News Deeply, the Islamic state claimed responsibility for the attacks which were directed at Syrian rebels supported by Turkey near the Atmeh border in Ankara's "Operation Euphrates Shield".

President Obama's U.S. led administration is considering tougher sanctions on Syria according to AFP news. The U.S has however, called for war crimes investigations in Syria according to the New York Times. In addition to this, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon called for any such investigations to be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

UN Special Envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura, has warned that eastern Aleppo risked being completely ruined within two months.

Russia used its veto power on the UN Security Council to reject a resolution calling on Syria and Russia to halt bombings in rebel-held areas in eastern Aleppo, according to The Independent news.

The Lebanese Shiite Movement Hezbollah, has said it will keep fighting its "jihad" in Syria as the war escalates. This was according to Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, in marking the Shiite annual Ashura commemoration.

According to the Middle East Eye, nearly 900 people fleeing the battle in the Iraqi city of Mosul have crossed the border into Syria.

REGIONAL UPDATES: SYRIA

The AFP reported that; the battle to take back Raqqa from the Islamic State will begin in a few weeks according to U.S and U.K officials. Meanwhile, Turkish Military troops in Syria say it will target the Islamic State in Raqqa after taking Manbij.

At the end of October, rebel forces continued their offensive on regime held areas of Aleppo according to the Associated Press. Furthermore, the Russian military will extend its pause in air raids of rebel-held areas of eastern Aleppo in order to aid humanitarian deliveries.

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.

GPoT Center serves as a platform for the free exchange of views and information on political, social and economic matters concerning a variety of parties and segments of society. We aim to achieve our mission by routinely bringing together opinion leaders, government officials, policy makers, analysts, scholars, experts and members of the media from Turkey and abroad.

Our publications can be downloaded from our website for free. They are also accessible through online libraries worldwide, such as the International Relations and Security Network in Zurich, Europe's World in Brussels, and Columbia University Press in New York. Additionally, you can find our books on Google Books and Amazon Kindle.

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