

THE EARLY PHOENIX

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

14 DECEMBER 2022

SYRIA

1. [Assad's Government Shuts Down All Agencies Due to Worsening Fuel Crisis, Calling it a Holiday. \(Syrian Boursa & Enab Baladi\)](#). The Ministry of Internal Trade announced that it would once a month only [subsidize](#) the price of 20 liters at \$9. The actual fuel price, however, remains at \$11 per gallon. The government's first imposed shutdown was announced on December 11, the second on the 18, and the last one claiming it is for the holidays runs from December 25 until January 1.
2. [UN Secretary General Warns Millions of Syrians may not Survive the Winter \(Syria TV\)](#) The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres , warned that the already dire humanitarian situation in Syria is getting worse, stressing that if the authorization for aid passage from Turkey to northwestern Syria is not renewed , millions of Syrians may not survive the winter.
3. [Local Groups and Assad Regime Forces Clash in Daraa Province \(Enab Baladi\)](#) On Monday, the city of Dael witnessed clashes between local fighters and the Assad regime's "Air Force Intelligence," after which locals demanded the regime's military presence in the area be limited.

IRAN

4. [Iran Attempts to Save Its Seat at UN Women Commission \(Iran International\)](#) The Iranian regime is exerting pressure on academic figures to send letters to numerous global bodies urging them to vote against Iran being expelled from the UN Women Commission.
5. [FBI Operation Reveals IRGC Plan to Assassinate John Bolton and Mike Pompeo \(Al Hadath\)](#) According to sources, the failed plan called for recruiting a non-Iranian agent to carry out the assassination, so that the role of the regime's elements would not be revealed, but it appeared later that the person who lured those in charge of the operation was a member of the FBI, and thus the Iranian plan failed.

THE GULF & YEMEN

6. [Saudi Arabia and Britain Sign Defense Cooperation Pact \(Al Sharq Al Awsat\)](#) Yesterday British Minister Ben Wallace received Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman at the Royal Cavalry Guard Square in London, where the two signed a joint plan to develop military capabilities and industry.
7. [Egyptian army leads new international force in Red Sea - what is the mission? \(Mareb Press\)](#) "The Egyptian Navy assumed command of Joint Task Force (153), one of the most important joint mechanisms to enhance regional security and stability and confront threats," army spokesman Colonel Gharib Abdel Hafez said. The statement added that the new tasks assumed by the Egyptian Navy "are represented in combating smuggling and countering illegal activities, especially terrorist activities in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandab, and Gulf of Aden regions."

IRAQ

8. [Iraq Recovers \\$7.9bn in Surplus War Reparations from Kuwait \(Middle East Monitor\)](#). Iraq has received \$7.9 billion in surplus war reparations paid to Kuwait through a UN commission. The reparations resulted from Saddam Hussein's invasion and occupation of its Gulf neighbor in 1990, the Central Bank of Iraq said in a statement.

NORTH AFRICA

9. [**Sudan Announces Assad, Houthi, and Egyptian Mafia Involvement in the Spread of Afghan “Nutella” Hash \(Al Hadath\)**](#) Sudanese police set up an elaborate ambush that resulted in the seizure of 10 kilograms of Afghani hashish, 100 grams of crystal meth, and 1,000 Captagon pills that were ready for distribution. The sources pointed to the involvement of gangs whose members are from Syria, Egypt and Yemen.
10. [**Lockerbie Bomb Suspect Abu Ageila Appears in an American Court \(Libya Akhbar\)**](#) Abu Ageila spoke before the American investigating judge, Robin in the presence of an interpreter, where he said that he understood the indictment against him, but he would not talk about the case until after his meeting with his lawyer.

LEBANON

11. [**Former French Minister: The International Tribunal on the Hariri Assassination was Pressured to Remove Mention of the Involvement of the Syrian Regime \(Shaam.org\)**](#). Former French Defense Minister Florence Parly indicated that " Syrian regime officials were involved in the crime of assassinating Prime Minister Rafik Hariri."
12. [**The bitter experience of the Aoun era necessitated the creation of a third Christian bloc \(Houna Loubnan\)**](#) Former Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives Elie Ferzli said "All that also drives us to support Franjeh's candidacy is that the bitter experience of Aoun's era convinces us more and more of the need to find a third Christian bloc that follows in its performance the path of a sane, prudent, insightful person into the depth of matters, not the path of a desire to dominate and marginalize the other as a prelude to his exclusion and abolishment."

TURKEY

13. [**Ankara: We are Going to Raise our Trade Exchanges with Washington to \\$100 Billion \(Anadolu Agency\)**](#). Turkish Vice President Fuad Oktay said that his country and the United States are moving forward towards achieving their goal of raising trade exchange between them to \$100 billion. Turkey said Tuesday it has cleared up a dispute linked to a Western price cap on Russian crude that had stalled the passage of tankers through the Bosphorus and Dardanelle straits, Agence France-Presse reported.