

THE EARLY PHOENIX
22-December-22

IRAN

1. [Iranian Foreign Minister Denounces France’s “Interference in Iran’s Internal Affairs” and Claims France Will Change Its Position](#) (*Tasnim News Agency*). Amirabdollahian made the statement after meeting his French counterpart Catherine Colonna at the Baghdad Conference in Jordan. He claimed he and Colonna discussed the reconsideration of France’s position concerning the Iranian protests, and that both sides agreed the path of dialogue and diplomacy is preferable.
2. [Ambiguity About the Fate of the American Hostages in Iran](#) (*Al Hadath Channel*). During a White House Press Conference, Al Hadath’s correspondent asked White House Spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre about the fate of Iranian-American prisoners currently held in Iran, and why the White House had not met with any of their families. Ms. Pierre replied that she had no information on the particular family the correspondent asked about and referred her to the State Department. Four American prisoners are still hostages in Iranian custody: Simak Namazi (13 October 2015), Murad Tahbaz (January 2018), Shihab Dalili (2016), and Imad Sharqi (24 April 2018).

GULF REGION

3. [France Seeks to Sell Defense Weapons to Saudi Arabia](#) (*Asharq Al-Awsat*). On Tuesday Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Minister of Defense, spoke with French Armed Forces Minister Sebastien Licorne. The two reviewed their bilateral relations and discussed how to enhance their cooperation and joint coordination in the military and defense fields, in addition to discussing a number of issues of common interest.
4. [UK Agrees to Develop Financial Services in Saudi Arabia](#) (*Asharq Al-Awsat*). On Wednesday, Saudi Finance Minister Muhammad al-Jadaan and his British counterpart Jeremy Hunt met in London to sign a memorandum of understanding under which the UK will assist in developing the Kingdom’s financial and public financial services.
5. [Islamic Countries Agree to a New Fight Against Corruption](#) (*Asharq Al-Awsat*). Member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Tuesday adopted the draft resolution of the “Makkah Al-Mukarramah Agreement,” under which they will establish new mechanisms to combat corruption, including exchanging liaison officers to confront cross-border crimes.

IRAQ

6. [ISIS Steps Up Attacks on Iraqi Security Forces](#) (*Bas News*). The latest ISIS attacks targeted Iraqi military convoys on consecutive days. On Monday, ISIS militants attacked

the village of Albu Bali in Khalis district of Diyala province, where they killed eight civilians and wounded three others. The previous day, jihadists attacked a Federal Police convoy near Safra village in the province of Kirkuk, killing nine policemen.

YEMEN

7. [Houthi Media Claims U.S. Civil Society Programs Secretly Encourage Yemeni Women to Be Naked and Immoral \(al Thawrah\)](#). On Tuesday the Houthis' official media outlet attacked U.S. government programs to support Yemeni civil society, claiming that the programs are a front behind which the Americans are pursuing "hidden goals." A Houthi statement claimed that "The American programs focused on attracting women in Iraq and pushing them to be naked, considering that this is freedom. These programs even moved to deeper goals, such as claiming women's right to abortion, and the right to immoral practices. Later, America used these women and youth groups to cause chaos under the title of the October Revolution, which gave America the opportunity to occupy Iraq for a longer period, plunder its wealth and control its capabilities. Women are a title, and behind the title are malicious American goals that seek to use women in a battlefield that achieves America's goals in Yemen."

TURKEY

8. [Lavrov Says Russia-Türkiye Trade Doubled to \\$45B in 2022 \(Anadolu Agency\)](#). Trade between Russia and Türkiye doubled in the first nine months of this year to reach \$45 billion, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Wednesday. In an online meeting of foreign ministers of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), Lavrov hailed the Black Sea region as "a crossroads of peoples, cultures, religions, and civilizations."

SYRIA

9. [U.S. Commander and Bafel Talabani Make Joint Visit to Syrian Democratic Forces Commander Mazloun Abdi \(Syria TV\)](#). On Wednesday U.S. Major General Matt MacFarlane and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) official Bafel Talabani made a joint visit to northeast Syria to meet with SDF Commander Mazloun Abdi. The two sides discussed the political and military situation in northeastern Syria and developments related to dialogue between the Syrian Kurdish parties. Talabani stressed the need to solve all problems in the region peacefully and through dialogue, and the need to maintain good relations with neighboring countries. Abdi stressed the close relationship between the "Autonomous Administration" of Northeast Syria and the PUK, which Abdi described as a continuous supporter.
10. [US Forces Arrest Six ISIS Members in Eastern Syria \(Asharq Al-Awsat\)](#). U.S. Central Command announced on Tuesday that its forces carried out three operations in

eastern Syria during the past 48 hours, during which they arrested six ISIS members, including a prominent ISIS leader known as “Al Zubaidi.” CENTCOM said Zubaidi was “involved in planning the organization’s attacks in Syria.”

11. [UN Says Syrians Are Suffering Worst Humanitarian Crisis Since the Conflict Began \(*Enab Baladi*\)](#). UN Under-Secretary-General and Humanitarian Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, said on Wednesday that 2022 witnessed the breaking of negative records in Syria. In the last UN Security Council briefing of the year on Syria, Griffiths said Syria has not witnessed similar figures on the level of humanitarian needs since the start of the conflict in 2011.

