

## The Early Phoenix

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

31 January 2023

### IRAN

1. [Iran FM Encourages Hamas and Palestinian Jihad leaders](#) (*Tehran Times*). In separate phone calls with leaders of the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement Ismail Haniyeh and Islamic Jihad Ziyad al-Nakhalah, Amir Abdollahian “strongly denounced the Israeli killings of the defenseless Palestinians,” and made it clear that Iran will continue to support their struggle. Haniyeh commended Iran for taking stances that were based on moral principles and supported the Palestinian nation at all levels. Nakhalah expressed his pride in the positions announced by Iran.
2. [US Iran Envoy Says Diplomacy Is Best Despite Worsening Problems](#) (*Iran International*). US Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley, when pressed to acknowledge if the 2015 JCPOA is dead, avoided a direct answer, saying that Iran “turned down multiple opportunities to end this crisis...so you could reach your own conclusion.” He reiterated that the US is willing to continue talks with Iran “to reach a diplomatic outcome”...Malley reiterated that US “is not in the business of regime change.”
3. [Iran Summons Ukraine’s Envoy Demanding Clarification Over Drone Attack](#) (*Iran International*). Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, tweeted “Explosive night in Iran - drone and missile production, oil refineries.” He continued, “Ukraine did warn you,” referring to repeated calls on Tehran to stop supplying arms to Moscow. Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned the Ukrainian envoy to ask for an explanation in reaction to comments about the drone attacks against the Defense Ministry's facility in Esfahan (Isfahan) on Saturday night.

### SYRIA

4. [Russian Foreign Ministry: No Intention to Cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Regarding Syria](#) (*Syria TV*). The Russian Foreign Ministry announced that Moscow does not intend to cooperate with the investigation and identification team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons regarding chemical weapons attacks in Syria, noting that it "starts from the illegality of this [OPCW] team." This came in a statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry, following the issuance of the report of the OPCW last Friday, which concluded that the Syrian

regime was responsible for the deadly attack with chemical weapons on the city of Douma on April 7, 2018. The report refutes the Russian claim that the opposition carried out the attack.

5. [Multiple Drone Strikes Against Iranian Militias in Al Bukamal, Syria](#) (*Syria TV*). Less than twelve hours after the first drone targeted a convoy of 25 trucks, an Iranian leader was killed, along with two of his companions, as a result of a second airstrike that targeted his four-wheel drive pickup truck while he was on an inspection tour of the location of the first raid.
6. [Antony Blinken Confirms the United States' Rejection of Any Normalization with the Syrian Regime](#) (*Syria TV*). The US Secretary of State made it clear that Washington "does not support any normalization with Assad, and wants a political process in Syria that is consistent with Security Council resolutions," adding that "Assad refused to engage in any political process on the basis of UN resolutions."

## IRAQ

7. [Saudi FM Visits Baghdad to Resume Saudi-Iranian Dialogue](#) (*Iraqi News*). The Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fuad Hussein, announced on Sunday that the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, will visit Baghdad soon to hold talks on resuming rounds of dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

## THE GULF

8. [Russia and Saudi Discussed Cooperation Within the OPEC+ Group](#) (*Al Hurra*). The Kremlin said in a statement, Monday, that Russian President Vladimir Putin had a phone call with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman today, Monday, to discuss cooperation within the framework of the OPEC + group to maintain the stability of oil prices...The group's joint ministerial monitoring committee is likely to recommend maintaining the current oil production policy during their next meeting on Wednesday.
9. [China Seeks a Free Trade Zone with the Gulf](#) (*Al Hurra*). The new Chinese foreign minister phoned his Saudi counterpart to express the desire to establish a free trade area between the two countries as soon as possible.

## EGYPT

10. **US-Egyptian Consensus: Prioritize the Economy and Achieving Stability** (*Al Nahar*).

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry pointed out, in a joint press conference with his American counterpart Antony Blinken in Cairo, that there is a great agreement between the two countries on various issues, as the talks included the Renaissance Dam, Libya and Sudan, stressing that “Cairo is counting on cooperation with Washington to achieve stability in the Middle East region”...In turn, Blinken indicated that "the priority is the economy in relations between Egypt and the United States," pointing out that the war in Ukraine has greatly affected the Egyptian people.

11. **Russian-Egyptian Meeting to Discuss Politics and Trade** (*Sky News Arabia*). On Monday evening, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry will head to Moscow on a bilateral visit aimed at following up the course of bilateral relations between the two countries and discussing the repercussions of the war in Ukraine. Shoukry 's visit to Russia comes a few hours after the talks he held with his American counterpart, Antony Blinken, in Cairo, which focused mainly on ways to calm the Palestinian territories after the recent wave of escalation, in addition to other issues, including the Renaissance Dam and the situation in Libya and Sudan.

## **TURKIYE**

12. **President Erdogan: Turkiye May Respond Differently to Finland's NATO Bid** (*Anadolu Agency*). Türkiye may respond "differently" to Finland's NATO bid which would "shock" Sweden, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said. "We may respond differently to Finland if necessary. Sweden would be shocked when we respond differently to Finland. But Finland should not make the same mistake," Erdogan said at a meeting with the youth in the country's Bilecik province. Ankara gave a list of 120 people to Sweden for extradition to Türkiye, Erdogan said, adding: "You need to extradite these terrorists so that you can enter NATO," or a different response may “shock” Sweden.

13. **The Chairman of the Future Party, Ahmet Davutglu, Explains the Delay in Nominating a Presidential Candidate to Oppose Erdogan** (*Cumhuriyet*). In his speech at the 30th Provincial Presidents Meeting, Davutoglu said, "With the Joint Policies Consensus, we have announced the text that will be seen as a government program by anyone who looks sincerely and without prejudice in more than 2,500 articles." Pointing to the criticisms against the six-party opposition coalition still not announcing its presidential candidate, Davutoğlu said "We haven't named the presidential opponent, because for us, the system is what is important, not the person."