

THE EARLY PHOENIX

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

February 17, 2023

IRAN

1. [**China and Iran Call for Full Implementation of the JCPOA**](#) (***Tehran Times***). Raisi and Xi insisted that Washington's unilateral pullout from the JCPOA is the root cause of the current stalemate in the negotiations to revive the landmark agreement. In their joint statement which was issued at the end of Raisi's three-day state visit to Beijing, the two presidents stressed the importance of lifting sanctions and ensuring Iran's economic benefits as important components of the JCPOA.
2. [**Iran Warns Regional Countries of US Divisive Policies**](#) (***Tasnim Agency***). Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman criticized the statement issued by the United States and the Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) about Iran's regional destabilizing policies. Kanani called the accusations "oft-repeated", "interventionist", and cited examples of the US's "destructive" and "interventionist" policies in the region, including sales of weapons to regional states, support for Takfiri terrorism, and contribution to the Yemeni conflict.
3. [**UK Turns Counter-Terrorism Attention To Iran, Russia, And China**](#) (***Iran International***). The announcement signaled a shift from focusing on Islamic extremism to dangers posed by adversarial states. The September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States and deadly incidents in Britain made tackling Islamist plots the priority for counter-terrorism police, with resources focused on the threat from home-grown and foreign-based militants.

TURKIYE

4. **[4,627 Babies Born Since Devastating Earthquake](#)** (*Daily Sabah*). Over the last 10 days since the earthquake, 4,627 babies have been born in the affected provinces of Turkiye, according to information from the General Directorate of Public Health.

5. **[Another Earthquake of 5.1 Magnitude Causes Panic in Southern Turkiye and Northern Syria](#)** (*Syria TV*). The Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (AFAD) said that an earthquake measuring 5.1 on the Richter scale struck southern Turkey at 22:47, with its center in the city of Arsuz in Hatay state, at a depth of 10.77 kilometers below the surface of the earth.

6. **[Five People Rescued Eleven Days After Quake](#)** (*Daily Sabah*). Back-to-back rescues of five people from the wreckage 11 days after the catastrophic earthquakes that ravaged Türkiye's southeast have been hailed nationwide as a miracle.

7. **[Muslims in London Receive Hate-Filled Letters after Quake in Turkiye and Syria](#)** (*Anadlou Agency*). Two London mosques were shocked by Islamophobic letters they received after devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, in "appalling and disgusting" shows of hate at a time when the whole world has mobilized to help heal the wounds of the two countries. A hate-filled letter was sent to both the UK's first Turkish mosque Masjid Ramadan and the largest one Aziziye Mosque on Wednesday at the same time...Expressing disturbing glee at the suffering and death caused by last Monday's earthquakes, the yet-unknown author wished for more misfortune to befall Muslims in the region.

SYRIA

8. **[Despite Earthquake, Assad Regime Bombards West Aleppo](#)** (*Syria TV*).
At midnight, Thursday-Friday, Syrian regime forces bombed the town of Kafr Ta'al, west of Aleppo, minutes after an earthquake caused panic among the residents of the area. A Syria TV correspondent said that the regime's artillery, stationed in the 46th Regiment, targeted the town with more than 20 shells, without recording any civilian casualties. A source from the "[Al-Fateh Al-Mubin](#)" opposition military group said they had responded to the regime's bombardment by targeting the military headquarters belonging to the Assad regime's notorious 25th Division in the eastern countryside of Idlib." He confirmed, "Direct hits and injuries from Assad's forces were achieved in the targeted locations."
9. **[Fatalities Among the Syrian Regime Forces in an Attack by ISIS, West of Raqqa](#)** (*Al Araby Al Jadeed*). On Thursday, members of the Syrian regime forces were killed and wounded in an attack carried out by cells of the terrorist organization ISIS that targeted a military point in an oilfield in the desert of Raqqa governorate. Meanwhile, a young man died in the prisons of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) after months of detention.
10. **[Seven Syrian Earthquake Survivors, Including Five Children, Died in a Fire in Konya](#)** (*Arabi 21*). The Syrian family arrived at their relatives' home in Konya, coming from the state of Gaziantep , which was affected by the devastating earthquake in the south of the country, killing tens of thousands. Turkish media reported that while the firefighting teams were putting out the fire, the roof of the house collapsed, and the bodies of seven people from the same family were found in the wreckage of the house.

11. [UN Aid is Still Minimal for 171,000 Displaced Syrians](#) (*Nedaa Post*). The response coordinators said that "the UN aid is still within the minimum limits, and its number reached only 114 trucks within one week, 93 percent of which came through the Bab al-Hawa crossing, despite the opening of two additional crossings."

YEMEN

12. [The Joint Arab Gulf-US Working Group Confirmed Iran Continues to Supply the Houthi Militia with Weapons](#) (*Mareb Press*). At the end of its third meeting, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, the group condemned Iran's continued policies of destabilization, including its support for terrorism, the use of advanced missiles, cyber weapons, and unmanned aircraft systems, and their deployment in the region and throughout the world. The United States and GCC member states affirmed that the continuous proliferation of these weapons by Iran and their delivery to other parties, whether governmental or non-governmental, constitutes a serious security threat to the region and the world as a whole.

IRAQ

13. [Heritage Foundation Calls on Biden to Reject Iraq's Demands to Loosen Dollar Restrictions](#) (*Al Iraq News*). The organization called on US President Joe Biden to "politely reject" all the demands of the Iraqi delegation, stressing that the banking system in Iraq is "completely corrupt and directly harms the interests of the Iraqi and American people."
14. [Iraqi Official Says that Under Kazemi, Iraq Made a Fake Purchase of 6,000 Housing Units in Turkiye](#) (*Al Iraqi News*). The Advisor to the Prime

Minister for Financial Affairs, Mazhar Muhammad Salih, revealed on Thursday that the Central Bank of Iraq, during the era of Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kazemi, transferred funds to purchase more than 6,000 housing units in Turkey last year, indicating that all of these funds were sent on behalf of fake invoices. Saleh said in a televised interview that "Iraq bought last year about 6,000 housing units in Turkey through forged invoices and without any oversight from the Central Bank of Iraq."

15. [Kurdistan President Joins World Leaders in Munich to Discuss Global Security](#) (*Bas News*). World leaders are gathering in Munich today to highlight the latest global security challenges as the one-year anniversary of the war in Ukraine approaches, which is expected to dominate the conference agenda this year. Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani on Friday arrived in Germany, where he will be taking part in the annual Munich Security Conference to address challenges facing global security.
16. [Macron receives KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani in Paris](#) (*Rudaw*). French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday received Kurdistan Region Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, discussing a range of topics, including trade and security, according to Barzani's office... "Together we helped safeguard the world from ISIS," said Barzani in a tweet, referring to the Islamic State (ISIS). "Now we're building trade and investment ties to sustain our peoples."
17. [Sadr Calls for Lifting "Siege" on Syria after Earthquake](#) (*Al Sharq Al Awsat*). His first "regional" political position in a while, but his silence continues internally. The leader of the "Sadr movement," Muqtada al-Sadr, announced his opposition to Western sanctions imposed on Syria, considering that "any international economic sanctions against regimes and governments have not and

will not be useful in achieving the desired goal of the colonial state at all,” without specifying who he meant. Al-Sadr said in a tweet, “The Syrian people are suffering from the scourge of epidemics, diseases, hunger, poverty, terrorism, injustice, and lack of fuel, money, lives, and fruits...What kind of injustice is this that befell them? Is it for the sake of the Golan Heights and Israel, or for the sake of bringing the people to their knees and subjugating them to the colonial West with all its sects and races?”

LEBANON

18. **Dollarization: Businesses Price in Dollars as Lebanese Pounds Falls to 80,000 to the Dollar** (*Nabarnet*). In less than a week the Lebanese pound’s value against the dollar has plummeted to a new low from 66,000 to 80,000 at the black market rate, the exchange rate used for buying and selling most goods and services in the country...The value of the Lebanese pound, at times swinging in value several times daily, has led to businesses pricing their items in dollars, where customers pay in the local currency based on black market rates...Caretaker Economy Minister Amin Salam announced Friday a new pricing mechanism for grocery stores, where goods will be priced in dollars based on what he described as a “modest” interpretation of the black market rate.

TUNISIA

19. **Arrests Occupy Tunisia: Pursuit of Corruption or Settlement of Political Scores?** (*Al Nahar*). The campaign of arrests, which included a number of politicians and well-known personalities in Tunisia, occupied public opinion and raised a number of questions about its goals, and criticism reached Washington, which expressed its concern about it. Tunisian security carried out a series of night raids and arrests during the past few days, the last of which was last Monday

night, when the journalist and owner of the private radio "Mosaique FM" Nouredine Boutar was arrested.

20. [**A Tunisian actor attacks the veil and raises a wave of controversy**](#) (*Al Jazeera*). Tunisian theatrical actor Mohamed Kouka - during his hosting of the Tunisian Channel Nine - sparked widespread controversy because of his attack on the veil and his declaration of his strong hatred for it, saying that it "insults and degrades women." "I have a strong hatred for the hijab, and if a woman objects to me, I wish I would remove it from above her head, because it is an insult to the human soul and a degradation of her dignity," Kouka said, in a clip shared by the pioneers of social networking sites.

ISRAEL

21. [**Washington is "deeply disturbed" by Israel's announcement of settlement expansion**](#) (*Al Sharq Al Awsat*). The White House announced Thursday that the United States is "deeply disturbed" by the Israeli cabinet's decision to expand settlement activity in the occupied West Bank, indicating that President Joe Biden is ready to take a more hawkish approach in dealing with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. White House spokeswoman Karen Jean-Pierre told reporters that this behavior "creates facts on the ground that undermine the two-state solution" between the Israelis and the Palestinians.