

MEIWeekly.

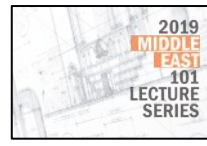


Lebanese President Michel Aoun (above) proclaimed an Israeli drone attack on Beirut as a “declaration of war” that justified a “right to defend [the country’s] sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity”. Photo: Russia Presidential Executive Office

CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

ME 101: From Suez to Singapore

Did you know that based on contemporary definitions, jumping into the waters off Tuas would have meant that you’d landed in the “Middle East”? Also, what do Aladdin, Gigi Hadid, and Osama bin Laden have in common? Find out on **4 September**, when Ms Koh Choon Hwee uses Arabic hip-hop music, Hollywood movie clips, and Instagram photos to deconstruct media coverage of current events, expose their effects on Singapore society, and introduce basic media literacy.



WHAT’S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Israel Drone Attack a “Declaration of War”

Lebanese President Michel Aoun proclaimed that an Israeli drone attack on Beirut last weekend was a “declaration of war” while Prime Minister Saad Hariri called it a “blatant violation” of Lebanese sovereignty. Israel further struck in Iraq, prompting Iraqi President Barham Salih to condemn the drone attacks as a “hostile act that targets Iraq”. In a third instance on Monday, Israeli drones attacked a Palestinian base in eastern Lebanon near the border with Syria, in a likely message to Hezbollah.



Leaders and extended members of the G7 (above) at the Hotel du Palais Biarritz in Biarritz, France for this year’s summit. Photo: The White House

Iran Foreign Minister Appears at G7 Summit

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif made a surprise appearance in Biarritz, France in the midst of this year’s G7 summit, where western policy towards Iran was a key topic. While the United States continues to implement its “maximum pressure” policy, French President Emmanuel Macron sought to partially lift the US oil embargo on Iran in exchange for Tehran’s return to full compliance with the 2015 nuclear agreement. Mr Zarif said the French initiative is moving “in the right direction”.

US Plans Direct Talks with Houthis in Yemen

In an effort to end the four-year-old war in Yemen, the United States is preparing to initiate direct talks with Iran-backed Houthi forces. According to sources, the US is looking to involve Saudi Arabia in secret talks in Oman with Houthi leaders. No direct talks between the US and the Houthis have been held since President Donald Trump assumed office in 2017. The deteriorating situation in Yemen and a rollback in congressional support for the war may have created urgency in the US for diplomatic efforts.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Iran to Further Reduce JCPOA Commitments

On Tuesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif announced that the Islamic Republic will further reduce its nuclear obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on 6 September. This marks the third phase of Iran’s pullback following the second phase on 7 July and the first on 8 May, catalysed by the United States’ withdrawal from the deal. Mr Zarif added that Iran would reconsider the upcoming decision if it reaches an agreement with Europe and the Europeans start implementing it.

Honduras to Open Trade Office in Jerusalem

Honduras will establish a trade office with diplomatic status in Jerusalem next week, paving the way for “the future relocation of the Honduras embassy to Jerusalem”, according to the Israeli foreign ministry. Maintaining embassies in Jerusalem is widely regarded as controversial due to the disputed international legal status of the city. The Israeli prime minister’s wife, Ms Sara Netanyahu, revealed on Tuesday that the development came about through her personal intervention with the president of Guatemala, which neighbours Honduras.

#MUSTREAD: WHAT’S POPULAR ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK: Should small states “always behave like small states”? This was a question which provoked fierce debate in Singapore following the 2017 Qatar boycott. In this article, MEI Senior Research Fellow Fanar Haddad introduces an upcoming series which examines the various strategies and policies that small states adopt to navigate their regional environments. <https://nus.edu/2zmCPZ1>

Lebanon’s cultural heritage, long threatened by poor regulation of construction and conservation, now has new champions. A green generation is stepping up to develop sustainable initiatives to protect the formerly war-torn country’s land, traditions and artisans. <https://nyti.ms/2PmrGCj>

TWITTER: The editor at a conservative news agency got wind of his arrest warrant, and made a run for it. <https://bit.ly/2L1pYSI>



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