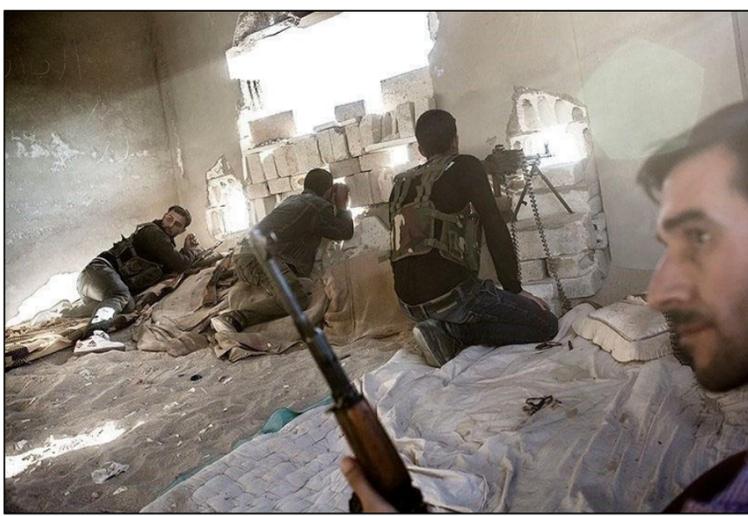


# MEI Weekly.



Ras al-Ayn in northern Syria was among the towns hit by Turkish air strikes and artillery fire on Wednesday. Here, Kurdish gunmen are defending Ras al-Ayn from attacks by Islamic State-affiliated militants in 2013. Photo: Younes Mohammad for *Tasnim News*

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

### 2019 S R Nathan Distinguished Lecture

How can Singapore become a start-up nation like Israel? Hear from Prof Eugene Kandel, CEO of Start-up Nation Central and former head of Israel's National Economic Council, who will share his insights on digital strategy and innovation in the Middle East. Join us at MEI's 2019 S R Nathan Distinguished Lecture on **17 October!**



## WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

### Turkey Launches Offensive in Syria

Turkey launched an air and ground offensive in northern Syria on Wednesday, days after United States President Donald Trump withdrew US troops from the border area. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan claimed the operation would create a "safe zone" cleared of Kurdish militias for Syrian refugees and "prevent the creation of a terror corridor across (their) southern border". At least 23 Kurdish fighters have been reportedly killed.



China's pull-out from a natural-gas project has inflicted further pain on Iran's struggling economy. Pictured above is an example of a natural gas refinery. Photo: Max Pixel

### China Pulls Out of Giant Iranian Gas Project

Amid trade tensions with the United States, China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) has pulled out of a US\$5 billion natural-gas project in Tehran. CNPC cited difficulties in finding banking channels to transfer funds to Iran due to US pressure. The exit is part of a broader Chinese pullback, and comes as a blow to the Islamic Republic's attempts to fight economic isolation.

### Singapore is Studying Saudi Drone Attacks

Singapore's Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen told parliament on Monday that the Singapore Armed Forces is studying the recent attacks on Saudi Arabian oil facilities to protect the Republic from similar drone strikes. Dr Ng observed that Singapore's various assets would have prevented a similar outcome, but warned that the existence of a wide spectrum of threats, including from toy drones, means there can be no single counter-response.

## LOOKAHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### Tunisia to Hold Presidential Run-off Elections

Tunisia is set to hold its presidential run-off elections on 13 October. Voters will choose between two candidates, law professor Mr Kais Saied and businessman Mr Nabil Karoui. Both men emerged as forerunners in the first presidential vote on 15 September. However, detained on charges of tax fraud and money laundering until Wednesday, Mr Karoui has been absent from the campaign trail, while Mr Saied has suspended his own campaign to "remove the ambiguity related to the lack of equal opportunities between the two candidates".

### Pakistani PM to Visit Saudi Arabia and Iran

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan is expected to travel to Saudi Arabia and Iran this month to defuse tensions between the two countries following the 14 September drone attacks on Saudi oil facilities, which the Kingdom has blamed on Tehran. *Dunya News* reported that Mr Khan will visit Saudi Arabia on 13 October.

## #MUSTREAD: WHAT'S POPULAR ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

**FACEBOOK:** Unmarried foreign couples can now rent hotel rooms in Saudi Arabia. The move is part of the Kingdom's drive to boost tourism numbers. <https://bbc.in/33cBGiM>

Is the two-state solution still a viable option to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? MEI Senior Research Fellow Victor Kattan explained the roots and prospects of the two-state solution on Wednesday. Missed his ME 101 lecture? Watch the video <https://bit.ly/2AXjtui> or tune in to our podcast <https://spoti.fi/2IDuFR3>.

**TWITTER:** Recent protests in Iraq are a result of the ruling oligarchy's ineffectiveness. Instead of cosmetic reforms, the political system needs independent figures who can introduce structural change, writes MEI Senior Research Fellow Fanar Haddad for *Al-Jazeera*. <https://bit.ly/33jnt4a>



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