

MEIWeekly.



An Israeli settlement near Jericho, West Bank. The United States' latest announcement that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are not in violation of international law reverses decades of US foreign policy and may undermine peace efforts and negotiation for a two-state solution. Photo: Daniel Case, shared on Wikimedia Commons.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

MEI Salon: Haflah Musica

Transport yourself across the lands of Arabia through the rhythm and melody of Haflah Musica. With a fusion of traditional and modern instruments, we will dish out popular classics from Egypt, evergreen tunes from across the Arabian Gulf and introduce you to the rhythmic favourites of the South-east Asian Hadrami Arabs. Haflah Musica is presented to you by the Arab Network @ Singapore in partnership with the Middle East Institute at NUS. Join us on **14 December**.



WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

US Shifts Stance on Israeli Settlements

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced on Monday (18 November) that the US no longer considered Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be in violation of international law. The new American policy was met with widespread denunciation by other United Nations Security Council members on Wednesday (20 November). Council members warned that the policy would undermine efforts for a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, as well as cast further doubts on the Trump administration's proposed peace plan.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded to indictment charges in a defiant speech, insisting that the case was built on lies and that the Israeli people should “investigate the investigators”. Photo: the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Netanyahu Indicted for Fraud and Bribery

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was indicted on Thursday (21 November) on charges of fraud, bribery and breach of trust, after long-running corruption cases involving allegations of official favours to media tycoons. In his response, Mr Netanyahu insisted that the case against him was an “attempted coup”, and that the police and prosecutors, led by Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit, needed to be brought to account. The charges are brought amid political turmoil: opposition leader Benny Gantz announced his failure to form a governing coalition on Wednesday (20 November), paving the way for potentially, an unprecedented third round of elections.

Turkey Begins Deportation of Isis Militants

Turkey has followed through on its threat to repatriate Islamic State (Isis) militants, releasing a dozen former Isis members and relatives to Britain, Denmark, Germany and the United States last week. Turkey holds 2, 280 Isis members from 30 countries, and Turkish officials have stated that all of them will be returned. The threat of returning Isis fighters serves as diplomatic leverage that Turkey can use against the criticism of European countries, which have threatened sanctions for unauthorised oil drilling in the Mediterranean ocean.

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Lebanon Parliament to Reopen Amid Protests

Lebanese House Speaker Nabih Berri has scheduled a session of parliament for next Wednesday, 27 November, to discuss laws about banking secrecy and the return of stolen state funds. Protests in Beirut blocked Parliament from convening on Tuesday (19 November), in response to proposed controversial laws that could include amnesty for past corruption. Tuesday's session would have been the first session in two months. Lebanon has been in political standstill since the resignation of former Prime Minister Saad Hariri in October.

Saudi Aramco to Meet UAE Investors

Representatives from Saudi oil giant Aramco will meet with investors in Dubai and Abu Dhabi next week, beginning this Sunday (24 November). The meetings aim to help Aramco raise almost US\$26 billion dollars, after its IPO was valued at US\$1.7 trillion last Sunday — falling short of the Saudi government's goal of US\$2 trillion. After cancelling roadshows in Asia and North America, Aramco has turned to more local markets to sell 1.5 per cent of the company in what could be the world's biggest share sale.

#MUSTREAD: WHAT'S POPULAR ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK: “All of the Iraqi Army's intelligence — consider it yours,” an Iraqi commander of military intelligence once told Iranian agents. The 700-page leaked document details how Iran has outmanoeuvred the United States in establishing influence in Baghdad after the 2003 invasion. <https://nyti.ms/2rdKLUu>

Small states need external shelter in order to survive and prosper, says Professor Baldur Thorhallsson. Read the latest edition of MEI *Insights* to see how Iceland's experiences following desertion by main ally United States show the importance of multilateral arrangements for the survival of small states. <https://nus.edu/2XyDnWH>

TWITTER: Singaporean Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security Teo Chee Hean called on Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani and other leaders to renew ties between Qatar and Singapore during a working visit to Doha from 17 to 20 November. Among the issues discussed were food security and climate change. <https://bit.ly/2O64tRZ>



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