

# MEI Weekly.



General Qassem Soleimani's funeral in Tehran on Tuesday (7 January) was described as the "largest in Iran" since the funeral of Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in 1989. Photo: Mehr news agency, shared on Wikimedia Commons

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

### MEI Annual Conference

Don't miss your last chance to register for MEI's Annual Conference held on **15 and 16 January 2020!** This year's theme is "The Middle East in Transformation: Are there Lessons from East Asia?". Besides hearing from eminent speakers such as Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for Social Policies Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Harvard University's Professor Ezra F Vogel, participants will also receive a free copy of a primer on doing business in the Gulf.



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

### Iran Mourns General Soleimani's Death

Hundreds of thousands flooded the streets of Tehran on Tuesday (7 January) for the funeral of General Qassem Soleimani, who was killed by an American drone strike. The country's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei wept openly as he recited prayers over the caskets of General Soleimani and others killed in the attack. Ms Zeinab Soleimani, the general's daughter, warned in a fiery speech that her father's martyrdom will lead to "a dark day" for America and Zionism.



An Ukrainian Airline Boeing 737 (similar to the one seen above) crashed minutes after taking off from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport on Wednesday (8 January). Photo: Wikipedia Commons

### Boeing 737 Crashes in Iran

Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 bound for Kiev crashed minutes after taking off from Tehran on Wednesday (8 January), killing at least 176 people on board. This comes at a tense time for Iran, just hours after Iran had fired missiles at two bases in Iraq that housed United States troops. Based on early evidence, the US and its allies believe that it was one or more Iranian missiles that accidentally brought down the Ukrainian jet.

### Iran Launches Rockets at US Base in Iraq

Iran fired more than a dozen missiles at Iraqi airbases hosting US troops on Wednesday (8 January) as part of its promised retaliation over the killing of General Qassem Soleimani. Al-Asad airbase in Iraq's Anbar province was hit 17 times. Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei described the bombings as "a slap in the face" for the United States while President Donald Trump tweeted "all is well!".

## LOOKAHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### Turkey, Russia Set Libya Ceasefire Deadline

Turkey and Russia on Wednesday (8 January) have called on warring parties in Libya to reach a ceasefire by midnight on Sunday (12 January). This comes after recent escalation between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and United Nations-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA), supported by Russian mercenaries and Turkish forces respectively.

### Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan to Settle Dam Dispute

Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan are expected to meet for the last time at Washington DC on next Wednesday (15 January) to come up with a final agreement on the disputed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) that will ensure the rights of the three countries. Several rounds of meetings have taken place, where the three countries had agreed that the filling of the reservoir would be according to the hydrology of the Blue Nile.

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

**FACEBOOK:** In this piece for the *South China Morning Post*, MEI Senior Research Fellow Fanar Haddad argues that Iran's options for revenge on US President Donald Trump are not limited to its military; other avenues include the resuscitation of the Islamic State. <https://bit.ly/2QB00YI>

MEI Principal Research Fellow Alessandro Arduino spoke on CNBC's Capital Connection about how recent events in Iran have resulted in increasing uncertainty among the Chinese towards the Middle East. He also shared how the impending signing of a truce on the trade war contributed to China's mild tone in its response to the killing of General Qassem Soleimani. <https://cnb.cx/2s8e6Yd>

**TWITTER:** If US President Donald Trump pushes through with his threat to target Iranian cultural sites, he could be obliterating some of the world's most ingenious architecture, said an article in *The Guardian*. They include Persepolis and diverse religious sites such as Imam Reza Shrine, Vank Cathedral and the tomb of Daniel. <https://bit.ly/2T9E774>



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