

MEIWeekly.



Standing with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left), US President Donald Trump unveils details of his administration's Middle East Peace Plan. The plan, which he refers to as "the deal of the century", is the product of more than two years of discussion. Mr Jared Kushner, senior White House adviser and son-in-law of President Trump, described it as "the last chance for Palestinians". Photo: Official White House Photo, shared on Flickr.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

Middle East Film Festival

Afghan orphan Qodrat, 15, was taken off the streets of Kabul and sent to a Soviet orphanage. There, he learnt to deal with friendships, bullies and larger sociopolitical forces at play in late 1980s Soviet-occupied Afghanistan. *The Orphanage* is one of seven films featured in this year's Middle East Film Fest. Tickets are on sale now! Check out <https://nus.edu/2RDc787> for more details.



WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Trump Reveals Middle East Peace Plan

The long-awaited peace plan hailed by US President Donald Trump as "win-win solution for both sides" proposes a four-year freeze on settlement construction by Israel and increases the amount of territory directly under Palestinian control. However, it also recognises Israeli sovereignty over illegal settlements in the West Bank and grants Jerusalem to Israel. The Palestinian leadership had rejected the 181-page plan ahead of its release on Tuesday (28 January) as it was expected to be favourable to Israel, which had played a role in the negotiation.



A man holds the Palestinian flag amidst the protestors demonstrating in front of the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul on 29 Jan 2020 standing against US President Donald Trump's Middle East peace plan. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas declared that "the deal of the century is the slap of the century" during a speech in response to the plan. Photo: Ozan Kose/AFP.

Strong, but Mixed Responses to Trump's Plan

The polarising peace plan was welcomed by some as a potentially "positive step forward" but denounced by others like Turkey and Iran as "stillborn" and "doomed to fail". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu branded it "a great plan for Israel" and "a great plan for peace", while Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said "a thousand no's" to the plan, which "belongs to the dustbin of history". Others were more subdued, with Saudi Arabia "[appreciating]" the plan, and France and Germany insisting on a "two-state solution".

Israel Postpones West Bank Annexation Vote

The vote in the Cabinet to annex large parts of the West Bank has been put on hold, said an Israeli minister on Wednesday (29 January), a day after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that that lawmakers would decide on the issue on Sunday (2 February). Tourism Minister Yariv Levin said the postponement was due to issues of feasibility, such as the need to consult Israel's attorney general, especially since the current government is a caretaker government. If the vote were to pass, up to 30 per cent of the West Bank and Jordan Valley could be annexed, a move which some describe as causing "an Apartheid state".

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Palestine President to Speak to UNSC

In response to the Arab-Israeli peace plan that was put forth by US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Mr Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, will be speaking to the United Nations Security Council within the next two weeks about his rejection of the proposed plan. He will also be taking part in an Arab League meeting this Saturday (1 February) and an African Union summit in February.

Iran Prepares for "10 Days of Dawn"

Iran is gearing up for *Dabe-ye Fajr* ("10 Days of Dawn"), which is observed from 1 February every year. The celebrations commemorates the days in 1979 between Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returning to Iran and the fall of the Shah's government. Many speeches and nationalist demonstrations are expected across the country, especially in the wake of General Qasem Soleimani's recent passing.

#MUSTREAD: WHAT'S POPULAR ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman courted Amazon's Jeff Bezos and forged a cordial and mutually beneficial relationship before the recent rift over alleged phone hacking. <https://bit.ly/36FUMjc>

Examining the effects of the British colonial legacy, Dr Falestin Naili explains how the current physical and political rifts that segregate the Old City can trace their origins to the Mandate era. <https://nus.edu/2O9p6wr>

TWITTER: Much like the rest of the world now, governments all over the Middle East are taking necessary steps to combat the outbreak of the Wuhan coronavirus. <https://bit.ly/2RYDIzG>



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