

# MEIWeekly.



An aerial view of destroyed buildings in the town of Ihsim taken on 19 February in Idlib province, Syria. Photo: Omar Haj Kadour/AFP.

## CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

### Suspension of Public Events

All MEI public events for February and March have been suspended until further notice, in view of the Ministry of Health's advice to cancel or defer all large scale and non-essential events. New event dates will be announced once the coronavirus situation stabilises. Please check our website and social media channels for updates. Thank you.



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

### UN Calls for Immediate Ceasefire in Syria

In the face of a rapidly deteriorating situation in Syria, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for an immediate cessation of hostilities on Tuesday (18 February), along with several other senior UN officials. Turkey and Russia have been identified as essential actors in the construction of a long-lasting ceasefire. However, based on statements made at a UN Security Council meeting held on Wednesday (19 February), the situation seems “exceedingly bleak”, and talks have yet to produce substantial results.



A Syrian boy plays with a football in a makeshift camp for displaced people fleeing attacks from pro-regime forces in the Aleppo and Idlib provinces, Syria. Photo: Bakr Alkasem/AFP.

### Worsening Humanitarian Crisis in Syria

Freezing temperatures and insufficient aid have resulted in the deaths of many babies and children in the makeshift camps meant to shelter Syrian refugees, reported *Al-Jazeera* on Thursday (20 February). The Syrian conflict, which has seen more than 900,000 people displaced from their homes since December 2019, has been described as “cruel beyond belief” by Ms Michelle Bachelet, the UN high commissioner for human rights. The UN Children's Fund (Unicef) has warned that “virtually every child, up to 1.8 million of them, require humanitarian assistance”, as calls for increased humanitarian aid continue.

### ‘Developments’ in Turkish Protestors’ Trial

In a surprising turn of events for the authoritarian regime, nine of the 16 individuals charged with attempting to overthrow Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2016 were acquitted in a landmark trial on Tuesday (18 February). However, prominent philanthropist Osman Kavala, one of those previously released, was subsequently arrested again later that same day, in a move that “resembles a deliberate and planned cruelty” according to Ms Milena Buyum, the Turkey campaigner for Amnesty International. Mr Kavala, who may now face even more serious charges after having spent over two years in police detention, has grown to symbolise the arbitrary injustice commonly meted out in Turkey, wrote *The New York Times*.

## LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

### Nanotech Middle East 2020

The Nanotech Middle East 2020 Conference and Exhibition will be held at the Dubai World Trade Centre Convention Centre from 24 to 26 February. Covering all frontier topics in nanotechnology such as technology trends, development tools, research and development collaborations and commercialisation partners, it is the most commercially-focused nanotechnology industry conference in the Middle East and North Africa region. This year's plenary speakers include leading researchers and policy makers who will exchange information on the latest research progress and business opportunities in the field of nanotechnology.

### Kuwaiti National Day

Kuwait marks its 59th anniversary on 25 February (Tuesday). This national day is observed by Kuwaitis from all over the world as they commemorate the country's independence from British rule and remember the coronation of one of their most admired rulers, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. Apart from fireworks displays, many citizens gather with friends and family to have picnics at local parks and beaches.



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

**FACEBOOK:** An Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) tweet featuring a sexy young woman without an accompanying caption created quite a stir online last weekend (15 February). The IDF was trying to educate its soldiers about a Hamas “honeypot” operation using attractive young women on social networks to lure IDF soldiers to download spyware onto their mobile phones, which will allow Hamas to gather intelligence and information about the armed forces.  
<http://bit.ly/2HGJUre>

In this latest MEI *Insight*, Manachem Klein recounts the history of Jerusalem between 1949 and 1967, and how the city has experienced two vastly different development trajectories under the divided rule of Jordan and Israel.  
<https://nus.edu/2SjaxSX>



**TWITTER:** An Israeli airplane flew through Sudanese airspace for the first time on Saturday (15 February). As Israel's 2 March election approaches, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could stand to gain a great deal of political leverage if he manages to normalise relations with Sudan.  
<http://bit.ly/2vMiuO4>

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