

MEI Weekly.



US forces firing teargas at Iraqi demonstrators protesting against US strikes that killed Iraqi militia fighters outside the US embassy in Baghdad on 1 January 2020. The US had blamed an Iranian-backed Iraqi militia for the 27 December 2019 attack on the K-1 air base. Photo: Ahmad Al-Rubaye/AFP.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING INSTITUTE EVENTS

Middle East Film Festival

Reunited at their father's home in the village, sisters Reyhan, Nurhan and Havva work together to leave for the big cities as soon as they can — against the will of the domineering men in their lives. *A Tale of Three Sisters* is a Turkish family drama brought in especially for the Middle East Film Fest, along with seven others. Tickets are on sale now! Check out <https://nus.edu/2RDC787> for more details.



WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Was the US Wrong about 27 Dec Attack?

Doubts have been raised about who fired the rockets on 27 December last year that started the spiral of events between Iran and the United States, reported *The New York Times* on Thursday (6 February). The US had blamed Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Khataib Hezbollah, but Iraqi military and intelligence officials said the facts now point to the Islamic State.



Turkish military vehicles driving in a convoy bound for Idlib province, which sits on Syria's northwestern border with Turkey. Photo: Aaref Wataad/AFP.

Violence between Turkey and Syria in Idlib

Turkey has responded to Syria's latest Russia-backed offensive to drive out "terrorists" in Idlib province by deploying more tanks into the region on Sunday (2 February). The intensifying military push by Syrian government forces in the country's last major rebel-held stronghold has promoted fears of a new refugee crisis. Turkey has been hosting 3.5 million Syrian refugees and is reluctant to accept more. According to Unicef, an estimated 6,500 children have been fleeing the violence each day over the past week.

Qatar to be First Gulf State with Submarines

Qatar's impending acquisition of submarines from Italian defense giant Fincantieri will displace Iran as the only submarine operator in the Arabian Gulf, reported a *Forbes* article on Tuesday (4 February). The move may be a response to growing tension with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which have also expressed interest in acquiring submarines of their own. According to *Forbes*, this may "change the naval balance in the region".

LOOKAHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

Pompeo to Visit Saudi Arabia and Oman

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will travel to six countries next week, ending his visit in Saudi Arabia and Oman, where he is expected to speak on Iran, Yemen and human rights issues with the Saudi leadership.

World Urban Forum in UAE

The World Urban Forum, organised by UN-Habitat will begin on Saturday (8 February) in Abu Dhabi and last till 13 February. It is the world's most important conference on cities and urbanisation, and this year, it aims to foster diverse dialogue among urban experts and local leaders to focus on sustainable urbanisation issues. The forum theme this year is "Cities of Opportunities: Connecting Culture and Innovation".

#MUSTREAD: WHAT'S POPULAR ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK: The coronavirus outbreak has had a direct impact on oil prices, causing the worst monthly price dip in 30 years. That has led the Saudis to consider drastic cuts on output to shore up oil prices, reported *The Wall Street Journal* on Monday (3 February). <http://bit.ly/2S5myBK>

The internationalisation of Jerusalem has been a key initiative by the United Nations to diffuse Arab-Israeli tensions in the region. In this new *Insight* article, Dr Elad Ben-Dror analyses why an international regime for Jerusalem has yet to be achieved despite repeated attempts by the international community. <http://bit.ly/2H0b4ZX>

TWITTER: Political art flourishes in Iraq as locals take to the streets and the web with visual arts and songs to bolster the protest effort in Baghdad. <http://bit.ly/37bfN5S>



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