



(Hani Amara/Reuters, 2019)

## Violence in the Tripoli Leaves 270 Dead; Egypt's Constitutional Referendum Passes

19/04/2019-25/04/2019

*Across the region, different aspects dominate national news. Libya again remains the center of most violent unrest. Fighting continues in Libya's capital, as the death toll continues to rise. Neighboring Tunisia too remains preoccupied with Libya's violence, and the possibilities of a potential influx of refugees.*

*In Egypt, the referendum on the constitutional amendments allowing for the President to stay in power until 2030 passed. Algerian news focuses on corruption scandals, freedom of the press features in some stories in Mauritania, and the Hirak movement has gained further publicity in Morocco.*

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## Algeria

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In Algeria, corruption scandals have been the focus of the news, with reports of several important businessmen having been arrested (*Le Point*)<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, investigations on Chakib Khelil, a former Minister under Bouteflika, have begun (*Le Monde*)<sup>2</sup>. According to the spokesperson of the Algerian Anti-Corruption Association, some “60 billion dollars” were diverted over the past 15 years (*Algeria-Watch*)<sup>3</sup>.

Meanwhile the Algerian army has fired the head of the State energy group (*The Financial Times*)<sup>4</sup>, and the Minister of Justice has called for the lifting of parliamentary immunity of Ould Abbas and Said Barkat, two members of the National Assembly (*Algérie 360*)<sup>5</sup>.

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## Egypt

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In Egypt, the referendum on the new constitutional changes that could allow President El-Sisi to remain in power until 2030 was passed (*BBC*)<sup>6</sup>. Some 88% of voters backed the changes approved by the Egyptian Parliament last week (*RFI*)<sup>7</sup>.

In South Sinai province, there has been a dramatic increase in security presence due to fears of militant infiltration in the region (*Mada Masr*)<sup>8</sup>. And on the international level, Egypt has begun hosting a three-week human rights conference for the African Union, though this has been faced criticism from some parties (*Africa Times*)<sup>9</sup>.

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## Libya

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Tripoli has been hit by airstrikes as Haftar’s assault on the capital continues (*The Guardian*)<sup>10</sup>. The World Health Organization has reported that since 4 April, at least 270 people, including 69 civilians, have died and another 1266 have been injured (*El Watan*)<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/algerie-la-justice-entre-en-scene-24-04-2019-2309364\\_3826.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/algerie-la-justice-entre-en-scene-24-04-2019-2309364_3826.php)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/04/25/en-algerie-nouvelles-enquetes-sur-chakib-khelil-ancien-ministre-proche-de-bouteflika\\_5454701\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/04/25/en-algerie-nouvelles-enquetes-sur-chakib-khelil-ancien-ministre-proche-de-bouteflika_5454701_3212.html)

<sup>3</sup> <https://algeria-watch.org/?p=71901>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/2a33e316-66a2-11e9-9adc-98bf1d35a056>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.algerie360.com/le-ministre-de-la-justice-demande-la-levee-de-limmunit-parlementaire-de-ould-abbes-et-said-barkat/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-48035512>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.rfi.fr/moyen-orient/20190423-egypte-resultat-referendum-nouvelle-constitution-al-sissi-oui-approuvee-mandat>

<sup>8</sup> <https://madamasr.com/en/2019/04/21/feature/politics/arish-on-high-alert-after-militant-infiltration-extraordinary-security-in-south-sinai-amid-fear-of-spreading-violence/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://africatimes.com/2019/04/25/critics-focus-on-egypt-as-it-hosts-au-human-rights-summit/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/21/air-strikes-hit-tripoli-as-haftar-steps-up-assault-on-libyan-capital>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.elwatan.com/edition/international/crise-libyenne-larmee-de-haftar-au-bord-de-lenlissement-25-04-2019>

On the international level, the Foreign Minister of the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord, Mohammed Sayala has criticized the recent statement issued by the African Union as differing from the realities of the situation on ground (*The Libya Observer*)<sup>12</sup>. Russia has also intervened politically, with its Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stating that a political settlement is the only way out of the current crisis (*The Libya Observer*)<sup>13</sup>. Meanwhile, Reuters has emphasized another element of the crisis, noting that a potential vulnerability in Haftar's strategy is his dependence upon a parallel finance system that is being used to pay his soldiers, and that the outcome of this financial system may be the deciding factor in the current battle (*Reuters*)<sup>14</sup>.

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## Mauritania

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Freedom of the press has been in the spotlight, as Mauritania loses its first place ranking in the Maghreb to Tunisia (*L'Authentique*)<sup>15</sup>. While this has happened, demonstrations have taken place to demand the release of two bloggers who were imprisoned by authorities (*Sahara Media*)<sup>16</sup>.

Regarding the upcoming Presidential elections, the leader of an opposition coalition, the Popular Progressive Coalition, Ahmed Ould Iyahi, has officially announced his candidacy (*Yabiladi*)<sup>17</sup>. And, there are reports that over half of Mauritania's mayors sponsored the candidacy of Ould Ghazouani (*CRIDEM*)<sup>18</sup>.

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## Morocco

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There are reports that several detainees from the Hirak movement in Morocco, including its leader Nasser Zefzafi, have begun to hunger strike in prison (*RFI*)<sup>19</sup>. And thousands have marched in Rabat to demand the liberation of these Hirak detainees (*RFI*)<sup>20</sup>.

Meanwhile, the EU has reinforced its support for the Moroccan private sector (*La Tribune*)<sup>21</sup>, and through the African Union Morocco has rejected the military escalation occurring in Libya (*Ya Biladi*)<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/foreign-minister-criticizes-african-tripartite-summit-statement-current-events-libya>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/lavrov-no-alternative-political-solution-libya>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-analysis/after-tripoli-assault-libyas-next-battle-could-be-over-banks-idUSKCN1S10KU>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.lauthentic.info/Social/article/Classement-liberte-de-la-presse-la-Mauritanie-perd-sa-premiere-place-au-Maghreb>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.sahamedias.net/fr/mauritanie-nouvelles-manifestations-pour-demander-la-liberation-de-deux-blogueurs/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/77495/presidentielle-mauritanie-quand-l-un-candidats.html>

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.cridem.org/C\\_Info.php?article=722697](http://www.cridem.org/C_Info.php?article=722697)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190424-maroc-plusieurs-detenus-mouvement-hirak-greve-faim>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190421-maroc-manifestation-rabat-reclamer-liberation-detenus-hirak>

<sup>21</sup> <https://lnt.ma/lue-renforce-action-faveur-secteur-prive-maroc/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/77551/maroc-rejette-l-escalade-militaire-libye.html>

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## Tunisia

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Tunisia is bracing itself for the repercussions of the intense fighting in neighbouring Libya (*Middle East Monitor*)<sup>23</sup>. Critically, Tunisia anticipates a possible refugee crisis coming from Libya, with an associated burden on its own public services (*Jeune Afrique*)<sup>24</sup>.

In other news, a national debate on transitional justice in Tunisia will be launched in June 2019 (*Web Manager Center*)<sup>25</sup>. Meanwhile, Nessma TV has been ordered to shut down due to accusations of illegal broadcasting by tax evasion and corruption (*Jeune Afrique*)<sup>26</sup>. Further, there are reports that 15 irregular migrants were rescued in Nebeul (*Tunisie Numérique*)<sup>27</sup>.

### About:

*This is a weekly, non-exhaustive snapshot of regional, and international news regarding the politics of the North African region. Selections demonstrate varying perspectives and opinions from French, Arabic and English media sources. Taking such an approach enables regional trends to be observed and documented so they may be used and applied in our detailed research projects.*

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190423-escalating-fighting-in-libya-capital-threatens-tunisia/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/764350/societe/offensive-du-marechal-haftar-en-libye-la-tunisie-vigilante-a-un-afflux-de-refugies/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.webmanagercenter.com/2019/04/25/434217/tunisie-un-debat-national-sur-la-justice-transitionnelle-se-tiendra-en-juin-2019/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/767323/politique/tunisie-les-autorites-ordonnent-larret-de-nessma-tv-pour-diffusion-illegale/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-15-candidats-a-la-migration-clandestine-secours-au-large-de-nabeul/>

## BRUSSELS INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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