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Weekly Insights from North Africa

08/03/2019-14/03/2019

With the withdrawal of Bouteflika's bid for a 5th Presidential term in Algeria, the international media has focused on what this means for the state, who could possibly be an alternative and when the new elections will now be held. In Libya, there has been reports of armed unrest in Libya's southern desert regions, as General Haftar secures his position across two-thirds of the country. A health scandal in Tunisia and a public transportation scandal in Egypt have seen replacements of Government Ministers, and Morocco continues to garner international praise for its approach to deradicalization.

Algeria

This week, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika dramatically announced that he was stepping down as a Presidential candidate in upcoming Presidential elections; during the same announcement he also postponed said-elections to an as-of-yet unspecified date in the future (*France 24*)¹. In addition to this announcement, the current Prime Minister Ahmed Ouhayia resigned from office, and was replaced by former Minister of Interior Nouredine Badoui (*Jeune Afrique*)².

In response to these announcements, France has congratulated Bouteflika for standing down and praised his intention for political reform to the Algerian system (*Courrier International*)³. However, some Algerians have continued to protest despite these new developments, fearing that a lack of a new election date could enable an indefinite extension to Bouteflika's already existing 4th mandate to govern (*Le Figaro*)⁴.

Egypt

The President of the Gulf Cooperation Council's delegation in Egypt praised the state as being a principal gateway and access point for money and investment from the Gulf into Africa (*Akhbar Masr News*)⁵.

Following the scandal involving a series of serious rail accidents in Egypt and the resignation of Minister of Transportation Heshem Arafat, the ex-head of the Egyptian Armed Forces Engineering Authority has been approved as the new Minister (*Egyptian Streets*)⁶.

In other news, the Egyptian military reported the deaths of 46 jihadists and 3 military personnel during an operation in Northern Sinai (*Le Figaro*)⁷. And there has been some criticism in international media towards the lack of discussion of human rights issues during the recent Arab-EU summit in Sharm el Sheikh (*The Guardian*)⁸.

¹ <https://www.france24.com/fr/20190311-algerie-abdelaziz-bouteflika-renonce-presidentielle-report-scrutin>

² <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/747782/politique/algerie-le-premier-ministre-ahmed-ouyahia-demissionne-noured-dine-bedoui-le-remplace/>

³ <https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/diplomatie-en-algerie-des-declarations-francaises-qui-passent-mal>

⁴ <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2019/03/12/01003-20190312ARTFIG00158-algerie-la-manoeuvre-du-pouvoir-echoue-a-calmer-le-degagisme.php>

⁵ <https://bit.ly/2udOmaw> (Link Shortened)

⁶ <https://egyptianstreets.com/2019/03/11/ex-head-of-the-egyptian-armed-forces-engineering-authority-approved-as-new-minister-of-transportation/>

⁷ <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2019/03/11/97001-20190311FILWWW00070-egypte-46-djihadistes-presumes-tues-dans-des-affrontements.php>

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/mar/13/egypt-executed-15-people-in-february-why-is-the-uk-staying-silent>

Libya

There has been differing reports of armed operations in Libya's south. The forces of Khalifa Haftar now reportedly control two-thirds of Libya following the recent operation to take over parts of Libya's southwest, and are now looking to advance on Sirte in the northern centre of the country (*The Guardian; Libyan Express*)⁹. But this picture is unclear as those forces allegedly left parts of Sabha in chaos following a withdrawal from the southern city (*The Libyan Observer*)¹⁰. In addition, a truce was apparently made between warring factions in Murzuq (*The Libyan Observer*)¹¹. And rebel detainees have suggested that the Sudan Liberation Movement is actively collaborating to support Haftar in Libya's southern border regions (*The Libyan Observer*)¹².

Regarding talk about elections, the Interior Ministry of the Government of National Accord has announced the establishment of a department to protect the election process (*Libya News Agency*)¹³. However, members of the rival House of Representatives have cast doubt on the planned National Conference, a key step in the UN-backed plan for national elections, by refusing to commit to a date until reaching consensus on the aims and expectations of such a conference (*The Libyan Observer*)¹⁴. Meanwhile, the visiting EU delegation to Libya has reaffirmed commitment to national stability (*The Independent Online*)¹⁵.

Mauritania

In perspective of the presidential election scheduled for June 2019, the Mauritanian opposition has not managed to release a single candidate after several weeks of consultations (*MauriWeb*)¹⁶. Also, the MPR (Mouvement Pour la Refondation) strongly rejected the decision made by the Ministry of the Interior last week that brought about its dissolution and that of 75 other political parties (*L'Authentique*)¹⁷.

Meanwhile, the Mauritanian Police Force and the Spanish Civil Guard have renewed the security agreement aimed at developing cooperation between the two institutions (*Sahara Media*)¹⁸. And Mauritania is a candidate for the post of Director General of the Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science (ALESCO) (*Sahara Media*)¹⁹.

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/11/libya-khalifa-haftar-gains-control-of-majority-of-country-onshore-oil-fields>; <https://www.libyanexpress.com/haftars-forces-claim-advance-on-sirte-local-protection-force-denies/>

¹⁰ <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/chaos-sabha-after-withdrawal-pro-haftar-armed-groups>

¹¹ <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/truce-reached-murzuq-southern-libya>

¹² <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/sudan-liberation-movement-chief-collaborating-libyan-warlord-haftar-rebel-detainees-confirm>

¹³ <https://lana-news.ly/art.php?id=147764&lang=en&p=2>

¹⁴ <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/hor-member-al-faqih-no-date-set-national-conference-reaching-consensus>

¹⁵ <https://www.iol.co.za/pretoria-news/eu-delegation-to-libya-reaffirms-support-for-stability-19877529>

¹⁶ <http://mauriweb.info/node/6130>

¹⁷ <http://www.lauthentic.info/Politique/article/Le-M-P-R-condamne-fermement-la-decision-de-sa-dissolution-par-un-arrete-nul-et>

¹⁸ <https://www.sahamedias.net/fr/renouvellement-de-laccord-de-cooperation-securitaire-entre-la-gendarmerie-mauritanienne-et-lespagne/>

¹⁹ <https://www.sahamedias.net/fr/la-mauritanie-candidate-pour-le-poste-de-directeur-general-de-lalesco/>

Morocco

Morocco has been re-elected co-chair of the global counter-terrorism forum (*H24 Info*)²⁰. The Vice President of the American Foreign Policy Council welcomed Morocco's approach to de-radicalization and especially how Rabat manages jihadists repatriated from conflict zones (*Le 360*)²¹.

Regarding Morocco's external relations, the House of Councillors and the United Arab Emirates Federal National Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at institutionalizing parliamentary cooperation and strengthening collaboration between the two legislative institutions (2M)²². The country is also willing to share with Iraq its experiences and expertise in several areas, including vocational training and development of the construction sector (2M)²³. Meanwhile, Moroccan authorities refrained from commenting on protests in Algeria (*France 24*)²⁴.

Tunisia

Tunisia has been removed from the EU 'black list' of countries exposed to money laundering and terrorist financing (*Kapitalis*)²⁵. Meanwhile, the political bill on mobilizing investment and improving the climate for business will be examined this week (*Tunisie Numérique*)²⁶. However, the union of university teacher-researchers announced its opposition to the proposed law, accusing it of undermining an already fragilized public education system (*Mosaïque FM*)²⁷.

Regarding the health sector, an investigation has been launched after 15 new-borns died in a public hospital this week in Tunis (*RTCI*)²⁸. Following this tragedy, the Minister of Health, Abderraouf Cherfi, resigned (*Tunisie Numérique*)²⁹.

²⁰ <https://www.h24info.ma/actu/le-maroc-reelu-a-la-copresidence-du-forum-mondial-de-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme/>

²¹ <http://fr.le360.ma/politique/ilan-berman-le-maroc-a-realise-de-precieux-succes-en-matiere-de-deradicalisation-185945>

²² <http://www.2m.ma/fr/news/reportage-memorandum-dentente-entre-les-institutions-legislatives-marocaine-et-emirat-20190312/>

²³ <http://www.2m.ma/fr/news/cooperation-le-maroc-dispose-a-partager-ses-experiences-avec-lirak-el-otmani-20190313/>

²⁴ <https://www.france24.com/fr/20190313-crise-bouteflika-algerie-inquietude-mutisme-maroc-tunisie-sahara-occidental>

²⁵ <http://kapitalis.com/tunisie/2019/03/12/fiscalite-des-entreprises-la-tunisie-retee-de-liste-noire-de-lue/>

²⁶ <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-le-projet-de-loi-sur-la-mobilisation-de-linvestissement-et-lamelioration-du-climat-des-affaires-sera-examine-cette-semaine/>

²⁷ <https://www.mosaïquefm.net/fr/actualite-national-tunisie/510696/ijaba-contre-le-projet-de-loi-sur-l-investissement-etranger>

²⁸ <http://www.rtc.tn/hopital-rabta-nombre-bebes-decedes-seleve-15/>

²⁹ <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-derniere-minute-demission-du-ministre-de-la-sante/>

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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We base our activities in three spheres of work: Social Outreach, Insights and Democratic Development. Combined, they provide a global perspective with actions focused on influencing the individual.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The North Africa Team

- Ben Lowings
- May Barth
- Yasmine Akrimi

Avenue Louise, 89 - 1050 Brussels - Belgium

Tel: +32 02 725 84 66

www.bic-rhr.com

info@bic-rhr.com

