
**Private Health
Sector**

A. Polymeros

**Focus on
MENA-Greek
Economic
Relations**

An interview with

*Saleh Jallad,
Editor of the Middle
East Economic
Survey*

*Monitoring
the Middle East*

Improving Economic Cooperation: Greece and the Muslim world

The Reconstruction of Gaza and
the Greek companies

Eleftherios Mastrotheodoros

Iran and Greece Boosting
Business Cooperation

Evangelos Venetis

Middle East Mediterranean

Editorial Team

Evangelos Venetis, *Editor in Chief,*
The Middle East Research Project, ELIAMEP

Evangelos Tembos,
Senior Research Fellow, ELIAMEP

George Tzogopoulos, *Web Editor*
Bodossakis Post-Doctoral Fellow at ELIAMEP

Thanos Dokos, *Senior Advisor,*
Director-General, ELIAMEP

Editorial Office

Hellenic Foundation for European and foreign Policy - ELIAMEP
49, Vas. Sofias str., Athens, 10676, Greece
T.: (+30) 210 7257110
Email: mideast@eliamep.gr; venetis@eliamep.gr

Middle East Mediterranean (MEM) is an unbiased bimonthly report of the *ELIAMEP Middle East Research Project*, focusing largely on geopolitical and economic developments, debates as well as policies, affecting the future of the Middle East. Having a global outlook MEM hosts analyses, commentaries, interviews and news, conducting research in the fields of politics, economics and culture in the Middle East and adjacent areas, such as the Eastern Mediterranean.

NOTICE: The views expressed in the articles of the *Middle East Mediterranean* do not reflect the point of view of the Hellenic Institute for European and Foreign Policy and the Editorial Team.

CONTENTS

Analyses

Editor's Note 4

The Reconstruction of Gaza and the Role of Greece 5
Eleftherios Mastrotheodoros

The current efforts to lift the Gaza blockade are to the right direction and there must be a wider participation of regional countries in this process. Greece can have an important role, forging trust between Palestinians and Israelis and boosting regional stability.

Iran and Greece Boosting Business Cooperation 8
Evangelos Venetis

The recent Iran nuclear deal has created a favorable business climate for companies from all over the world to invest in Iran. In the case of Iranian-Greek relations, this promising atmosphere could boost both Greek investments in Iran and Iranian investments in Greece based on mutuality.

Comments

Greek Tourism and Arab Investments 10

The Greek touristic product is quite attractive and is based on climatic conditions, topography (many islands), culture and gastronomy. Nobody can neglect the high position of Greece in the global ranking of tourist destinations.

Investing in Greek Private Health Services 14
Alekos Polymeros

The benefits of this business include: the involvement in the sector of large companies and conglomerates with extensive presence in the health sector; the chronic structural problems and the inability of the public sector to meet the demand and to meet the demands of patients (poor infrastructure, lack of staff, etc.); the trend of gradual aging of the population; the development of medical science and technology and the rapid adaptation of large, mostly private units in that industry.

Focus on Greek-Muslim economic relations 16
The interview with Dr. Saleh Jallad, Editor of the Middle East Economic Survey, Nicosia-Athens highlights the need for the active economic cooperation between Greece, Cyprus and the Muslim world.

Monitoring the Middle East 20
A selection of news and comments on major developments in the region.

General News

Editor's Note

The ongoing global financial crisis poses a major challenge to international stability and peace. Since 2007 the world stock markets have been hit by recession, major financial institutions have collapsed, and governments bailed out their financial systems. Apparently the global financial recession affects everyone's livelihood. At a time of dramatic geopolitical and economic shifts around the globe, the regions of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean are at the centre of international interest.

In this context the role of economic cooperation between Greece, Cyprus and the Muslim world is important. Given the geographical proximity of both countries to the Muslim world, Greeks are culturally familiar with Muslim societies and vice versa. In the past this cultural familiarity has been transformed into economic cooperation.

Nowadays the level of economic interaction between the aforementioned sides is good but needs to be boosted further in order to address current economic challenges and necessities. Hence it is necessary to have Muslim investments in Greece and Cyprus and Greek economic presence in various Muslim countries.

The current issue of the Middle East Mediterranean focuses on various on going geopolitical developments and aspects of economy framing the prospects of economic cooperation between the markets in the Muslim world, Greece and Cyprus with fruitful results on a mutual basis for entrepreneurship.

MEM

Analyses

The Reconstruction of Gaza and the Role of Greece

Eleftherios Mastrotheodoros

c. PhD University of Athens

The current efforts to lift the Gaza blockade are to the right direction and there must be a wider participation of regional countries in this process. Greece can have an important role, forging trust between Palestinians and Israelis and boosting regional stability.

The Gaza blockade by Israel is a dead-end process that must be lifted as soon as possible for the sake of regional stability and peace. In this process there are interesting ongoing developments currently. After the Mavi Marmara events in 2009 and the halt of diplomatic and military relations between Turkey and Israel, there is now for the first time an effort to restore these ties based on the need of both countries to boost their regional influence and avoid their isolation. This secretive effort refers to the ongoing negotiations between Ankara and Tel Aviv. The content of these negotiations includes a wide range of topics

combining business, culture and politics. Lifting the Israeli blockade of Gaza seems to be the main goal of Turkey in these negotiations. Tel Aviv seems to examine Ankara's proposal, even though Israelis are not convinced about the sincerity of Ankara's intentions regarding the continuation of the current status-quo in the Eastern Mediterranean. Moreover The Palestinian Authority is deeply concerned about Turkey's role in Gaza and the prospect of a permanent division in the ranks of Palestinian leadership. In this context and in order to fill the trust vacuum between Israel, Palestine and Turkey, Athens can play a

constructive role in regard to the reconstruction of Gaza as well as Palestinian unity and regional stability.

According to reliable official [unnamed] sources, Ankara has asked the end of the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip and the lion-share in the reconstruction process of the Gaza Strip; such a claim entails the operation of Turkish companies and funds in Gaza in every field including construction, agriculture, industry, services. Of particular geopolitical and economic significance is Turkey's interest in reconstructing on its own the Port of Gaza which is the gate of Gaza Strip and the Hamas government to the world.

Such a type of cooperation involves the close collaboration between Turkey and Hamas under Israeli supervision. Tel Aviv is hesitant to endorse such a cooperation which is against its security interests but it is also likely to concede to the Turkish request because such a rapprochement (Ankara and Hamas) would create further discord amongst the Palestinians. Already the Palestinian

Authority and Mahmood Abbas himself have reacted angrily against even the fact of such negotiations which are underway. Abbas knows that such an agreement would empower Hamas so much that Meshaal would be unwilling to compromise in the future. Abbas view the Islamic foreign policy of Turkey as a threat to the secular character of the Palestinian Resistance in Ramallah; he also knows that Israel will take advantage of this development in order to bury any hope of Palestinian unity in the near future, something that will enable Israel to pursue the *divide and conquer* policy of illegal settlements in the West Bank.

In this context Greece can play an important and constructive role for regional stability and development in Palestine and the Eastern Mediterranean. Athens could pursue the prospect of taking a share of the re-construction process in Gaza by promoting the future participation of a number of Greek companies in various relevant fields. This economic activity can be combined with a cultural presence in

many fields, such as education and arts. This type of initiative would be welcomed by everyone: the Palestinian Authority would see the Greek role as positive and supportive to the national cause of Palestinians vis-a-vis Tel Aviv, Ankara and Hamas; the latter on its part would be positive to the Greek presence because of its European and Eastern Mediterranean ramifications. Tel-Aviv would also welcome such an initiative because of the positive relations it has with Athens vis-à-vis Turkey. Ankara on its part would also view the Greek participation in the Gaza reconstruction as a positive step to the end of the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

To sum up, there is a political gap resulting from a lack of consensus in Palestine that creates political instability between Israelis and Palestinians. The cases of lifting the blockade against Gaza and reconstructing it clearly manifest this deadlock. The current efforts are to the right direction and there must be a wider participation of regional countries in this process. In this context, Greece can have an

important role, forging trust between Palestinians and Israelis and boosting regional stability.

Iran and Greece Boosting Business Cooperation

Evangelos Venetis, MA, PhD

Head of the ELIAMEP Middle East Research Project

The recent Iran nuclear deal has created a favorable climate of an overall cooperation for companies from all over the world to invest in Iran. In the case of Iranian-Greek relations, this promising atmosphere could boost both Greek investments in Iran and Iranian investments in Greece based on mutuality.

The nuclear deal which was struck a few months ago between Iran and the P5+1 group countries sparked hope in Iran and around the globe about both the future of economic relations between Tehran and the rest of the world as well as the prospect of fostering geopolitical stability in the war-torn Muslim world. This development marked the momentum for cooperation in every field: economic, cultural and political. Especially vivid is the interest of Iranian and foreign companies in cooperating in the sphere of business. On their part non-Iranian, including some Greek, companies of various fields and size have ever since displayed their vivid interest in investing in Iran. The same is the case about Iranian companies which are willing to invest outside Iran in various countries in Europe and America.

In this context various Greek firms have expressed their resolve

and commitment to invest in Iran by establishing contact and cooperation with local cooperatives in the fields of agriculture, industrial production and equipment, communication, high-tech etc. It is true most of the Greek companies expressed their interest quite late, shortly before the signing of the nuclear agreement. This delay has cost them labor, time and money in order to make up the loss of contact that characterized their modus operandi during the sanctions period in Iran. Some of them who were already active in communicating with Tehran under sanctions are now in a better position in terms of competition and local business networks.

Yet this delay of the majority of Greek companies in entering the Iranian market cannot act as a deterrent, regardless of the huge competition they are facing now by western companies of global scale and capacity. The Iranian market is

big and the mentality of Iranian businessmen the appropriate one for doing business based on the concept: “the sky is the limit!” These two elements along with the cultural proximity of the Iranian and Greek civilizations make the prospect of mutual economic cooperation promising and viable in the long-term. What is much needed by Greek and Iranian businessmen is persistence and commitment in the contact process, the implementation of agreements and optimism about the fruits of cooperation.

Yet the concept of economic cooperation between Greece and Iran must be mutual in every sense including the prospect of active presence of Iranian companies and assets in the economic crisis-hit Greek market. Athens needs capital in order to eventually materialize the aspirations of economic development after seven years of stiff austerity measures and deflation hardships. The prospect of Iranian investments in the Greek market is a positive one and can contribute to the improvement of the status of Greek economy in various ways and fields.

The arrangement of the Greek debt to Iran for the oil which was purchased in the past but was not paid-off by Athens because of the sanctions against Iran’s banking sector, is a first class opportunity for making this debt into a economic form of cooperation with mutual benefits. The recent bilateral

agreement on this issue is promising and is expected to play a major role in fostering further cooperation in other areas, such as tourism. Every year thousands of Iranian tourists are interested in visiting Greece for their vacations with flights directly from Tehran or through other destinations such as Turkey (Istanbul, Izmir, Bodrum, Antalya etc) and the Arab world (Dubai, Beirut etc.) Greece must act immediately and encourage the visit of Iranian tourists to Greece as well as Greek tourists to Iran. The Schengen Treaty must not be an obstacle for Iranian tourists to visit Greece. The Greek foreign policy must pursue the issue of bringing more Iranian tourists and keeping the Schengen Treaty in operation but not at the expense of Greek interests and bilateral cooperation.

Regardless of the various obstacles that the implementation of the Iran and P5+1 nuclear deal has faced so far by the international banking and commercial sectors lobbies in the US and other countries, Greek and Iranian businessmen are expected to continue their flourishing level of cooperation enjoying mutual trust and respect in their dealings. This trust and respect ensures the high degree of economic and general cooperation with the maximum of results in every sector and field.

Comments

Greek Tourism and Arab Investments: Engaging in a long-term relationship

Although Greece is a major touristic destination globally, so far there have been no active and in depth touristic relations between Athens and the states of the Middle East. The Greek touristic product is quite attractive and is based on climatic conditions, topography (many islands), culture and gastronomy.

Tourism is one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy. In 2012 international tourism exceeded 1 billion. Arrivals in 2013 to 1,088 billion. Arrivals. In this context Europe stars with 563 m. Visitors to the territories of 2013. Below is the Asia-Pacific (248 3 cm. Travelers and America with 169 arrivals).

The domestic market of hotel luxury, A and B category (total income thereof) after a period of continuous growth, fell in the last two years. The 2011 international treaty favored the influx of foreign tourists in our country. As a result the value of the market grew by 8.8%. The highest rise was recorded

in 2013 luxury hotels (15,85), the first class (12%) and B category (10.5%). In 2012, the market recorded a decrease again by 6,1% in 2013 while the market value increased by 13.1% as a result of increased tourism in Greece. This rise continued in 2014 with a rate of 12% .The 2013 foreign tourist arrivals amounted to 17.9 mil., 15.5% more than in 2012. In 2014 reached 21.5 million.

The advantages for investing in Greek tourism are many. The Greek tourism product is quite attractive and is based on climatic conditions, topography (many islands), culture and gastronomy.

Additionally, nobody can neglect the high position of Greece in the global ranking of tourist destinations. The hotel infrastructure in the country is advanced while the operation of organized companies and groups with a long tradition and experience in tourism is a major asset.

The opportunities for the Greek touristic market during this period are the political and economic instability in competing with Greece Mediterranean countries markets (Syria, Egypt, etc.). Also the recent passage of the bill on tourism is expected to improve the investment climate in the country and to attract new investors to upgrade the tourism product. The systematic and targeted advertising promotion of Greek tourism along with the development of specific forms of tourism (agro-tourism, religious, medical, winter tourism etc.) is a promising factor. Moreover the systematic approach of new tourist markets (Middle East, North Africa, Russia, China etc.) is expected to increase arrivals in Greece.

As for the weaknesses of investing in Greek touristic market,

Arab investors must have in mind the following: the chronic structural problems of the Greek tourism (seasonality, lack of supporting infrastructure etc.); the bureaucracy, the lengthy process of licensing new tourism investments with several stakeholders. It is expected, however these processes improve after the recent passage of the bill; and the unilateral dependence of Greek tourism enterprises from major international tour operator.

Concerning the threats, these include the prolonged economic recession in the country and reduce the disposable income of individuals; the decrease in domestic tourism and tourism per capita expenditure by economic scarcity; the competition from neighboring countries, e.g. Turkey, Bulgaria etc. at a lower cost provider; the crisis which has broken out in Russian-Ukrainian relations, promising tourism markets for the country; the limitation of pre-payment and insolvency tourist organizations, i.e. the operators abroad, mainly Russia.

Although Greece is a major touristic destination globally, there

have been no active and in depth touristic relations between Athens and the states of the Middle East. There are agreements with Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria but there have been no agreements with almost any country of the Arabian Peninsula, albeit some of them are under negotiation. There are various reasons for having Greece falling behind in this sector, such as Greek inadequate knowledge for the tourism sector in these countries, the illegal migration from Muslim countries to Europe and the different mentality and lifestyle of Muslim vis-à-vis Western tourists.

A major obstacle for this underdevelopment is illegal migration from Muslim countries to Greece and the rest of Europe. Although there have been efforts by Greek and Middle East touristic bureaus to found, boost and expand touristic relations, in some cases various tourism companies in the Middle East have attempted to use tourism as a cover for establishing illegal migration cells. This poses, indeed, a serious obstacle in the

efforts of Athens to become a touristic hub for visitors from the Middle East.

Also different lifestyle of Muslim tourists is a major parameter that needs to be taken into consideration by Athens if Greece aims to boost its tourism sector with MENA partners. Apparently Greece must target Muslim customers with western lifestyle in their countries, i.e. coming from the upper strata of their society. Identifying and cross-checking the social and economic background of a perspective tourist from the Middle East can be a tricky issue, but there are always safe nets through which Athens can secure the best of results in this process. Also Athens must develop a special field in the touristic sector that could adjust its services to the needs of visitors from the Middle East. This aspect is also associated with the factor of knowledge about Islam and culture in the Middle East.

Regardless of the various parameters in the sector of tourism, Greece must develop its diplomatic and economic relations with Arab countries. For instance, it is

inconceivable for a country like Greece to have the Emir of Qatar buying Greek islands without a Tourism agreement between Doha and Athens. The main merit behind the argument to have tourism agreements with the aforementioned

states lies in the fact that, due to the high GDP of these states, their visitors could form the nucleus of a high-elite tourists visiting Greece regularly.

Investing in Greek Private Health Services

Alekos Polymeros, PhD
University of Ioannina, Greece

The benefits of this business include: the involvement in the sector of large companies and conglomerates with extensive presence in the health sector; the chronic structural problems and the inability of the public sector to meet the demand and to meet the demands of patients (poor infrastructure, lack of staff, etc.); the trend of gradual aging of the population; the development of medical science and technology and the rapid adaptation of large, mostly private units in that industry.

The value of the total global market for private health services was rising in 2008-9. In the next years the total value decreased by 11.2% in 2010-09 and 9.85 in 2011/10. The market rebounded in 2012 and fell in 2013 decreased by 19.1%.

According to the statistics of the World Health Organization for EU-member countries private health spending in total health expenditure was in 2012 by 13.45 (Netherlands) to 56.9% (Cyprus). The total health expenditure as a proportion of GDP ranged from 5.15 in Romania to 12.4% in the Netherlands. Luxembourg has the highest per capita health expenditure as average exchange rate of the dollar (\$ 7.452) in contrast to Romania, which has the smallest (\$ 420).

In Greece the total sales of Greek companies fell by 25% in 2012-3 to their profit to fall by 78.2%. So appeared negative operating result in 2013 was positive in 2012. The private health service extra charged to the 2013 financial results level the implementation of the law on clawback and rebate.

The benefits of this business include: the involvement in the sector of large companies and conglomerates with extensive presence in the health sector; the chronic structural problems and the inability of the public sector to meet the demand and to meet the demands of patients (poor infrastructure, lack of staff, etc.); the trend of gradual aging of the population; and the development of medical science and technology and the rapid adaptation of large, mostly private units in that industry.

As for the opportunities these deal with the expansion of big

companies and industry groups in foreign countries, especially in Eastern Europe and MENA; the forging partnerships with medical business groups abroad with the aim of developing new innovative services; the development of medical tourism; the contracts with private insurance companies; and the specialization in the provision of health services especially in areas where there is lack of coverage and supply, and rehabilitation centers.

By contrast the weaknesses include the frequent changes in the operational and billing way EOPYY; the existing institutional framework which lays down certain barriers to the establishment of new medical centers; and the strict considered the building specifications for the construction of a private clinic.

Additionally various threats should be taken into account. These deal with the prolonged economic downturn in the country and

reducing the disposable income of individuals, create an uncertain environment; the liquidity problems and delays in payments by EOPYY and other pension funds; the tight bank financing; and the exceptional and unforeseen decisions of state (rebate, clawback) significantly burden the economics of the industry enterprises.

In Greece the purchase of private health services is tripartite in 2013 with clinical precede (60.8%), follow the diagnostic centers (25.7%) and maternity hospitals (13.5%). This sector is potentially profitable conditions and under the perspective of the investment in the Middle East and North Africa. There lack of units and departments in the area in the time when the peoples of the region demonstrate strong interest to cover their health care, having in some Member-improving living standards constantly.



Focus on *economic relations between the Greek and Muslim worlds*

The investment opportunities in Greece and Cyprus for Muslim investors include a range of fields, forming the nucleus for economic cooperation between the Greek and the Muslim worlds. In this context, Dr. Saleh Jallad, Editor in Chief of the Middle East Economic Survey, focuses in his interview on major issues about economic relations between the Muslims and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and beyond.

Q1: *What is the current status of economic ties between the Muslim world, Greece and Cyprus?*

A1: Unfortunately, it is insignificant. The evidence is in the trade balance between Greece and the Muslim and Arab countries. It is worse when you deduct the energy transactions. It is interesting to note that the performance of the tourism sector as well as agriculture activities with Greece were relatively healthier before Greece joined the EU.

Q2: *Can deep rooted cultural relations between the Greek and the Muslim worlds act constructively in a modern economic cooperation scheme?*

A2. Definitely so, at least in the Muslim markets. There is a high level of respect to the Greek-Muslim cultural relationship all through history until today. If you say you are “Greek” in these markets you are automatically a preferred guest. However without the combination of economic deepening as well as expanding cultural cooperation relations will slowly fade away.

Q3: *3. How can future cooperation be implemented in sectors such as usury-free finance, tourism and private health services?*

A3: Greece in the eyes of Muslim world is well endowed with natural resources that are dear in their

countries. During the past 36 years, the tourist sector has lost tremendous traffic to Europe and Turkey. Private health services are also related to tourism though deficient in terms of attracting Middle Eastern peoples.

Usury-free finance has been introduced relatively recently even in the Muslim countries. I am definitely sure that it can play a positive and revolutionary role in activating the real Greek economy. After 2008, frequent studies by international institutes have confirmed the usury-free finance resilience during the economic crisis. It is worth noting that during the past 40 years many wealthy individuals from the Muslim world deposited their surplus in foreign banks with interest free conditions. The rise of Non- Usury banks in the Muslim world during this period and the demand for their services prompted the majority of the International Banks to establish such independent departments to capture such funds.

Q4: *Having in mind the economic opportunities in the Muslim world, what would you advise Greek and Cypriot companies in order to operate successfully in the region?*

A4: First, knowledge of the business modus operandi as well as the regulations is important, Second, rely on certain institutions like the Arab-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce in Athens Thessaloniki and Crete as well as some banks in Cyprus (There are no Middle Eastern Banks in Greece). There are other consultants who can assist in this. Please note that The Middle Eastern imports are more than 80% of their food and beverage items annually. Also in most other economic sectors Greece's share could drastically improve with the right decisions.

Q5: *What are the pros and cons of companies from the Muslim world investing in Greece?*

A5: They need the right partner and that could be improved by the Arab-Greek chambers. The language barrier plays an important role. Greeks from the Arab world had a significant role in shaping bilateral relations. Today this seems to fade

away but there are also some Arab Greeks here in Greece that can play a similar role. Still, more information should be sought by both sides. However, determining factors until today include but are not limited to the ambiguity of business regulations and taxation, out dated bureaucracy, visa problems etc.

Q6: *Has the recent improvement of Cypriot economy led prospective Muslim investors to think a more active involvement in development schemes in the island?*

A6: Not yet for social and political reasons. Let me stress that an investment function transcends ethnicity, religion and culture; the target for investors is to attain a reasonable level of long term combination of profitability, security and liquidity. Yet there were many individuals from the Middle East like other nationalities (Russians, Chinese etc.) who bought business and properties in the island basically to acquire residence permit in Cyprus. However, I do not call this real investment.

Q7: *Is the Eurozone crisis a deterrent for investing in Greece and Cyprus?*

A7: Of course. Actually Greece has little authority on its borders, currency, regulations. These are deterrents to the free mobility of resources. Investors are rational people and they move to less risky destinations with similar or higher return of their investment. This is one of the obstacles for attracting real investment and trade decisions. There are everywhere golden opportunities that can re-activate Greek economy.

Q8: *Last year Nicosia expressed its interest in opening the Cypriot market to Islamic bonds. What are the fruits of this initiative?*

A8: If this tendency is repeated, then it can take root. Moreover, when Cyprus is united, then there is a good chance that such an activity could flourish with possible positive effects on this economy. This type of financial activity has progressed successfully in various markets in the Middle East and Europe. It seems that it has been also accepted as a

financing investment. However cultural risks may play a negative role in certain countries.

Q9: *What is the future of usury-free finance in a possible investment scheme in Athens?*

A9: Frankly, usury-free finance has so far proven to be a viable alternative in activating real economy. Yet, it is still in its infancy relatively to conventional finance. Also usury-free finance was the dominant modus operandi of doing business in the Christian as well as in Muslim cultures for many centuries. Both have done well to protect the depositors by the method of sharing in the investment rather than transferring the risk of time and its events on the shoulders of the public.

Q10: *What is the future of usury-free finance in a possible investment scheme in Athens?*

No economy exists in vacuum. The role of government through its political and legal institutions and regulations as well as through its foreign policy has both direct and indirect effects on foreign partners. Greece is not an exception. As mentioned before, when restrictions on the mobility of all the resources (human and non-human) are in effect as they are now, Greece as a sovereign country does not have enough authority. As long as this situation is not resolved for the benefit of Greece, any progress, in my judgment, will be lukewarm. 🌻

Monitoring the Middle East

General News

Bahrain

Rights group slams F1 chief over Bahrain races (31 March, 2015)

A Bahraini human rights group has strongly criticized the Formula One's governing body, the FIA, for staging auto races in the Persian Gulf kingdom despite its terrible human rights record. "In the past five years severe human rights violations have been committed during the race authorized by the FIA. These include arbitrary arrests, torture and killings," Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, the director of advocacy at the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, said.

Egypt

Militant attack leaves five Egyptian soldiers dead in Sinai (17 March, 2016)

Egyptian security and medical officials say at least five army soldiers have been killed and eight others injured when Takfiri militants carried out a mortar attack against their camp in the North African country's volatile Sinai Peninsula. The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the attack took place early on Thursday, when terrorists fired a number of mortar shells at the camp in the border town of Rafah, located 340 kilometers (211 miles) northeast of the capital, Cairo.

Greece

Condemnation of the Greek MFA for vandalism in Monastery (18 March, 2016)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs in Greece condemned the vandalism by unknown Israelis in the Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. John the Baptist in the West Bank on Sunday, February 29/March 13, 2016, Cheesefare Sunday, the Monastery of St. John the Baptist and Forerunner. Greece recognizes the historic value of the Monastery, which has been

supported for ages. The Patriarchate expressed conviction for this “unacceptable vandalism.” Over the past several years, having obtained a special permit from the Israeli army, this ancient monastery is being maintained by the subvention of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which has undertaken to restore the damages it had suffered during the Six Day War of 1967.

On Clean Monday, the 1/14 of March 2016, the supervisors of the conservation work underway discovered that the central gate to the monastery had been secured from the inside by unknowns using a bolt, which allowed them to commit acts of vandalism, namely: writing slogans on the walls of the first-floor rooms above the church, and breaking into a room and destroying the computer that contained all archives of works carried out. Also, they have apparently caused damages to the interior walls of the rooms, removing tools, two generators, and other items which they apparently loaded on a truck waiting by the monastery’s outside wall, as indicated by the tire tracks on the desert road.

Kuwait

Kuwait expels 60 Lebanese over alleged Hezbollah links (28 March, 2016)

Kuwait has revoked the residency visas of more than 60 Lebanese individuals over their alleged links with Lebanon’s Hezbollah resistance movement. The Kuwaiti Arabic daily al-Qabas quoted a Kuwaiti security source as saying that the people to be deported can stay in Kuwait under a temporary residency visa of one to two months until they receive their financial dues and make the necessary arrangements. The source, however, added that those among the group of would-be-deportees that have been classified as “dangerous” have only 48 hours to leave the country.

Lebanon

Hezbollah destroys Daesh bunker on Lebanon's border with Syria (31 March, 2016)

Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement has destroyed a bunker used by Daesh terrorists on the country's northeastern border. The movement's fighters attacked Daesh positions in the al-Zweitini area on the outskirts of Ras Baalbek on Monday, destroying the bunker and killing the terrorists inside. The War Media Center, which is affiliated with Hezbollah, said on Twitter that Hezbollah fighters also attacked the Daesh reinforcements that were sent to the area.

Libya

10 Libyan cities pledge allegiance to new unity govt. (31 March, 2016)

Ten Libyan cities controlled by a self-declared authority in Tripoli have pledged their support to the UN-backed unity government of the country, which has moved into the capital. The announcement was made in a statement published on Thursday on the official Facebook page of the municipality of the northwestern city of Sabratha. It came following a meeting between representatives from the 10 coastal cities located between Tripoli and the border with Tunisia.

Nigeria

Nigerian protesters call for Shia cleric's release (28 March, 2016)

People in Nigeria have held protest rallies in several cities across the country to demand the immediate and unconditional release of senior Shia cleric and leader of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), Sheikh Ibrahim al-Zakzaky. Peaceful demonstrations were held in the cities of Lafia, Katsina, Gombe, and Kaduna with protesters carrying posters of the cleric and other Muslims killed or detained by the Nigerian army.

Palestine - Israel

Israel expands settlements in the West Bank (16 March, 2016)

Israeli Prime Minister and Israeli Defense Minister approved the designation of 580 acres in the occupied West Bank near the Dead Sea and the Jericho as “Israeli state land”. Peace Now, an NGO which tracks and opposes illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank since the 1967 war, said the reported seizure of land represented the largest land confiscation in the occupied West Bank in recent years.

Germany and France criticized Israel (17.3.16)

Germany and France also issued a statement criticizing Israel for its appropriation of Palestinian land. The European Union remains firmly opposed to Israel’s settlement policy and actions taken in this context, including demolitions and confiscations.

Saudi Arabia

Yemen, Saudi Arabia swap dozens of prisoners (28 March, 2016)

Yemen’s Houthi Ansarullah movement has freed nine Saudi prisoners of war in exchange for 100 Yemenis as a “humanitarian” move, a year after Riyadh started its deadly aggression against the impoverished nation. “A first step of understanding and respect for the humanitarian aspect [of the conflict] was the exchange of prisoners today,” Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdulsalam said in a statement on Saturday, adding the freed Saudi forces had been captured in some fronts in Yemen.

Somalia

Car bomb blast claims 10 lives in Somali capital (27 March, 2016)

At least ten people have been killed in a car bomb attack in Somalia’s capital city of Mogadishu, police say. According to officials, an explosive-laden car was detonated at the gate of the Maka al-Mukarama hotel in the Somali capital on Friday. “There are at least 10 people killed, including Somalia’s ambassador to Switzerland who was in the hotel.”

Syria

Kurds ready for recapturing Raqqa (31 March, 2016)

The forces of the Syrian Kurds are preparing for the battle of the "liberation" of Raqqa, with the cooperation of the international coalition fighting the jihadists of the Islamic State, tightening the noose around the stronghold of the "caliphate", said today the leader of the Democratic Party Union (PYD), Saleh Muslim. "The Syrian Democratic Forces (FDS, the aravokourdiki alliance where prevail forces Kurds) are prepared with the coalition to liberate Raqqa" said Muslim in a meeting with reporters in Paris. However he underlined the need "Arab residents of Raqqa" to join the Kurdish forces in order together to liberate the city. According to Muslim Kurdish fighters, men and women, amounting to 40-50,000.

Sudan

Prominent Sudanese opposition leader Turabi dies at 84 (5 March, 2016)

Sudan's main opposition leader Hassan Abd Allah al-Turabi has reportedly lost his life after sinking into a coma and being transferred to a medical center in the capital, Khartoum, in critical condition earlier in the day. Turabi, the late Secretary General of the Popular Congress Party, fell unconscious in his office on Saturday morning after apparently suffering a heart attack. He was shifted to the Royal Care International Hospital, where doctors and medical staff sought to save his life, Sky News Arabia television network reported.

Turkey

Erdogan: Europe must check its own migration performance (18 March, 2016)

Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan said today that Europe needs to look at its own performance in the migration issue before saying Turkey what to do with refugees, and stressed that his country will hear criticism from Europe with regard to performance in respect of rights when this is correct, otherwise it will do what it deems necessary. "While Turkey is home to three million (immigrants), those who are unable to find space for a handful of refugees who in the middle of Europe keep those innocent in shameful conditions, we must first look at themselves," he said.

Yemen

Yemeni forces capture 42 Saudi troops in Bayda, Jawf provinces (31 March, 2016)

Yemeni forces have managed to capture 42 Saudi soldiers in Bayda and Jawf provinces, and killed several others in Ma'rib. The Yemeni army, backed by Popular Committees loyal to the Houthi Ansarullah movement, caught 31 Saudi soldiers in Rada district in the southern province of Bayda and captured 11 others in al-Matma district in the northwestern province of Jawf, Yemen's official Saba Net news agency reported on Sunday. The report added that the captured soldiers were being transported to the west-central Ma'rib province to boost Saudi presence there when Yemeni forces caught them.



the *family* company...
...that *cares*

Consolidated Contractors Company

www.ccc.gr