



Middle East Mediterranean

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North America**

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Middle East Mediterranean

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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.

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In a global environment the phenomenon of legal and illegal migration in general has increased dramatically in recent years due to economic and political (domestic and regional) circumstances. In the context of the so-called Neoclassical Model and trade liberalization developing states have pursued the benefits of globalization by liberalizing their society and economy-trade. This suggests a structural demand for unskilled immigrant labor to fill undesirable jobs that native-born citizens are not after, no matter the wage or the type of the jobs. Hence it is possible to have this increase in a legal framework and quite expectedly the high GDP countries societies shaped the necessary legal framework to deal with such a development, e.g. in the EU case the treaties of Schengen, Maastricht, Amsterdam as well as the Dublin I Convention and Dublin II Regulation. Non-EU high GDP states took their own legal measures to facilitate legal migration process regarding crossing of national borders.

Illegal migration has created a number of problems including migration trafficking, slavery, prostitution and death. It has also created new “professions” such as traffickers and product sellers, affecting local societies en route and at the destination of the immigrants.

Additionally to the economic and political reasons of illegal immigration, a new geopolitical dimension has been added, that of the use of immigration as a means of asymmetrical warfare by the Sunni Islamic Caliphate (ISIS). Various events in the migration corridor of Libya-Italy and the expansion of the Caliphate's network in Europe manifest this important development of combining migration and jihad in various forms.

Aiming to inform and unfold the phenomenon of illegal immigration, the current issue of the Middle East Mediterranean focuses on various aspects, such as security, the role of Turkey in the trafficking streams, immigration and North America, as well as the connection between immigration and the Balkans.

MEM

Analyses

The Refugee Conundrum

Prof. Andre Gerolymatos

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ISIS exploits the current refugee crisis as a means for its own agents/terrorists to enter Europe. Greece is a frontline state with responsibility for Greek security as well as that of its European partners.

Historically, war and the upheavals caused by nature have generated armies of refugees. The Great Depression in America, triggered by the stock market crash of 1929, and the drought that occurred in the 1930s, forced two million people from their homes to other parts of the United States in search of work and food. The displacement caused waves of crime as individuals and groups tried every means possible to secure provisions and protection from the elements for their families. Desperation forced some to rob banks while others committed petty crimes. Those better off resented the arrival of the migrants and did little

to provide assistance. However, in situations where help was forthcoming, crime was negligible. The vast majority of these economic refugees found subsistence as migrant workers or relied on the state's limited resources for support.

From 1922-1924, the impact of the Treaty of Lausanne, which dismantled the Ottoman Empire, resulted in the forced expulsion of over one million Asia Minor Orthodox Christians, and, driven by fear and persecution, had no choice but to accept the frightening and tenuous existence of the refugee. The Greek state, itself undergoing a major political and economic

upheaval, was incapable of addressing the human catastrophe. One strategy adopted by the newly Greek Republic was to settle large numbers of refugees in Macedonia and Thrace to increase the Hellenic population of these territories. Prior to 1923, Greek Slavs and Muslims were the majority in some villages and represented about fifty percent of the population of Northern Greece. A large percentage of the refugees transplanted into Macedonia ended up as impoverished tobacco workers, while their counterparts in Athens and other large towns were consigned to shanty neighborhoods.

The refugees brought to Greece a great number of professionals, intellectuals, and political organizers who helped establish labor unions and made up the majority of the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party. Increased crime and political radicalism in left-wing organizations were a byproduct of the refugee crisis. By the 1940s, refugees, along with many other Greeks who fought in the resistance, represented a

significant part of the Greek Communists who led ELAS. After the end of the occupation in 1944, refugees formed the backbone of the KKE and later on, the Greek Democratic Army. Although a handful of the refugees were radicals and hardcore communists, such as Nikos Zachariadis, many joined the Greek left because they had been abandoned by or rather, were never assisted by the Greek establishment. It remains an open question that if these refugees had not opted to support the communist movement would civil war have been averted?

The end of the Second World War triggered waves of refugees. Jewish survivors of the death camps, the victims of slave labor, Germans fleeing the Red Army, a host of East Europeans running ahead of the shackles of Soviet communism, who were defined as stateless persons. Over eleven million people crowded the refugee and transit camps awaiting an uncertain future and hoping for a new home away from the violence and destitution of the war. Some of the displaced people were not hapless victims, many, in

order to earn a living, became expert forgers and information peddlers. The United States and the West in general had a great appetite for any intelligence on the Soviet Union and its satellites. The claustrophobic security of the Eastern Block had made it extremely difficult for the West's intelligence services to penetrate Moscow's machinations or even gather basic information on daily life. The refugees could offer such services because they either actually had experience from within the Soviet system, or they could imagine how the totalitarian regime operated because they had escaped from a similar system. The Soviets, conversely, took advantage of the inundation into the West of millions of refugees, and used the population movement to plant their own agents and sleeper cells. Some of the KGB's and GRU's spies, for example, even penetrated Israel's Mossad by entering the country under the pretense of being Russian Jewish refugees.

It should not be surprising then that ISIS exploits the current

refugee crisis as a means for its own agents/terrorists to enter Europe. The challenge facing the West is how to pick out the handful of terrorists from the hundreds of thousands of refugees. In this context, Greece is a frontline state with responsibility for Greek security as well as that of its European partners. If, as it happened with some of the Paris terrorists, ISIS continues to manipulate the fear of refugees being terrorists, it is only a matter of time before Greece will be painted in the media as a conduit for terrorism. In the course of the refugee crisis, Germany has regained the moral ground lost with the imposition of harsh economic terms on Greece, while the Greek state lost whatever high ground they had gained because of the failure of Greek authorities to deal with the massive influx of refugees upon their shores in an effective manner. 🇬🇷

Turkey and the EU on the Syrian Refugee Crisis: Dangerous Games

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Blind support for the Turkish regime on this matter translates into tolerance for major human-rights violations and legitimizes the regime's "flexible" understanding of the border. If Turkey continues using refugees and migrants as a chess pawns, the consequences will be grave for the internal progressive opposition, could further endanger regional stability and the safety of the millions of displaced asylum-seekers.

On Sunday, November 29, 2015, Turkish and European (EU) leaders signed a deal on the ever-growing refugee crisis currently shattering the continent. On the Turkish end, this arrangement is politically and financially lucrative. It forms a clear victory for Mr. Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Democracy party (JDP). Prime Minister Ahmed Davutoğlu promised to bring to a halt the smuggling of hundreds of thousands of refugees, who on a daily basis are pushed over the Turkish border into EU member states—predominantly Greece. In exchange, the EU will pay Turkey \$3 billion dollars to deal with incoming refugees internally. Moreover, talks over the country's EU candidacy have been "re-

energized." Brussels is now considering the gradual lifting of visa restrictions on Turkish citizens.

To those concerned with the ambivalent role played by the Turkish government in the broader region this is a worrisome development. Conspiracy theories that connect Mr. Erdogan's close circle to ISIS terrorists may be far-fetched, but their priorities regarding the unfolding Syrian crisis have proven to be questionable. In matters related to internal affairs, Brussels is accused of providing the Turkish government with blind support, despite the latter's increasing authoritarianism and multiple human-rights violations. These range from the open

repression of civil-rights movements—exemplified by the notorious government crackdown on “Gezi” protests in 2013—to the normalization of martial law as a governmental tool of enforcement and the series of anti-Kurdish campaigns that took place in 2015.

It is evident, therefore, that the management of refugee flows is closely intertwined with Turkish internal and foreign affairs during a period of profound instability. Compared to this complex matrix, the approach taken by Brussels appears to be disturbingly facile. At an enforcement level, it turns Turkey into a dangerous purgatory of sorts, further endangering the security and rights of already embattled asylum-seekers, while providing smugglers with even greater opportunities for profit. Conceptually, it runs against the EU’s founding principles and favors the spread of neo-chauvinistic attitudes within its borders. That said, it would be naïve to look for self-evident alternatives.

Since the beginning of the war, Turkey has become home to more Syrian refugees than any other

state. Of the 3 million Syrians who have fled to neighboring countries, over 2 million have been absorbed by Turkey. These numbers form a sharp contrast to the total of 150,000 Syrians, who have declared asylum in the EU so far. As conditions in the region remain explosive, the number of displaced people will continue to grow. Brussels has neither the means, nor the political consensus required to respond to such a grave challenge with efficiency and coordination. There is no mechanism in place to identify, securely move, and resettle legitimate refugees within the Union. Most important, there is no harmony of political action among or within member states. Those in the frontline—particularly Greece—have *de facto* undertaken the overwhelming burden of first reception. But the unwillingness of many in the Union to act in a coordinated way threatens to turn reception countries into massive concentration camps, with gruesome implications for residents and refugees alike.

Collaboration with Turkey seems to be, therefore, a feasible

approach. This realization, however, means nothing in and of itself. The most important questions that need to be addressed revolve around implementation. Currently, the working and living conditions of refugees are deplorable. The lack of a proper legal framework regulating integration keeps refugees hostage between confinement and exploitation. Most vulnerable are women and children, who often become the target of physical violence or/and abusive labor conditions. Hence, Turkey's function as a territory of first reception monitored by the EU requires closer and responsible interventions at the operational level. If not accompanied by careful planning, human resources, and the promise of refugee resettlement, financial aid is very likely to backfire, fueling a new circle of exploitation and corruption in turn. In this process, it is also imperative to place emphasis on

collaboration with involved Turkish civil actors. Exclusive partnership with the state gives the regime an opportunity to abuse refugees in order to serve its own internal and foreign agendas.

In short, blind support for the Turkish regime on this matter translates into tolerance for major human-rights violations, strengthening the construction of an authoritarian state. At the same time, it legitimizes the regime's "flexible" understanding of the border. If Mr. Erdoğan's government is given the chance to continue using refugees and migrants as a chess pawns, the consequences will be grave for the internal progressive opposition (outside and within his own party). Moreover, such action could further endanger stability in neighboring countries and the safety of the most vulnerable actor in this equation, namely, the millions of displaced asylum-seekers.

Comments

Europe's Refugee Crisis, North America's Refugee Opportunity

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There has been considerable debate in Canada and the United States over the threat posed by terrorists exploiting refugee status to gain access to North America, particularly in the wake of the November Paris attacks. This threat to North America, however, is overblown. While the sheer number of people they must process overwhelms European immigration systems, this is not the case in North America. North America, in fact, is well-placed to aid and assist the limited numbers they have promised.

Europe faces a crisis. In this year alone, over 700,000 refugees seeking asylum registered in Europe. Even the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) admits that this number does not represent all the refugees in Europe. The UNHCR conservatively estimates 875,000 individuals arrived as refugees in Europe in this year alone. The numbers are significant in themselves, but this raises a larger issue: the inability of the European immigration systems, as they currently organized, to account for and process such a large

volume of people. While Europe faces a crisis in terms of accommodating so many refugees, particularly the southern states through which the majority of the migrants enter the continent, this is not the challenge that confronts North America. The United States and Canada, contrary to Europe, can carefully regulate the number of refugees arriving due to its distance from Syria and northern Africa. This ability to control and regulate refugee intake, in turn, means that the alleged security risk that politicians, particularly in the United

States, are using for political gain is a mute point.

The Syrian Civil War and drought conditions throughout Africa make Europe an attractive destination for those seeking a better life. While Africans represent a significant portion of refugee claimants, the majority of asylum seekers currently arriving in Europe are from Syria. The Syrian Civil War, a protracted multifaceted conflict since 2011, has destroyed civil society in that state. Syrians, without recourse to authority, and facing depredations from multiple actors, increasingly flee the country rather than deal with an uncertain and dangerous future. As of 17 November 2015, the United Nations High Commission on Refugees states that there are 4,289,792 registered refugees from Syria. This estimate, however, is likely significantly less than the actual number of actual Syrian refugees. The majority of refugees, naturally, are in the countries bordering Syria, with Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan accounting for the majority. The limited ability of these countries to

address and cope with the sheer number, however, makes Europe an increasingly attractive destination.

Syria's neighbors, however, are not alone having difficulty welcoming refugees; Europe faces many hurdles in processing asylum seekers. The first significant issue is that the frontline involved in coping with the refugees is the countries hit the hardest by the 2008 financial meltdown. Greece, Italy, and Spain are the primary entrance point for refugees fleeing war-torn Syria and drought-stricken Africa. Under EU regulations, specifically the Dublin Convention, refugees are supposed to claim asylum in the country of entry. Southern Europe's ongoing financial difficulties, however, means that these countries have very limited resources to accommodate these unfortunate people. The asylum seekers, consequently, have little alternative but to seek refuge in the northern Europe. Nevertheless, the sheer volume of individuals and families seeking asylum means that European immigration systems, whether in the north or south, are

under severe strain. In this respect, the fact that the systems are overwhelmed does create a potential security risk. The 13 November 2015 Paris attacks, in which one of the individuals involved allegedly entered Europe as a refugee, underscore the potential risks involved, even if the link proves false.

This risk is considerably less in North America. In the United States and Canada, there has been a furor over the potential risk of terrorists using refugee as cover to infiltrate and attack targets in Canada and the United States. Thirty-one American state governors have announced that they will bar Syrian asylum seekers from their states. Opposition to refugee settlement in Canada, while more over the implementation of the plan than flat-out denial of refugees, gained considerable support in the wake of the Paris attacks. The number of refugees that Canada and the United States plan to accept, however, is negligible. Canada's offer to welcome 25,000, and the United States' plan for 10,000, represent less than 0.001% of the UNHCR's

total number of registered refugees. More critical than the numbers, however, are the particular persons that Canadian and American governments will permit entry into their countries.

Immigration

authorities in Canada and the United States, unlike in Europe and the Near East, are not overwhelmed by the volume of refugees. Instead, they are able to select which ones are best suited to live in their countries. Canada, for example, under security concerns will bar entry of single men, unless they are part of a family unit or identify as a member of the LGBT community. This policy, while open to criticism, nevertheless demonstrates the control that Canada has over the selection process. Furthermore, the Canadian government is only considering registered refugees for immigration to Canada. The countries where the refugees currently reside, in other words, have already started the vetting process. Refugees entering Canada will face a health and security vetting process, and news reports indicate that "any red flags

will mean that their files are set aside.” Past this step are three additional stages to guarantee that the families and individuals possess the support structures they need to integrate into Canadian society. Similar measures are in place in the United States.

American and Canadian concerns regarding terrorists using refugee status as a means of infiltrating North America are misplaced. The multiple security checks, and the limited numbers of

individuals the two countries plan to accept mean, if anything, that such an action will prove beneficial. Canada and the United States, through their careful selection process, will welcome individuals that will benefit the polity. Europeans may have legitimate concerns about the potential risks of refugees in the aftermath of the Paris attacks, but the current climate of fear means these concerns are exaggerated.

The EU and the Migrants in the Balkans

Dr. Evangelos Venetis

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The EU needs to act swiftly in order to come up with a sustainable policy and plan to address the unexpected in frequency and quantity phenomenon of illegal migration. If the EU fails to act swiftly then regions such as the Balkans will feel the repercussions of this inability.

In recent weeks many European states have been alarmed by the increasing influx of illegal immigrants to their lands. Some of them in the Balkans and central Europe have decided to boost their security measures and traffic control. The movement of Hungary to erect a fence along its borders with Serbia and Croatia has prompted a domino effect in the relations with its neighbors. Subsequently other countries have also tightened their security and check-points until a unified EU policy could be shaped.

Indeed the need for an EU policy on migration is necessary in every sense, especially on humanitarian and security grounds. Given the large quota of the immigrants coming into Europe is growing swiftly and hundreds of thousands are on their way to Europe, it is necessary for the EU to act realistically and reasonable in order to balance between social cohesion, security and respect of

human rights both of the immigrants and the EU citizens. The time is no more than 3-4 months and is provided by the weather conditions which in winter are expected to act as a deterrent for more immigrants to move into Europe. By spring new waves of immigrants will reach the European shores and by then Europe must be well prepared to address this humanitarian crisis. If it does not, then the future is not so promising and there are various scenarios already in this regard.

One of these scenarios which come up for the first time in this paper is the prospect of closing the EU borders in central Europe and having the migrants trapped in the Balkans. If the EU fails to reach a consensus about how the existing immigrant quota can be distributed amongst the member states and the issue of borders control and external EU borders patrol, then it is likely that a large number of immigrants are trapped in the Balkans. The

migration routes resemble small rivers carrying water. When somebody tries to block these rivers in their way to the sea by erecting a dam, then the water is spread near the dam flooding the area outside the dam. In the case of migration flooding the Balkan Peninsula with the large population of Muslim migrants may have geopolitical repercussions.

Given that the current Muslim population of the Balkans is more than 10% of the total population and the fact that this percentage resides in specific regions-states as majority or minority, then one can expect what will happen if tens of thousands of Muslim refugees are blocked in a country where local Muslims reside. Despite the fact that Balkan Muslim could see the immigrant Muslims as foreigners in their land, it will be easier for them to provide them with shelter and tolerant spirit because they are co-religionists. Actually such a development could absorb the majority of Muslim immigrants in countries with local Muslim population rather than in Balkan countries where there are no Muslims. In this case regions such as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, FYROM, Albania and Kosovo could see the rapid increase of their Muslim population within a relatively short period of time.

The creation of immigration hospitality centers in the Balkans could actually be the first step to absorb the immigrants in these societies and re-direct the destination of the immigrants from central and NW Europe to the Balkans. Such a re-direction could be facilitated through the existing charity networks and the emerging ISIS ones. Having in mind the aforementioned details about the influential social role of the charity networks, it is easy to imagine that a portion of these networks could be employed by ISIS for recruiting its forces in the region and elsewhere including the Black Sea and the Caucasus, as it has already been doing in recent years.

Today more than ever, the EU needs to act swiftly in order to come up with a sustainable policy and plan to address the unexpected in frequency and quantity phenomenon of illegal migration. Obviously neither the does EU have the remedy for all these issues, nor can it cure some of them in the short term. Thus it is necessary to have an EU plan in the next two months, i.e. by December-January, so that it can be able to start implementing as soon as possible before spring. If the EU fails to act swiftly then regions such as the Balkans might feel the repercussions of this inability.



Focus on *Immigration and Europe*

The main difference between legal and illegal migration does not lie only with the way that this phenomenon unfolds but mainly with the causes that spark its expansion. Although legal migration has prescribed economic and social causes that can be easily addressed, this is not the case regarding immigration causes such as overpopulation, climate change and geopolitical instability (regional or civil warfare) as well as deprivation of citizenship. What caught by surprise the EU high GDP societies was the fact that immigrants could pursue the prospect of becoming member of these societies in an unexpected, unforeseen and generally illegal way. Illegal immigration refers to the crossing of national borders in a way that violates the immigration laws of the destination country.

In this context, Mr. Alekos Papadopoulos, Former Minister of Interior in Greece, unfolds in his interview major points related to immigration in Europe.

Q1: *Could the EU address and alter the Dublin III Regulation?*

The EU could certainly do so. There is a need for the formation of a common European policy to transform and replace the particular interests of the EU national states. Yet this development is not going to be fulfilled in the foreseeable future.

Q2: *How could the European Commission resolve the issue of guarding the EU borders effectively?*

A2. While the land borders are easily controllable it is impossible to do so in the case of the sea borders.

Whoever claims the opposite is a demagogue. Europe with all its powers can check the sources of the illegal immigration streams.

Q3: *Are you concerned by the role of Islamic extremism in the illegal migration routes both in the case of Italy and Greece?*

A3: Islamic extremism penetrates Europe not only through the immigrants entering through Italy and Greece. In various cases terrorists travel business class in well-known airliners.

Q4: *How do you view the role of hotspots in Greece? Will they have an impact in the effort of Greece and the EU to safeguard a certain level of security if the migrants keep coming from Turkey?*

A4: The hotspots are of minor value and importance. They constitute a temporary and naïve choice of Europe, and especially Germany, forming the false impression that they take effective measures.

Q5: *Is Greece ready to cope effectively in terms of infrastructure with the ongoing challenge of increasing influx of migrants numbers in the country?*

A5: Greece is not ready now and will not be even in the long term because the immigration streams will be constant and of big numbers.

Q6: *Are the economic crisis and the illegal immigration two overlapping phenomena in the EU context? Could economic incentives to crisis torn EU state economies affect the policy of each country in dealing with the immigrants for the benefit of the EU as a whole?*

A6: Yes, they are but the immigration influx can barely have a positive impact on the Eurozone.

Q7: *Could the experience of other non-EU states benefit the EU on tackling illegal immigration?*

A7: In Epirus we say that only the owner can take his beast of burden out of the mud.

Q8: *Is Europe ready enough to promote a systematic and unified domestic integration migration scheme while simultaneously preserving security in every EU country and the high level of human rights?*

A8: This is wishful thinking.

Q9: *Are you optimistic that the EU could balance the notions of EU domestic security and respect for human rights of its citizens in the near future?*

A9: The EU can and ought to do so.

Monitoring the Middle East

General News

Afghanistan

ISIS increases its influence in Afghanistan (26 September, 2015)

The Islamic State increases its influence in Afghanistan against Taliban, according to the announcement of a special committee of the UN. "The number of groups and individuals who declare loyalty to IK or state that are adjacent to this is increasing in many provinces Afghanistan "reveals the committee's report al Qaeda-Taliban.

The committee based on assessments of the Afghan security forces, according namely that "about 10% of active members of the resistance in which

Taliban dominate have expressed their sympathy to the IR. " Yet this figure "is not stable because the alliances change over During the period of the conflict "in progress. "Obviously there is a large spread of IK" explains the report, notes that groups that have declared their adherence to jihadists have been detected in 25 provinces of Afghanistan by Afghan government sources. Among the new prepared with IK including supporters al Qaeda and a "very small number" of non-Afghans have come to country from Iraq and Syria and who are under Afghan government the core of IK in Afghanistan.

Cyprus

Developments on gas deposit “Venus” (26 September, 2015)

The Turkish underwater pipeline from Mersina will carry seventy-five million cubic meters of water to the occupied part of Cyprus. Water from the Mersina of Turkey arrived on the shores of Kyrenia currently for a period of time will flow over the city coasts until the tubes are cleaned. Then it will be driven to the dam,

held in Panagra and then distributed in the occupied part of Nicosia and elsewhere. The official inauguration of the pipeline will be in accordance with the "Milliyet", 28 October by the Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan. The construction of the conduit has been called "the century work".

Egypt

Egyptian brigadier assassinated in Sinai (20 September, 2015)

Islamist gunmen declared loyalty to the Islamic extremist group Country (IK) killed a brigadier of the Interior Ministry the night from Saturday to Sunday in North Sinai, said the press office ministry.

The attack occurred in the provincial capital, the city of Arish, according to the Ministry. On Thursday, the jihadist organization Province of Sinai, the arm of IK in Egypt, he was murdered by General Khaled Kamal Osman in Arish. Members of the organization opened fire from inside a car. The organization has claimed responsibility for a series of attacks against the army and police in Egypt in recent months.

The IK-a jihadist organization that has gripped large parts of territory of Iraq and Syrias- have declared allegiance to a series of armed organizations in Egypt, Afghanistan, Libya and Nigeria, among other.

Greece

Greece and Iraq to promote bilateral relations (28 September, 2015)

The foreign ministers of Greece and Iraq Nikos Kotzias and Ibrahim Al-Jaafari have decided to promote the expansion of bilateral relations and economic, technical, military and cultural cooperation between Greece and Iraq during a meeting held today in the margins of the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. To achieve this objective, Mr Kotzias and Al-Jaafari agreed to soon exchange visits scheduled Political Directors of the two foreign ministries, who, through technical working groups, will develop a bilateral action plan and

strategic cooperation. During the meeting the two ministers also discussed the latest international and regional developments.

Iran

Khamenei accused the Saudis for the Mecca stampede (25 September, 2015)

The spiritual leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, accused today the Saudi authorities for the tragedy that occurred near Mecca claiming that they had taken "inappropriate measures" and not handled the situation like should. "The Saudi government should assume the major responsibility for this sad accident. The mismanagement and inappropriate actions caused this disaster," said Khamenei declaring three days of mourning in the country. At least 90 Iranian pilgrims were killed in trampling Mina, where total killed 717 people, according to the latest report by the authorities.

Iraq

Iraq strengthens ties with Russia, Iran and Syria (27 September, 2015)

The Iraqi authorities said yesterday that the military officers of the country are involved in cooperation with Russia, Iran and Syria on issues information services and security issues in Baghdad to address the threat of organized Islamic State. An announcement from the joint venture command underlined that agreement came "from the growing concern of Russia for the presence thousands of terrorists from Russia carrying out criminal action along with Dae (Islamic State)." The Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari has declared its Friday from New York that his country has not received military consultants from Russia to help the Iraqi forces.

Jordan

ISIS urges Muslims to escalate attacks (1 July, 2015)

The Islamic State invited today supporters to escalate their attacks during the holy month of Ramadan against Christians, Shia and Sunni Muslims fighting on the side of the coalition led by the US that seeks to defeat the extremist organization. The representative of the Islamist group Abu Mohammed al Antnani urged jihadists to the audio message convert Ramadan, which lasts about one months and began last week, in a period of "destruction of the infidels and apostates ... Shia Muslims", inviting escalate attacks in Iraq, Syria and Libya. He also called the Arabs in the Levant and Saudi Arabia to rise up against the "tyrants" that govern them.

Lebanon

Hezbollah welcomes Russian intervention in Syria (26 September, 2015)

The Shiite organization Hezbollah in Lebanon today welcomed development Russian military forces in Syria that will offer support for the public ally, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The leader of Lebanese Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah said in an interview he gave television network Al- Manar that the campaign conducted the international coalition in the US has failed because it has not lead to defeat of the organization Islamic State, a fact which prompted Russia directly involved in the conflict. Nasrallah further confirmed that a ceasefire agreement 6 months reached between the warring parties in three areas of Syria..

Palestine - Israel

Israel authorizes use of live ammunition against those who throw stones (22 September, 2015)

The Israeli government's security council decided today to extend the authorization for the use of live ammunition by security forces against those who throw stones, according to an announcement released by the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Israeli government "decided to give permission to order enforcement forces to shoot with real bullets against those who throw stones and Molotov

cocktails when life is threatened third person and not only a threat to the life of a police officer," the statement said.

Qatar

US to sell arms to GCC countries (4 August, 2015)

The United States of America is prepared to 'accelerate' arms sales to Gulf countries, said today the US Secretary John Kerry in Doha, during his meeting with his counterparts in the Arab countries expressing concerns about the agreement Group 5 + 1 with Iran on the nuclear program of the Islamic Republic. "We agreed to accelerate some arms sales which are necessary and needed more time before," Kerry said during a press conference in Qatar. The American Foreign Minister also stated that the US and allied Arab states in the Gulf will face any destabilizing effects in the region.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi health minister on the Mecca stampede (25 September, 2015)

The Health Minister of Saudi Arabia gave attributed the current trampling that resulted killed over 700 people in Mina, near Mecca, to the the lack of discipline of pilgrims who tend, as he said, to disregard the directions of those responsible of Hajj. "If believers have followed the instructions, we could have avoided such an accident," said Khaled al-Falich on public television El-Ekmparigia since visited the site of the tragedy, which is the worst during the annual Muslim pilgrimage (Hajj) for 25 years. "Many pilgrims begin to move without considering their schedules" designated persons responsible for the management of rituals, he said.

Syria

Britain alters its policy on Assad (28 September, 2015)

British Prime Minister David Cameron said Wednesday, according to television channel Sky News, that the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad could remain as part of a transitional government, but it should be a long-term part of the future of Syria. The correspondent for Sky News traveled with Cameron in the US, said that Cameron does not exclude the Assad be part of a transition, but "in which he is very clear is that Assad can not be part of the future of Syria in the long term." Earlier the British newspaper Sunday Telegraph reported citing a government source that Cameron is open to Assad stay in power in the short term, to be formed in the country a national unity government, after more than four years of civil war.

Turkey

Erdogan in support of Saudi Arabia (26 September, 2015)

The Muslim conservative President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke today in support of the Saudi authorities who have received fierce criticism for failing to organize the pilgrimage Mecca after trampling made and resulted in death 700 people. "Undoubtedly measures will be taken in order to avoid repetition of this tragedy. I do not share the hostile to Saudi Arabia statements" he said the reporters. Erdogan expressed the view that "some mistakenly blame the Saudi Arabia that did everything possible "to the sacred pilgrimage be carried out smoothly. "We need to see the glass half full, and in every country there are errors made during such events," the Head of the Turkish state added. Initially 18 Turks were considered missing in the deadliest tragedy, but today there was confirmed the death of only five Turks.

UAE

UAE FM addresses western criticism over the refugee crisis (14 September, 2015)

The Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Anwar Gargas called "unfair" the criticism by some of the media and political organizations

about the refusal of the Arab countries to admit to their country of refugees from Syria. Gargas made his statements during a meeting of ministers of the Arab League in Cairo yesterday. "We see criticism does not correspond to reality and distortion of suspicious positions in several Arab states on the Syrian refugees from a portion policies and IT circles," the minister said.

Gargas's claims that the Emirates have hosted 100,000 Syrians from the beginning of the four-year conflict in the country and have provided financial assistance \$ 530 million in Damascus. Several Western media have criticized the Persian Gulf states with the highest per capita incomes for their reluctance to provide asylum to Syrians fleeing the war in their country. The director of Annex Middle East and North Africa Observatory Human Rights Watch, Sarah Lia Whitson has also condemned Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar to allegedly prevent them accommodate Syrian refugees.

Yemen

Fresh fierce Saudi airstrikes aim the Houthis (7 September, 2015)

Fierce air strikes launched today in Sana'a, the capital Yemen, by the Arab allied forces in Saudi Arabia, after the attack they received on Friday by Houthi rebels in Marib province, which claimed the lives of 60 soldiers, according to eyewitnesses. Today's air strikes were aimed at positions of Shiite rebels Houthis in the capital, as well as positions of their allies, the forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, according again eyewitnesses. One target was the headquarters of the security forces of Handan in the south part of the capital positions of Houthi neighborhoods in northern capital. Also strong explosions shook this part of the city and some Residents began fleeing, according again to eye witnesses. Since the raids also hit stores weapons in Jebel Nckm, a zone that dominates the eastern part of Sana'a and that control the forces loyal to Saleh, as the presidential palace, according to eyewitnesses.

Economy News

Cyprus

ENI interested in Cyprus gas reserves (10 September, 2015)

The Executive Director of the Italian company ENI, Claudio Del Kanji said that natural gas has been found in Cyprus can be channeled in Europe through the use of the company's facilities in Egypt. The Executive Director of ENI, who became head of delegation was received by the President of Cyprus Nikos Anastasiadis. He said the delegation of the company is in Cyprus since it managed three pieces in the Cypriot EEZ. They discussed with Cypriot President about the future of these three-pieces, and every possible development in Eastern Mediterranean, following the discovery of large deposits in Egypt.

"We can create good synergies with the Egyptian facilities and we can also discuss the future developments following the same geological model that we have developed in Egypt," he said. "The Cypriot government," he said, "is very active and progressing very positively in relation to the promotion of a positive investment environment." He also stressed that the commitment of ENI to continue research in Cyprus' is very strong. " For his part, Cypriot government spokesman Nikos Christodoulides highlighted the excellent character of the meeting.

Egypt

A special Economic Zone in the Suez Canal (11 August, 2015)

The Egyptian president Abdel Fattah El-Sisi decreed to establish an economic zone in Suez Canal. Egypt has launched a major expansion of the channel Canal last week that the Sisi hopes will spark an economic recovery in the country, the most populous of the Arab world. The Decree establishes an economic zone of 460 square kilometers, which the government intends to use to create an

international industrial and transit center that will attract foreign investment. According to the calculations of the government, the economic zone will contribute approximately one third of the country's economy.

Greece

Tourism business in Lesbos Island reduced due to migrants influx (22 September, 2015)

The complete lack of tourists in Lesbos by Turkey on the occasion of this year's Muslim feast of Eid al-Adha results from the situation that has been created with immigrants and refugees on the island. Mr. Aris Lazaris who distributes 80% of Turkish tourists in Lesbos from the opposite coast argued that since the 4000 Turkish expected in Lesbos for the five days Bajrami 23-27 September, will not come more than 1,000. But also by those who will come is unknown how many will stay on the island.

Iran

Tehran to complete new oil contracts scheme (2 September, 2015)

"Iran has put together a new model for oil contacts that allows access to regional and international markets and paves the way for long-term strategic cooperation with major companies," Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh was quoted as saying by the Shana news agency. Iran expects to finalize the wording for a new model for international oil contracts in the next few weeks. Tehran aims to boost recovery from its fields with the help of foreign companies. The ministry is expected to present the new oil contracts to investors at a conference in London in December, ahead of a likely lifting of international sanctions in 2016.

Iraq

Iraq's Parliament approves trade agreement with Kuwait (1 September, 2015)

The Iraqi House of Representatives approved a trade cooperation agreement with the State of Kuwait amidst calls by MPs to further cement relations and cooperation with the neighboring country. MP Adnan Al-Asadi, of the national coalition bloc, called for rapid endorsement of agreements between Iraq and Kuwait for they would improve bilateral relations.

Oman

Fast track for Oman's largest power project (31 August, 2015)

Three consortia submitted proposals for the development of independent power projects at Ibri and Sohar. Oman tries to keep up with growing demand for power in a rapidly industrializing country. The proposed project, spread over two sites, is the single largest power generation venture in terms of capacity which could reach 3,200MW. Proposals by the three consortia lead by Engie, Marubeni, and Mitsui were opened at the office of Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWPC) on Sunday. OPWPC is the sole buyer of water and power from all independent power and water projects in the country.

Palestine - Israel

Agreement delay on natural gas due to disagreement on sharing (30 September, 2015)

Controversy regarding the predictions of the target transnational sharing agreement and joint pooling deposits extending between the EEZ Cyprus and Israel, seeing there media, while Nicosia, sees no problem and will soon be ending. Actually Israel requires to participate in the decision making in approving the plan for development of the deposit "Venus" because it enters and within the Israeli EEZ. Additionally there must be an agreement on various technical issues. The "Venus" extends only 3% in Israel's EEZ in Block "Gisai", while those with direct interests in that Israeli piece-this is the multimillionaire Teddy Shaggy and

Beni Steinmetz- feel that they have completed studies and drilling to present real data.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi credit default swaps fall steeply (1 September, 2015)

Saudi stock prices surged 4.2 percent early on Sunday in response to oil's rebound, bringing them 15 percent above last week's low but still down 13 percent month-to-date. Last Monday, five-year Saudi credit default swaps soared as high as 120 basis points, from around 60 bps late last month. The cost of insuring against a Saudi Arabian sovereign debt default has dropped in the past days because of the rebound of global oil prices. Saudi Arabia has major fiscal reserves which could cover such a deficit for some years.

Turkey

QSE, Borsa Istanbul sign MoU to enhance their co-operation (30 August, 2015)

The Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) and the Borsa Istanbul have strengthened their co-operation by signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) yesterday, which will “formalise co-operation” between the two markets. The MoU was signed by Rashid bin Ali al-Mansoori, CEO of the QSE, and Tuncay Dinç, CEO, Borsa Istanbul. The MoU will seek to explore the opportunities of dual listing of securities to increase the competitiveness of both Borsa Istanbul and the QSE.

UAE

UAE Cabinet grants grace period to insurance companies (1 September, 2015)

The UAE Cabinet has issued a resolution granting a grace period of one year to the insurance companies operating in the UAE in the combined business of insurance of persons and fund accumulation operations along with property and liability insurance. The grace period is starting from August 28, 2015, to regularize their positions in accordance with the provisions of Article No. 25 of Federal Law No. 06 of 2007 concerning the Establishment of the Insurance Authority and Regulation of Insurance Business.

Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri, Minister of Economy and Chairman of the Insurance Authority, said in a press statement that the decision to grant the insurance companies an additional period of one year to regularize their positions came as part of the UAE leadership's approach to support national companies and improve their performance in order to serve economic development in the UAE.

Increase of Islamic finance assets by 2020 (1 September, 2015)

Islamic Finance is the most developed pillar of Islamic economy. The growth in the global Shariah-compliant economy is broadly measured by the value of Islamic Finance assets. The value of assets in the Islamic finance sector is expected to increase by 80 percent over the next five years, reaching \$ 3.24 trillion in value by 2020, according to initial findings garnered from the upcoming State of the Global Islamic Economy (SHOE) report.

The report by Dubai Islamic Economy Development Centre in partnership with Thomson Reuters and in collaboration with DinarStandard, will be published ahead of the second Global Islamic Economy Summit (GIES), which is taking place in Dubai this October. The 2015 summit, organized by Dubai Chamber, the Dubai Islamic Economy Development Centre (DIEDC) and Thomson Reuters, is set to gather over 2,000 policymakers, thinkers and business leaders on Oct. 5 and 6, at Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai. 



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