



21-06-2019

Weekly coverage round-up (Jun 17 - 21)

Weekly coverage round-up (Jun 17 - 21)

Al-Jumhuriya Collective



A quick English summary of our Arabic news coverage this week.

“Is the Gulf heading for war?” (17 June, 2019). Last week witnessed two grave security incidents in the Arabian Gulf. On Wednesday, 12 June, Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthi militants targeted Saudi Arabia’s Abha airport with a rocket that caused great damage to the building and injured several civilians. The next day, two oil tankers were bombed, in what the US, the UK, and others have said was an Iranian attack. (Editor’s note: This article was published before Iran later shot down a US drone.) All sides maintain they do not want war, but, judging by Iran’s provocative actions, Tehran may calculate that it has the least to lose – and possibly something to gain – from a limited, short-term confrontation. For more analysis, see our [full article](#) (Arabic).

“When the Makhoul family fights corruption” (18 June, 2019). A media outlet owned by the immensely wealthy and influential Makhoul family, from which Bashar al-Assad’s mother descends, has taken lately to bursting unannounced into small shops in Damascus markets and intimidating their nervous owners on camera, interrogating them about their prices and other business practices, sometimes closing them down and referring them to the judiciary. The intention appears to be to shift the blame for the country’s present economic crisis onto private business owners, rather than the state itself, which is here portrayed as fighting on citizens’ behalf against corruption, in an all-too-obvious inversion of reality. For more, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).

“Staring into the Chernobyl abyss” (19 June, 2019). The new HBO drama series Chernobyl, which tells a somewhat fictionalized version of the story of the infamous nuclear disaster in the Ukrainian city of Pripyat (then part of the Soviet Union) in 1986, reminds us of the potential horrors surrounding us all in a modern world filled with hundreds of nuclear reactors spanning the globe. For our full review of the series and the questions it raises, see [here](#) (Arabic).

“Sudan: The shadows of the massacre” (20 June, 2019). Peaceful protests have continued in Sudan following the ouster of longtime dictator Omar al-Bashir in April, calling for an end to military rule and the holding of free and fair elections. The ruling military council has successfully secured the support of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, however, and in early June its army carried out a massacre of scores of civilian demonstrators in the center of the capital, Khartoum. The opposition responded with a mass civil disobedience campaign, which saw banks and shops go on strike, and even suspended navigation at Khartoum airport temporarily. For more, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).

“A Saudi return to the Syria scene” (21 June, 2019). The visit to eastern Syria last week by Saudi Arabia’s State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Thamer al-Sabhan, signals Riyadh’s desire to become more involved in Syria once again, after approximately two years of taking a distance from it. Al-Sabhan met with tribal dignitaries in Deir al-Zor province, as well as officials from the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. The visit appeared to form part of

Washington's plans to stabilize the region post-ISIS, boost the dire local economy, and essentially keep the influential tribes happy (Al-Sabhan himself hails from a tribe with connections to those of Deir al-Zor). For more details and analysis, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).