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Weekly coverage round-up (Jul 8 - 12)

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Al-Jumhuriya Collective



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

“Empty stomachs for Syria” (8 July, 2019). Over sixty activists from Syria and elsewhere are currently holding a collective hunger strike—dubbed the “Empty Stomachs” campaign—calling for an end to the bombardment of Idlib. Al-Jumhuriya speaks to several participants in the strike to learn more. For a full English translation of this article, see [here](#).

“Tartous Port: Investment in expropriation” (9 July, 2019). A Russian company, STG Engineering, will begin managing, expanding, and operating Syria’s Tartous Port within the next few days, local sources have told Al-Jumhuriya. Details of the company’s 49-year contract are hard to come by, having been kept hidden even from the Assad regime’s puppet parliament that approved the contract in June. Fears abound that it will lead to substantial layoffs for Syrian workers at the port, and that in general the contract’s terms are unduly favorable to the Russian company, at the expense of Syria’s economy, state finances, and sovereignty. For more, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).

“Knowledge in fifteen minutes” (10 July, 2019). Recent years have seen the emergence in the Arab world of amateur-produced online videos purporting to provide concise summaries and overviews of various disciplines of learning, be it physics, philosophy, history, or mental health. From the “[Da7ee7](#)” YouTube channel in Egypt, to [Salam Katanani](#)’s in Jordan, to the Syrian “[Arab Dystopia](#)” channel, which boast a combined following in the hundreds of thousands, videos averaging ten to fifteen minutes in

length aim to plug gaps left by antiquated education systems and feed an evident hunger among Arab viewers for up-to-date information and general knowledge. For more, including a discussion of the videos' potential pitfalls, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).

“A potential food disaster in Idlib” (11 July, 2019). What was initially expected to be the best harvest in over a decade has turned into a potential disaster for Syrian farmers, following fires that have consumed large swathes of agricultural land, as well as the punishing military campaign waged in the north of the country by the Assad regime and its Russian ally, in which the bombing of crucial wheat and barley fields has been systematic. The opposition-held parts of Idlib and Hama Provinces now face the prospect of a food shortage, with attendant inflation and the loss of a critical source of livelihood for the local population. For more, see our [full article](#) (Arabic).

Bonus article: “Your Holiness Pope Francis, this is what I would like you to know before your meeting with President Putin” (3 July, 2019). An award-winning Syrian Christian journalist, Roger Asfar, wrote a letter on the eve of Vladimir Putin’s visit to the Vatican, calling on Pope Francis to press the Russian president to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure in his ongoing aerial bombardment of northern Syria. For a full English translation, see [here](#). For the Arabic original, click [here](#).

