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A weekly sample of news and opinions on current events from around the Middle East collected and brought to you by the Moshe Dayan Center, Tel Aviv University. **To see full article, click on title.**

Syria – Elias Harfoush: The Arab Observers and Ignoring Perpetrators

Neither Bashar al-Assad's regime nor the Syrian opposition had a better option than that of the Arab League observer mission. For the regime, the observers are a less bitter solution than internationalization. For the opposition, the observers could provide an acceptable means to embarrass the Syrian security apparatus, thus halting the killings and leading to the release of prisoners.

Source: Dar al Hayat (London) January 10, 2012

Israel/Palestine – Saleh Al-Naami: Underground War

Palestinians are nervous that the third anniversary of the Gaza War comes at a time when Israel is escalating threats to launch another military campaign on Gaza. Nonetheless, Tel Aviv worries that Israel will suffer grave losses in the war. Israeli military sources revealed that the key challenge facing Israel if it starts massive military operations against the Gaza Strip are the hundreds of booby-trapped tunnels.

Source: Al-Ahram Weekly (Cairo) January 5, 2012

Egypt – Khaled Fahmy: Women, Revolution, and Army

By the end of 2011, women's bodies emerged as a nexus for many principles and objectives of Egypt's revolution. Women, and more specifically the female body, occupy center stage in the most recent, highly delicate stage of the revolution; the struggle against the military institution with its patriarchal authority and repressive machinery.

An Arabic version of this article appeared first in Akhbar al-Adab.

Source: Al-Masry Al-Youm (Cairo), January 9, 2011

Israel/Palestine – Editorial: Telling Stand

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman is once again proposing to redraw Israel's borders with the Palestinian territories, with a view to placing more Arab Israelis under Palestinian control in return for plans to annex parts of the West Bank. He also wants to strip as many Arab Israelis of Israeli citizenship as possible. The desired outcome, of course, is to dramatically reduce the size of the Arab population in Israel. This is ethnic cleansing, whichever way one looks at it.

Source: Jordan Times (Amman), January 11, 2012

Egypt – Ayman El-Amir: Egypt Cannot be a Theocracy

The nearly-concluded parliamentary elections have infused Egypt with a feeling of national pride but no sense of direction. Islamist parties, led by the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, have emerged as clear winners. Islamist parties got more than they expected and liberal democrats netted less than they deserved. With these skewed results Egypt will be looking forward to an uncertain political future.

Source: Al-Ahram Weekly (Cairo) January 5, 2012

Turkey – Mustafa Akyol: Turkey's Arresting Machine Gone Mad

42 percent of the 128,000 inmates in Turkish prisons are not convicts but suspects -- meaning that thousands of citizens are in jail for nothing. There are structural and fundamental reasons for this crackdown on human liberty. The government should be forced to introduce an extensive legal reform, which will both minimize the court's power to arrest people and block their tendency to criminalize ideologies. Otherwise, the notion that Turkey is an "advanced democracy" will increasingly seem ridiculous.

Source: Hürriyet (Istanbul), January 7, 2012

Turkey – Semih İdiz: Something Not Right in Başbuğ's Detention

Something just doesn't feel right about the detention of former Chief of General Staff İlker Başbuğ on "terrorism" charges. He cannot be above the law, but it is an oversimplification to view his detention simply as a sign that Turkey is becoming more democratic. This, coupled with the arrest of journalists accused of anti-government sedition, makes it harder to believe that the AKP will make Turkey more democratic, despite all its talk about 'advanced democracy.'

Source: Hürriyet (Istanbul), January 10, 2012

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