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# Middle East News Brief

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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.](#)

## Yemen – Hasan Al-Haifi: Mr. Obama: Give the Yemeni People a Chance!

The peaceful protests in Yemen are not simply echoes of the political ambitions of any politicians or factions. Rather, they are spearheaded by a multitude of educated and politically conscious youth groups. Because of a baseless worry about the future of the “fight against terrorism,” the White House has been misled to believe that Ali Abdullah Saleh represents the only guarantee to satisfy American aims in this war. However, only under democratic governments can terror be subdued and remain undesirable to the majority of the Yemeni people.

Source: Yemen Times (Sanaa), April 4, 2011

## Syria – Editorial: Too Little, Much Too Late

Last week, President Bashar al-Assad gave a speech to the Syrian *Majlis a-Shaab*, a largely useless body that passes for a parliament. It was his first address to the Syrian people since unrest broke out on March 16, leading to the deaths of over 100 people. But instead of giving concrete promises of reform and lifting the emergency law, the speech was the distillation of everything that has held back Arab development for the last 60 years. Assad spoke of conspiracies by foreign countries. The man, who would have us believe that he has swapped an AK-47 for an iPad and repression for Twitter, blamed social media and satellite TV for the unrest that has gripped his country.

Source: NOW Lebanon (Beirut), March 31, 2011

## Libya – Amir Taheri: Obama at War: A Study in Ambiguity

The American stance on Libya is unclear. President Obama recently announced that Qaddafi had lost all legitimacy. He then joined the UK and France to implement a UN resolution that, in effect, demands regime change in Libya. Later, Obama appeared to distance himself from his previous stance. The administration appears less interested in winning this war than in proving that Obama is more prudent than Bush. Now that the US has become involved it cannot walk away without losing credibility. It is unwise to get involved in a war without wanting to win it.

Source: Asharq Alawsat (London), April 1, 2011

## Syria – Tariq Alhomayed: Syria: Praying by Identity Card

At the same time that a female presenter appeared on an Arab satellite channel to say that “the situation in Syria is calm,” a breaking news report flashed across the bottom of the screen reporting that demonstrations were taking place in several Syrian cities including Damascus, Baniyas, Homs, and Latakia. The best example of the media’s downplaying the severity of the situation can be seen in coverage of Assad’s speech. His assertion that Syria was subject to a foreign conspiracy was reiterated by Arab media throughout the day, while the demonstrations went unreported.

Source: Asharq Alawsat (London), April 2, 2011

## Afghanistan – Editorial: Afghan Travails

The more sincere efforts are made to heal the rift between the Western and Islamic worlds, the more it is widened by the actions of a few lunatics on both sides. Obama was right to condemn the outrage committed against the Quran by Florida pastor Terry Jones, just as he was justified to condemn the killing of 12 people, including seven UN workers, in Afghanistan. Jones and his kind indeed represent a growing culture of intolerance and Islamophobia that has turned freedom of speech into a provocation for murder.

Source: Arab News (Riyadh), April 3, 2011

## Turkey – Yusuf Kanlı: Feelings

Why Turks are interested in what’s happening in Libya but not in the situation in the Ivory Coast has little to do with religion. Rather, it has to do with economic, cultural, and historical ties. Furthermore, there is a strong connection between the Turkish sentiments toward Libya, Palestine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Damascus or Cairo, and the imperial past of the country. The neo-Ottomanist tone of FM Ahmet Davutoğlu’s policy corresponds to popular Turkish sentiment, which has not yet shed its imperial dreams.

Source: Hürriyet (Istanbul), April 5, 2011

## Turkey – Fatma Dişli Zibak: Dispute on Scarf-Wearing Deputy

An initiative launched by a group of headscarf-wearing women who demanded the election of headscarf-wearing deputies to Parliament has led to a debate in conservative circles. As the secularist status quo saw headscarf-wearing women as ignorant people “who are abused by some,” the conservative status quo is seen to have the same approach towards these women. The clearest gauge of justice, freedom and humanitarian values in a society is the status of women.

Source: Today’s Zaman (Istanbul), April 6, 2011

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