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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.](#)

## Regional – Elias Harfoush: The Wilting of the Arab Spring

What we are witnessing today in the streets of Yemen, Libya, and Bahrain is closer to a civil war than to a popular revolution. There is concern that this might spread to the streets of the Syrian cities as well. Societies that are supposed to constitute nations are dismantling into tribes, sects, and conflicting doctrines. The leaves of the so-called Arab Spring have begun to wilt even before the season's end.

Source: *Al-Hayat* (Beirut), April 12, 2011

## France – Faisal al Yafai: Sarkozy Has Struck at the Heart of Europe's Liberty

The "burqa ban," which outlaws face coverings in public places, is now in force on the streets of France. In reality, the law is as ill-conceived as its nickname: the item of clothing the lawmakers are targeting is actually the *niqab*, the head covering that reveals the eyes; the *burqa* is the complete covering cloth mostly worn in Afghanistan. Banning this piece of cloth will not solve any problems. But that's not the fatal flaw in this politically-driven decision; the flaw is that in practice and in principle, it doesn't work.

Source: *The National* (Abu Dhabi), April 12, 2011

## Regional – Ayman El-Amir: The Islamist Challenge

The uprisings that rocked several Arab countries in the past four months had Islamist supporters poised to play an important role in the post-revolutionary system. Like the wider protest community, the Islamists have a stake in scrapping the regimes that oppressed and persecuted them, and in shaping a new era of political change. However, unlike other partners, they are largely captive of a single-minded ideology that places them at odds with the more liberal forces of society. They must decide whether to stick to their ideological dogma or to become a team player and accept the compromises that go with it.

Source: *Al-Ahram* (Cairo), April 7, 2011

## Libya, Yemen – Osama Al Sharif: It's Time for Political Deals in Libya and Yemen

In Libya, an African Union (AU) delegation has proposed a five-point road map to achieve an immediate cease-fire, withdrawal of forces from cities and the beginning of negotiations between the government and the opposition. Likewise, Yemen is also the subject of diplomatic efforts to find a way out of the current impasse. President Ali Abdullah Saleh has not rejected the latest GCC proposition that he transfer power to his deputy and allow for the formation of a national unity government headed by the opposition. However, he shifted the responsibility of debunking this latest initiative to his opponents. Will these diplomatic efforts be enough?

Source: *Arab News* (Riyadh), April 12, 2011

## Regional – Aaidh al-Qarni: The Arabs and the Conspiracy Complex

Colonel Qaddafi said that the world was conspiring against Libya, out of envy for what the Libyan people enjoy. The Syrian official media said that Syria was victim to a foreign conspiracy against its heroic struggle for resistance, resilience, survival and opposition. When will the Arabs abandon this conspiracy complex and stop denying mistakes and searching for scapegoats?

Source: *Asharq Alawsat* (London), April 11, 2011

## Turkey – Semih Idiz : Turkey's Libya Dilemma Grows

Demonstrations against Turkish PM Erdoğan in Benghazi last week came as a shock given the popularity he normally enjoys in the Arab world. Since Turkey's initial opposition to a NATO intervention, the anti-Qaddafi opposition feel that Turkey is indirectly supporting the regime. At the same time, Turkey is in a row with the Libyan government over unfinished business affairs. Last week, Erdoğan proposed a political road map for Libya. Qaddafi's regime and the rebels are highly unlikely to reach an agreement on the basis of Erdoğan's road map.

Source: *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), April 11, 2011

## Turkey – Emre Uslu: Turkification of Kurdish Politics

The Peace and Democracy Party's (BDP) candidate list for the upcoming general elections excludes moderate BDP deputies, but retains more hawkish members. The BDP probably decided to exclude "dove" Kurds and include "hawk" Kurds after consulting Kurdish PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, who is trying to "Turkify" Kurdish politics. He aims to maintain Kurdish constituents with hawkish Kurdish deputies, while trying to legitimize and explain his position in Turkish society using the doves of the Turkish left. Even if this "post-PKK" political move can be implemented, the biggest barrier to peace is the PKK itself.

Source: *Today's Zaman* (Istanbul), April 12, 2011

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