

Arab Reform Bulletin: December 2007

Arab Reform Bulletin نشرة الإصلاح العربي

Published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

December 2007, Volume 5, Issue 10

Michele Dunne, Editor

Salma Waheedi, Assistant Editor

To view this issue as a PDF, click [here](#).

Read the Arab Reform Bulletin and other Middle East Program publications in Arabic at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/programs/arabic/>

Read the Arab Reform Bulletin and other Middle East Program publications in English at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/MiddleEast>

Subscriber Information

Click [here](#) to receive the *Arab Reform Bulletin* in English or Arabic.

Click [here](#) to read past issues of the *Bulletin* in English; click [here](#) for Arabic.

We welcome your comments or suggestions. Please e-mail the editor at arb@CarnegieEndowment.org.

Insights and Analysis

[United States: Presidential Hopefuls and Middle East Democracy](#)

Steven A. Cook

[Lebanon: Civil Society says "No More Silence"](#)

Omayma Abdel-Latif

[Mauritania: Fragility of a New Democracy](#)

Salma Waheedi

[Libya: Freedom of Expression under the Law](#)

Faiza al-Basha

[Saudi Arabia: Reforms in Higher Education Raise Questions](#)

Zvika Krieger

Readers React

Find out how readers are reacting to articles in the *Arab Reform Bulletin*. Join the debate by sending your views to the editor at arb@CarnegieEndowment.org.

News and Views

[Lebanon: Presidential Vote Delayed](#)

[Palestine: Annapolis Follow Up; Settlement Plans; Attacks on Journalists](#)

[Jordan: Parliamentary Election Results; New Cabinet](#)

[Syria: Activists Arrested; Websites Blocked](#)

[Iraq: Justice and Accountability Law; Sunni MPs End Boycott; Press Freedoms](#)
[Egypt: Muslim Brotherhood Arrests; Torturers Punished; Other Developments](#)
[Sudan: Cabinet Reshuffle; British Teacher Released; Journalists Fined](#)
[Gulf Countries: Common Market Pledged](#)
[Kuwait: Draft Political Parties Law; Questioning of Education Minister](#)
[Saudi Arabia: Religious Police Cleared; Rape Victim and Her Lawyer Punished](#)
[Bahrain: Human Rights Defender on Trial](#)
[UAE: Crackdown on Human Trafficking; Press Freedom Violations](#)
[Algeria: Local Election Results](#)
[Tunisia: Journalist Trial](#)
[Morocco: Arrests of Homosexuals](#)

[Upcoming Political Events](#)
[Views from the Arab Media](#)

Read On

New publications on Lebanon, Palestine, Arab-Israeli peace, Iraq, Egypt, Gulf States, North Africa, Sudan, media and academic freedoms, economic reform, and more.

Subscriber Information

Insights and Analysis

United States: Presidential Hopefuls and Middle East Democracy

Steven A. Cook

While the heady days of the so-called Arab Spring of 2005 and the soaring rhetoric of President Bush's "forward strategy of freedom" are long past, the question of whether and how the United States should promote democracy in the Middle East is still debated. Each of the prospective candidates for the 2008 U.S. presidential election has, in one way or another, established a position on the issue. Keeping in mind that a new president's actual policies are often shaped more by breaking events than by campaign rhetoric, there are already some observable differences.

The six candidates often cited as most likely to win their parties' nomination (Senators Clinton, Edwards, and Obama on the Democratic side; Senator McCain, Mayor Giuliani, and Governor Romney on the Republican) have expressed common themes on the subject of democracy promotion in the Middle East. For example they all say (as does the Bush administration) that if Arabs are provided with an opportunity to process their grievances through democratic institutions, there will be less terrorism. In the wider pool of candidates, only third tier contenders Republican Ron Paul and Democrat Dennis Kucinich have rejected outright the notion of promoting political and economic change in the Middle East.

Yet, in recognition of the failures of Iraq, all the candidates emphasize that democracy cannot and must not be imposed through force. They also agree that free and fair elections are only one component of a democratic society, citing the need for the establishment of the rule of law, transparency, accountability, human rights, tolerance, women's rights, and an educated citizenry as other primary principles of a democratic polity. In general, the candidates have been rather vague about how the United States can promote such developments.

Although the rhetoric has much in common, there are enough differences among the candidates to discern—even at this early date—how much emphasis each would be likely to place on democracy promotion should he or she enter the Oval Office. Senator John McCain was a co-sponsor of the 2005 "ADVANCE Democracy Act" (which never became law), which instructed U.S. diplomats and officials "to use all instruments of United States influence to support, promote, and strengthen democratic principles, practices, and values in foreign countries." In his recent *Foreign Affairs* article laying out his foreign policy priorities, however, McCain stated merely that the United States would help "friendly Muslim states establish the building blocks of open and tolerant societies."

For his part, Governor Mitt Romney has emphasized the need for U.S. help in providing economic opportunity for Arabs as a pathway to the emergence of democratic political systems. While supporting political reform in the Middle East, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has argued that order and stability are a prerequisite for democratic development. He contends that Washington can be helpful in promoting democracy, but that it must be modest in its expectations of what can be achieved and how long it might take to see results. Giuliani has said he would tie good bilateral relations with the United States to a

country's positive record on good governance, human rights, and "democratic development"—a policy that, if pursued seriously, could put his administration in conflict with some of Washington's closest allies in the Middle East.

On the democratic side, Senator Hillary Clinton has argued that the United States must support Arabs who embrace the ideals of democracy. Her critique of the Bush administration is that the White House has talked about democracy, but done little of the hard work to build democratic institutions. The Senator has also called for human rights to "be a centerpiece of foreign policy and a core element of our [U.S.] conception of democracy." More than any of the other candidates, Senator John Edwards situates democracy promotion within a policy to fight extremism. As part of a long-term effort to support political change, Senator Edwards has called for \$3 billion in funding for global primary education, increasing microfinance programs, supporting health care in developing countries, and "dramatic increases" in the "promotion of constitutional democracies and the rule of law across the developing world."

Finally, Senator Barack Obama, a co-sponsor of the "ADVANCE Democracy Act," has indicated that it is in the interest of the United States "to help foster democracy through diplomatic and economic resources." Yet the Senator has argued that Washington must be modest in its approach and signal a spirit of partnership with the Arab world as it promotes democracy. Of all the candidates, Obama provides the strongest hint of how he would go about promoting political change in the Arab world. The centerpiece of his approach can be described as conditionality in which economic and military aid, trade deals, and debt relief would be coupled with an "insistent call for reform."

Steven A. Cook is the Douglas Dillon Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He is the author of Ruling But Not Governing: The Military and Political Development in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

[Return to table of contents.](#) [Printer-friendly version.](#)

Lebanon: Civil Society says "No More Silence"

Omayma Abdel-Latif

It was an unfamiliar scene. One Friday night in November, in the heart of Hamra, the main thoroughfare in Beirut, a concert entitled "No More Silence" drew a large number of young Lebanese men and women. But this was not just another concert. The gathering was publicizing the *Khalass* (No More): *Together for Lebanon* campaign (www.khalass.net), the latest in a series of moves by civil society forces to "drive away the specter of civil war," in the words of one activist. With the sound of anti-war songs in the background, activists wearing tee-shirts with the word *Khalass* printed in Arabic and English distributed leaflets, while others explained to audience members why they joined the campaign. "We are fed up with sectarianism, talk of war, and a political elite that does not realize the gravity of the situation," said Elie Abi Lameh of the campaign's press team.

The political turmoil that has engulfed Lebanon since the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in February 2005 has cast a heavy shadow on Lebanon's social fabric. Sectarian language has reentered the political debate, and political forces have engaged in what one observer termed a "cold civil war." "We had to do something to pull Lebanon back from the brink," said Ziyad Baroud, a veteran civil society activist. "*Khalass* is an emergency campaign," he added. The founding statement of *Khalass*, which brings together thirty civil society organizations, defines its goal as "exerting pressure on political leaders to overcome the deadlock and assert our will to live together."

Aside from the concert, other activities included a sit-in at the Lebanese parliament on November 17 and a symbolic funeral procession on November 22 to protest the status quo. Reversing the tide of sectarianism and reminding the Lebanese of its dangers—particularly young people who have not experienced the horrors of civil war—are among *Khalass's* core goals. A petition entitled "Together to Save Lebanon," which calls for dialogue and an end to violence, has drawn some 30,000 signatures.

Lebanon's civil society is one of the most vibrant in the Arab world, with an established record of attempting to confront the country's chronic social and political malaises. Lebanese University Professor Fadia Kiwan recalls that before civil war broke in 1975, civil society organizations—especially student and labor organizations—began to appear stronger than traditional communal ties. Baroud relates that activists from the then-nascent civil society organized protests against sectarianism, but the tide of violence was too strong. Another milestone for Lebanon's civil society came in November 1987, when activists organized a demonstration involving some 250,000 Lebanese who crossed sectarian boundaries to protest the war and the state's complacency. The movement also engaged in a wide range of other activities during the civil war including symbolic strikes, protest sit-ins, blood drives, and two national congresses that affirmed the commitment of all civil society forces to national unity, despite, and with, all Lebanon's differences. In 1997, civil society forces engaged in a successful campaign to force the politicians to hold municipal elections for the first time in 30 years.

Five months into the *Khalass* campaign, it is not clear whether the organizers' efforts to go beyond politics and sectarian

polarization are bearing fruit. "It has not created momentum or attracted enough popular attention," wrote Ghassan Saoud in *al-Akhbar* newspaper recently. Other observers have suggested that a photo-op between two political enemies such as Saad al-Hariri, head of majority March 14 bloc, and Michel Aoun, head of the Free Patriotic Movement and an ally of Hizbollah, would change the popular mood ten times faster than *Khalass* and other anti-war civil society activities.

Ziad Baroud has acknowledged that the campaign's results so far have been less than expected. He does not, however, blame *Khalass*'s young activists. He believes, rather, that "the problem lies within the structural basis of the Lebanese political system. The street and the media have become the only two institutions through which debate takes place because all other state institutions are in complete paralysis." The severe political polarization that has taken hold of the country has rendered street activities—the backbone of the civil society movement—ineffective. "There is no silent majority in Lebanon," said Baroud. "What we have experienced is that the majority of the Lebanese people have chosen to ally themselves with one political group or the other. Communal ties have become stronger and it is difficult to ignore their impact. This poses a serious challenge to our efforts."

Omayma Abdel-Latif is Projects Coordinator at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut.

[Return to table of contents.](#) [Printer-friendly version.](#)

Mauritania: Fragility of a New Democracy

Salma Waheedi

Mauritania, an often-ignored country in the western periphery of the Arab world, surprised observers two years ago by undertaking one of the most forthcoming advances toward democracy in the region. Democratic reforms came as a result of a 2005 bloodless military coup led by Colonel Ely Ould Muhammad Vall. Vall demonstrated enlightened leadership by pledging to restore democracy and ensure a constitutional transfer of power through free and fair elections. A swift political transition process culminated in credible legislative and presidential elections. President Sidi Muhammad Ould el-Sheikh Abdullahi, an independent, formerly exiled economist who served in previous cabinets, was elected in March 2007 in the country's first peaceful transfer of power. Abdullahi pledged to fight corruption, guarantee freedom of speech, alleviate poverty, eliminate slavery, and promote justice and national reconciliation.

The new government has taken some positive political steps, including passing a law that criminalizes slavery, requiring senior officials to declare their assets, and requiring 20 percent female representation in electoral lists. Freedom of speech and the press have also registered significant improvements. Mauritania ranked fiftieth out of 169 countries in Reporters without Borders' *Press Freedom Index 2007*, the highest among Arab countries.

Consolidation and progress toward democracy in Mauritania, however, depend on the government's ability to address its people's most pressing concerns, namely poverty and unemployment. Progress on those fronts has been slow and signs of strain are already apparent. In what the opposition called a "revolution of the hungry," thousands took to the streets in the Eastern impoverished regions in early November to protest sharp increases in the prices of basic food staples, electricity, and fuel. At least two people were killed after police forces used violence to disperse the protestors. In October, a coalition of five opposition parties led by Ahmed Ould Daddah, president of the Coalition of Democratic Forces, staged a mass protest in the capital Nouakchott and called for the government's resignation, citing "ineffectiveness" and "lack of serious efforts to improve people's lives." Recent unpopular initiatives—such as the privatization of the National Industrial and Mining Company and plans by political and military elites close to the president to establish a political party—added to the tensions.

Despite a spike in economic growth with the start of oil production, Mauritania continues to struggle with deeply-entrenched socio-economic challenges. Over 46 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. High unemployment, high food prices, scarcity of water, insufficient road networks and public transportation, and poor healthcare and education services are among the main problems.

The government, which inherited a troubled, corruption-ridden economy, has placed high hopes on the recent discovery of oil. Mauritania began oil production in February 2006, but output is so far lower than expected. The Chinguetti field is currently producing around 20,000 barrels per day, versus a projected 75,000 barrels. Lower production levels also afflict the fishing industry, and agricultural production is vulnerable because of unstable weather conditions. Manufacturing industries also suffer due to unreliable power supplies. While oil-driven economic growth in 2006 was 11.7 percent, non-oil GDP growth was only 4.1 percent, marking a decline from the 2005 rate of 5.4 percent. According to the World Bank, Mauritania's income per capita in 2006 was only \$740, while the inflation rate was 29.8 percent.

Yet a further challenge to democratic consolidation in Mauritania are the socio-economic divisions arising from the country's

complex ethnic composition, which includes Arab White Moores (*Bidan*), former Black Moore slaves (*Harratin*), and Afro-Mauritians. Despite the president's pledge to promote national unity and equality, the country's African population continues to suffer from a historically disadvantaged socio-economic position exacerbated by the continuation of slavery practices, illiteracy, and weak central government institutions. Furthermore, an estimated 25,000 Afro-Mauritanian refugees displaced after a wave of ethnic violence in 1989 remain in Senegal and Mali. The return of the refugees has faltered in the past two years mainly due to lack of sufficient funds. The government's November 22 announcement that it is allocating nearly \$8 million to ensure the refugees' safe return and reintegration may signal that some sort of breakthrough has been reached.

In the midst of this sobering overall situation, one ray of hope lies in the fact that government efforts to obtain external economic development aid are showing signs of success. In March-July 2007, the World Bank endorsed a new Country Assistance Strategy for Mauritania and approved a total of \$1.14 billion in credits and grants to support various economic reform and infrastructure development projects. In FY 2008, U.S. economic aid to Mauritania will be \$5.23 million. And in a Consultative Group Meeting in Paris December 4-6, the Mauritanian government succeeded in securing \$2.1 billion dollars in additional aid for its 2008-2010 investment program from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and various European countries and development organizations.

Salma Waheedi is Assistant Editor of the Arab Reform Bulletin.

[Return to table of contents.](#) [Printer-friendly version.](#)

Libya: Freedom of Expression under the Law

Faiza al-Basha

Libya's basic legal documents affirm the right of every individual to freedom of thought, innovation, and creativity, and aim to support the flourishing of science and the spread of arts and literature among the masses, not only the elite. Articles 19-26 of the 1988 Green Charter on Human Rights and Law 20 of 1991 on Enhancing Freedom enshrine these rights. Other laws, however, sometimes contradict such principles.

Press Law 76 of 1972, for example, states that the press is free and that every person has the right to express his or her view freely and to broadcast opinions and news by various means. The law also stipulates, however, that such expression must not "contradict the values and goals of society," a vague formulation open to interpretation. Article 21 of the law bans prepublication censorship of printed materials, including newspapers, although this is contradicted by the practices of the Department of Publications, which imposes restrictions on all that is published. Works by authors and intellectuals, for example, may not be printed or distributed without the Department's permission. Article 4 of the law gives the private sector the right to own printing houses and publish materials. In practice, this right is legally restricted to specific designated agencies that are granted the right to express the opinions of their members. The result is that only state-issued newspapers and publications praising the government are printed.

Law 9 of 1968 regarding the rights of authors (modeled on the 1967 Berne Convention before it was amended) has not been updated to take account of international developments in this field, for example regarding literary works incorporating modern technology, data, or confidential information. Article 32 of the law also infringes upon the rights of those who inherit copyright, giving the minister of culture and information the ability to authorize publication for reasons of national interest sixty days after the submission of a publishing request, even if the copyright inheritors withhold permission or do not give a response.

The penal code extends its protection to intellectual property, criminalizing any offense that violates the rights of others or oversteps certain bounds. Such offenses include promoting theories or principles that oppose the Libyan state, for example calling for regime change, overthrow of the Libyan political, social, and economic systems, or destroying one of the essential components of society. If the offender uses violence in the service of such goals, the punishment may be the death penalty or life in prison. While the punishment of individuals who commit violent acts is legitimate, prison sentences for non-violent offenses, such as possession of books, pamphlets, drawings, poetry, or any other items expressing such views, is not justified, because these acts do not threaten social peace.

Another unclear area related to expression is the penal code's criminalization of insulting foreign heads of state [Article 220] and representatives of missions accredited by the Libyan government [Article 221]. Does "insulting" mean slander and libel, which falls under Article 438 criminalizing the violation of a person's honor, or Article 439, which criminalizes defamation? While there are justifiable and realistic limits to these rights, "insulting" can also be interpreted to include pointed, objective criticism of policies. In practice it is acceptable for Libyans to demonstrate against policies of other countries, but not to criticize other leaders from the region.

States impose conditions on intellectuals with the intent of shackling their activities, by making them acquire permits if they want to use any means of expression and by limiting permits for means of expression to those who do not challenge the authorities. There is a pressing need for thinkers who are free from fear of the other—whether that other is an official establishment, cultural customs and traditions, religious authorities, or the economically and financially powerful.

Faiza al-Basha is a professor of criminal law at al-Fateh University, Libya. Paul Wulfsberg translated this article from Arabic.

[Return to table of contents.](#) [Printer-friendly version.](#)

Saudi Arabia: Reforms in Higher Education Raise Questions

Zvika Krieger

In a lavish ceremony in November in the remote port town of Thuwal, a three-hour drive from Mecca, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia laid the cornerstone for a new Western-style science and technology university. "Based on Islam's eternal values, which urge us to seek knowledge and develop ourselves and our societies, and relying on God Almighty, we declare the establishment of King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, and hope it will be a source of knowledge and serve as a bridge between people and cultures," he told the crowd of over 1,500 national and foreign dignitaries. Observers, however, are skeptical about the viability of such new institutions.

The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) is at the forefront of Saudi Arabia's new efforts to reform an antiquated higher education system. The country's Ministry of Higher Education—established in 1975—has been mainly controlled by the Wahhabi elite, who emphasize religious instruction over liberal arts or sciences. As recently as 2003, Saudi Arabia had only eight universities for a population of over 22 million people—75 percent of them under 30—and spent less than a quarter of one percent of its GDP on research, as opposed to 10 percent spent on the military.

Under the leadership of reform-minded King Abdullah, the country has begun a massive overhaul of its higher education system. The Ministry of Higher Education has opened more than 100 new universities and colleges in the past four years, funded by a \$15-billion budget, which has tripled since 2004. KAUST's \$10-billion endowment makes it the sixth richest university in the world before even opening its doors. King Saud University, the nation's largest, recently announced the hiring of twenty-four Nobel laureates. The government has also lifted its ban on private universities, and will be providing \$10-million toward scholarships and building costs for the half-dozen private institutions already in the works.

As a personal project of the King—and under the aegis of the relatively secular Saudi oil company Aramco rather than the Ministry—KAUST will push social boundaries by becoming the Kingdom's first co-educational university. Some of the new private universities are hoping to follow in its path. Among KAUST's advisors are high-ranking administrators from Cornell University, Imperial College of London, and the National Academy of Sciences. Private universities have already teamed up with consultants from Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the University of Cambridge.

Education reform is also part of a set of broader efforts to diversify the Saudi economy and "Saudiify" the Kingdom's companies, a strategy to address the staggering youth unemployment rate of 30 percent. In turn, most of the reforms are directed toward the sciences, high-tech, and other lucrative fields. "We've tailored most of our new programs—I'd say close to 80 percent of them—to the labor market needs," says Mohammed al-Ohali, deputy minister of higher education. Many university administrators also admit that focusing on the sciences—rather than politics, literature or history—will help them escape the scorn of the Saudi religious elite.

One of the primary challenges facing these new universities will be attracting Western faculty to a country known for its severe social restrictions, such as the ban on alcohol, most public entertainment, and women's driving as well as restrictions on women's dress. To overcome these challenges, KAUST is planning on spending \$100-million a year on international research grants and academic prizes, and will shoulder the costs of jointly hiring professors at foreign universities who will split their time between the partners. The university also hopes to create a steady pipeline of graduate students by funding 250 undergraduates every year to complete their studies abroad in exchange for commitments to enroll in KAUST as graduate students.

But critics both inside and outside the Kingdom are skeptical that these new universities, even with Western faculty and Western-designed curricula, will be able to flourish in the restrictive Saudi environment. "It's not only about buildings and labs and big names and throwing money at everything," says Khalid al-Dakhil, a former professor at King Saud University who was forced to retire early because of his controversial research about Saudi history. "If you want to build a Western-style university in Saudi Arabia, you have to remember that these institutions prospered because of the freedom of those societies. You have to be comfortable asking questions."

Even the special status accorded to KAUST by the King's sponsorship may not be enough to protect it from adversarial forces in Saudi society. Hassan al-Husseini, a former administrator at the King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals, which was Saudi Aramco's first attempt at starting a Western-style university, cautions that "when something is established

by royal edict, then that same thing can be reversed by another royal edict. It's not like you have legal protection for such things in Saudi Arabia."

Zvika Krieger is a special correspondent for Newsweek and Middle East correspondent for the Chronicle of Higher Education.

[Return to table of contents.](#) *Printer-friendly version.*

Readers React

Mustafa Barghouti is clearly correct when he points out in his [interview](#) (November 2007) that there is little prospect for progress after the Annapolis conference if Israel does not implement a complete freeze on settlement building in the occupied territories, and if it does not take steps to facilitate the recovery of the Palestinian economy and ease the burden of its occupation on Palestinian society. The necessity for those steps is well-known. The recent decision of the Israeli government to build an additional 300 homes in Har Homa only days before negotiations are about to resume suggests that, without a more robust engagement by the international community, the process spawned by the Annapolis meeting will be as short-lived as other well meaning initiatives since the collapse of the peace process seven years ago.

Barghouti also raises in this interview the critical role that Palestinian civil society has to play in both rebuilding Palestinian legislative, judicial, and executive institutions and in unifying Palestinian society. As he rightly points out, peace will not come unless a democratic Palestinian system is accepted by all. What is not clear from his comments, however, is whether Barghouti sees the current Palestinian leadership as possessing the political legitimacy and moral authority to negotiate any peace agreement, should indeed Israel take the necessary steps to facilitate a return to the negotiation table, or whether a resumption of the peace process needs to wait until the process of Palestinian reform, institution building, and unification is more mature.

Joel Peters
Associate Professor, Government and International Affairs, Virginia Tech.

Send your views on what you have read in the *Arab Reform Bulletin* to the editor at arb@carnegiendowment.org.

[Return to table of contents.](#)

News and Views

Lebanon: Presidential Vote Delayed

On December 11, the Lebanese parliament postponed for the eighth time the session to elect a new president to December 17. The Western-backed ruling majority coalition and the pro-Syria opposition have agreed on Army Commander General Michel Suleiman for presidency, but are divided on the composition of a new government and the constitutional amendment mechanism. Article 49 of the constitution, which stipulates that senior public servants must wait two years before running for president, must be amended before Suleiman can take office. The presidential post fell vacant when former President Emile Lahoud stepped down on November 23.

Palestine: Annapolis Follow up; Settlement Plans; Attacks on Journalists

France will host a donors' conference on December 17 in Paris aimed at mobilizing support for President Mahmoud Abbas's government. France has invited 69 countries to the conference, including the 44 states that attended the Annapolis meeting, as well as the European Union member states and major UN donors. Palestinian Minister of Economy Muhammad Hassaneh announced on December 9 that the Palestinian Authority is seeking to mobilize \$7.1 billion dollars in aid to revive the Palestinian economy. Click [here](#) for more information.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyya on December 5 renewed a call for an unconditional dialogue with Fatah to "heal Palestinian wounds." He called the November 27-8 Annapolis meeting a "cover for Israeli aggression." Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas responded the following day by declaring that he is open to dialogue with Hamas, provided that it surrenders control of the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile Israeli military officials continue to discuss a possible military incursion into Gaza in response to rocket fire. Defense Minister Ehud Barak said on December 5 that the Israeli military "will eventually carry out a large-scale operation in the Gaza Strip, but we are not in a hurry to do so."

The White House announced on December 4 that President George W. Bush will travel to the Middle East in January 2008. Specific stops and dates have not yet been announced; Israeli and Palestinian media reported that Bush will visit Israel and the Palestinian territories January 9 to 11.

A December 3 Israeli announcement of plans to build more than 300 new houses in the Har Homa settlement in East Jerusalem has drawn [criticism from the United States](#) and [U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon](#), and prompted Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat to urge U.S. intervention to stop the move. The Israel-based activist group [Peace Now](#) issued a [report](#) on December 4 saying that out of 3,449 illegal settlement buildings, only 107 have been dismantled in the past ten years.

In the Annapolis meeting held November 27-8, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Abbas pledged to seek a peace deal by the end of 2008. On December 2, Olmert announced that Israel was not bound by that target, telling his cabinet that progress will depend on the Palestinian Authority's ability to restrain Hamas militants. Israeli and Palestinian teams will meet for their first discussions on December 12, and Olmert and Abbas will continue one-on-one meetings. Israel released 429 Palestinian detainees on December 3, the majority of whom were Fatah supporters.

Reporters without Borders issued a statement on November 29 criticizing the increase in physical assaults against West Bank journalists. Since November 23, eight journalists in the West Bank have been attacked by Fatah-controlled forces. Click [here](#) for more information.

Jordan: Parliamentary Election Results; New Cabinet

Jordan's Islamist opposition cried foul after suffering a major setback in parliamentary elections. Only six of the twenty-two candidates of the [Islamic Action Front](#) won seats in the November 20 elections, compared with seventeen in 2003. The majority of the parliament's 110 seats went to pro-government independents. Voter turnout was estimated at 42 percent. A [statement](#) by the Amman-based al-Urdun al-Jadid Research Center reported significant electoral irregularities including vote buying, breaching the secrecy of voting, and the use of improper identification by voters. Click [here](#) for the final election results.

Jordan's new twenty-seven member cabinet was sworn in on November 25. The new cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Nader Dahabi, includes thirteen first-time ministers and four women. Click [here](#) for the new cabinet line-up.

Syria: Activists Arrested; Websites Blocked

Syrian authorities launched a campaign of arrests against members of the [Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change](#) opposition coalition on December 9. Twenty-three leading members of the Declaration have been arrested as of December 11. The campaign comes a week after the Declaration has held its first conference in Syria on December 1, in which it elected its president and general secretariat, and issued a call for peaceful democratic change. Click [here](#) for the Declaration's statement in Arabic. The Damascus Declaration, formed in October 2005, is an alliance that comprises various Syrian secular, nationalist, leftist, and Islamic political groups and activists. Click [here](#) for the names of those arrested in Arabic.

On November 27, Syrian authorities arrested former MP Osman Suleiman Bin Hajji, as well as Kurdish activist and Democratic Union Party member Aisha Afandi Bint Ahmed. The two were moved to an undisclosed location and reasons for their arrest have not been announced. Click [here](#) for a statement by the Kurdish Organization for the Defense of Human Rights and Public Freedoms in Syria.

Internet censorship in Syria is growing, with over one hundred websites blocked, according to a Reporters without Borders [statement](#) on December 7. Banned websites include YouTube, Amazon, Facebook, the Arabic electronic daily Elaph, and various websites run by human rights groups and political organizations.

Iraq: Justice and Accountability Law; Sunni MPs End Boycott; Press Freedoms

The Iraqi parliament is debating a draft "Justice and Accountability Law" to replace the de-Baathification law enacted by former U.S. Civil Administrator Paul Bremer. In a November 26 parliament session, Iraqi political forces indicated their support, with the exception of those affiliated to Shi'i leader Muqtada al-Sadr. According to the draft law, Baathists may assume senior state positions, with the exception of sensitive and security intelligence posts, but the Baath party will be barred from political participation. The Baath Uprooting Committee, headed by Ahmed al-Chalabi, will be dissolved and a judicial body will be charged with implementation. Click [here](#) for the draft law in Arabic.

The [Iraqi Accordance Front](#), the largest Sunni Arab bloc in parliament, ended on December 3 a two-day parliamentary boycott over the house arrest of its leader, Adnan al-Dulaimi. The Iraqi government insisted that it was protecting al-Dulaimi's safety after one of his security guards was discovered to possess keys to a car laden with explosives. Al-

Dulaimi's son and thirty of his followers were arrested following the incident on November 30. The Front, which holds forty-four of the 275 parliament seats, withdrew its six ministers from the government in August to protest Prime Minister al-Maliki's policies.

The [Kurdistan Regional Government](#) on November 19 prohibited journalists from meeting combatants of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) who have taken refuge in the Qandil Mountains on the border between Iraq and Turkey. Kurdistan Regional Government spokesman Jamal Abdullah said that inaccurate media reports have led to an acceleration of the crisis with Turkey. Several journalists were arrested near the Turkish border as a result of the regional government's decision. Faisal Gazala, correspondent of the satellite television station Kolsat, was also arrested on November 19 by Kurdish security forces near Mosul on suspicions of terrorist activity. Click [here](#) for more information.

Egypt: Muslim Brotherhood Arrests; Torturers Punished; Other Developments

Egyptian police forces arrested thirteen senior members of the Muslim Brotherhood on December 4. They face accusations of belonging to a banned organization, conspiracy against the government, and holding a meeting to plan illicit activities. Authorities also arrested eleven al-Azhar University students affiliated with the Brotherhood on December 6 and twenty-five other Brotherhood members in the Delta region on November 19. Twelve Egyptian human rights organizations and legal associations issued a [joint statement](#) on November 20 criticizing Egyptian authorities' actions and press silence about the arrest campaign. Approximately 400 Brotherhood members are now in detention, most of them without charge or trial, since a crackdown that began a year ago.

An Egyptian court sentenced three police officers to seven years and a fourth officer to three years in prison on November 28 for beating a man to death during interrogation. Under Egyptian law, the sentence for torturing a prisoner ranges between three and fifteen years in prison. Earlier this month, two police officers were sentenced to three years in prison for sexually assaulting a man at a police station. Click [here](#) for more information.

President Mubarak referred to parliament on November 28 a draft law banning demonstrations in places of worship. The "Law to Preserve the Sanctity of Places of Worship" was passed to the Shura Council on December 4 and will then be sent to the People's Assembly. The law sets punishment of up to one year in prison and fines of 1000-5000 Egyptian pounds (US\$182-910) for organizers of a demonstration and up to six months in prison and fines of 500-2000 pounds (US\$91-264) for participants. The law is expected to face opposition in the People's Assembly, especially from [Muslim Brotherhood MPs](#) who hold eighty-eight out of 454 seats.

In elections to the [Egyptian Syndicate of Journalists](#) held on November 17, pro-government editor Makram Muhammad Ahmed was elected chairman and other pro-government journalists dominated the syndicate's council. Ahmed promised to advocate abolishing jail sentences for press offenses. Click here for the Hisham Mubarak Center for Law's [statement](#) on the elections in Arabic.

An Egyptian court sentenced Hatem Mahran, editor of the tabloid [al-Naba](#), on November 27 to a year in prison and ordered him to pay a fine of 20,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$3,600) for publishing a revealing photograph of an Egyptian actress. He was released on a five-thousand pound (US\$912) bail and vowed to appeal the ruling.

Sudan: Cabinet Reshuffle; British Teacher Released; Journalists Fined

On December 10, President Omar al-Bashir reshuffled the cabinet, bringing in six new ministers and a presidential advisor. According to al-Bashir, the cabinet reshuffle is intended to bolster national unity. He also announced the continuation of talks with First Vice President and Chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), Salva Kiir Mayadrit, on implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The SPLM suspended its participation in the government nearly a month ago, accusing the government of hindering CPA implementation. A cabinet reshuffle was the first in a series of demands presented by the SPLM to the Sudanese president before resuming cooperation. The 2005 peace agreement, brokered by the United States and other Western countries, ended two decades of civil war between the Arab and Muslim-dominated North and the mainly Christian Black South. Click [here](#) for a list of the new ministers.

Gillian Gibbons, a British teacher in Sudan arrested for letting her class name a stuffed bear Mohammed, was released on December 3 after spending eight days in jail. Gibbons was charged with "insulting religion" and sentenced to fifteen days in prison. Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir pardoned her after talks with two British Muslim leaders. Click [here](#) for more information.

Mahjoub Ourwa, chairman of the independent daily [al-Sudani](#), and Nouredine Medani, the newspaper's editor, were released on November 29 after spending eleven days in prison. The two journalists were detained on November 18 for refusing to pay court-ordered fines of 10,000 Sudanese pounds (US\$5,000). Ourwa and Medani were convicted of libel against the national intelligence service for a July 20 report about the arrests of four journalists. The fine was later reduced to 7,150 Sudanese pounds (US\$3,600) each, which they agreed to pay. Click [here](#) for more information.

Gulf Countries: Common Market Pledged

The [Gulf Cooperation Council](#) (GCC) concluded its twenty-eighth annual summit on November 4. The summit's final declaration announced the launch of a pan-Gulf common market in January 2008 and common currency by 2010. Citizens of the six Gulf monarchies in principle will have equal rights to work in government and private institutions, make real estate and other investments, move freely, and receive education and health benefits in all GCC states. The GCC states have been working toward establishing a common market for the past five years, but implementation so far has been piecemeal. It remains to be seen whether the six states are able to harmonize their different laws, especially on ownership and investment. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the first Iranian president to attend a GCC summit, proposed the establishment of security and economic pacts and regional institutions between Iran and the six Gulf States. Click [here](#) for the summit's final declaration in Arabic.

Kuwait: Draft Political Parties Law; Questioning of Education Minister

MPs from the liberal National Action Bloc proposed a draft political parties law on December 8. Political parties are illegal in Kuwait, although political groups act as de facto parties. The Kuwaiti constitution states that political parties should be allowed at some point in the development of parliamentary democracy. Click [here](#) for a summary of the draft law in Arabic.

The Independent Islamic Bloc confirmed on December 9 that it will question Minister of Education Nuriya al-Sabeeh in parliament after the Eid al-Adha holiday on allegations of mismanagement. The [Islamic Constitutional Movement](#) (Muslim Brotherhood) and the [Salafi Movement](#) have not yet declared their positions, while the National Action Bloc opposed the questioning. Al-Sabeeh has been under fire after dismissing several ministry officials. Since February 2006, Kuwait has witnessed the resignation of three cabinets and a major cabinet reshuffle to avoid confrontation with parliament.

On December 5, the parliament postponed, at the government's request, discussion of a proposed law on purchasing and rescheduling citizens' loans. The government is currently drafting a law to establish a fund with a capital of 300 million Kuwaiti dinars (US\$1.09 billion) to help citizens pay off their debts.

Saudi Arabia: Religious Police Cleared; Rape Victim and Her Lawyer Punished

A Riyadh court on November 28 acquitted two members of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice—the religious police—of responsibility for the death of a 28 year-old man in May. Commission members stormed the man's house after they suspected him of distributing alcohol, which is banned in the kingdom. The court cited lack of sufficient evidence and dismissed a forensic report that stated the victim was beaten severely. The Commission is a government body charged with upholding Islamic moral values and social discipline. Click [here](#) for details.

Lawyer Abdul Rahman al-Lahem was summoned to a disciplinary committee on December 5 for publicly criticizing a court ruling punishing a victim of gang rape with 200 lashes and six months in prison. Al-Lahem is charged with "insulting the Supreme Judicial Council and disobeying rules and regulations." His client, known as the al-Qatif girl, was sentenced in November 2006 to ninety lashes for *khilwa*—being alone in the company of a man who is not an immediate relative—while the seven perpetrators were sentenced to flogging and prison terms ranging from one to five years. All sentences were increased on appeal. Click [here](#) for a statement by Amnesty International.

Saudi police forces arrested 208 suspected Islamist militants on November 28. The Saudi Interior Ministry said the suspects have been planning attacks on an oil installation and security forces. Click [here](#) for details.

Bahrain: Human Rights Defender on Trial

Mohammed al-Maskati, Director of the [Bahrain Youth Center for Human Rights](#) (BYSHR) was charged on November 27 with "activating an unregistered association before the issuance of a declaration of registration." Bahraini law criminalizes the formation of any group without the approval of the Ministry of Social Development. BYSHR has been active in exposing government human rights violations and is a member of the Bahraini Coalition for Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation. Al-Maskati rejected the charges, citing that the BYSHR was established in accordance with the International Convention for Civil and Political Rights, to which Bahrain is a signatory. Click [here](#) for more information.

UAE: Crackdown on Human Trafficking; Press Freedom Violations

Dubai announced on December 3 that it had uncovered the largest prostitution network in the Gulf region, arresting over 300 members and clients. According to Dubai Police Chief Dahi Khalfan bin Tamim, the recent crackdown is part of a comprehensive campaign to eliminate prostitution and human trafficking in the region. The UAE enacted a law in November 2006 making human trafficking punishable by life imprisonment and set up a national committee to combat human

trafficking in May 2007. Click [here](#) for details.

The Arab Network for Human Rights, in collaboration with a number of activists from the United Arab Emirates, issued a [statement](#) on November 27 criticizing continued violations of press freedom despite a recent [order](#) by Prime Minister Sheikh Muhammad bin Rashid al-Maktum abolishing imprisonment for press offenses. According to the statement, government ministries and officials continue to harass journalists and ban publications.

Algeria: Local Election Results

Algeria held elections for 1,541 municipal councils and 48 local departments on November 29. The [National Liberation Front](#) (FLN) emerged as the largest winner with 30.5 percent of the seats, followed by its ally in the ruling coalition, the [National Rally for Democracy](#) (RND) with 24.5 percent. The centrist [Algerian National Front](#) (FNA) won 11.3 percent of the seats. The third party in the ruling coalition, the Islamist [Movement of Society for Peace](#) (MSP), won 10.7 percent. Twenty-three parties and many independents contested the elections. The voter turnout was estimated at 44 percent. Despite scattered reports of irregularities, most competing parties expressed satisfaction with the election process. Click [here](#) for more information.

Tunisia: Journalist Trial

A local court convicted journalist Salim Boukhdeir on December 4 of “insulting an official while exercising his duty” and “refusing to produce his identity papers to the police.” Boukhdeir was sentenced to one year in prison and ordered to pay a five dinar fine (US\$4). The case against Boukhdeir follows a number of recent articles he wrote in the international press accusing close aids of President Ben Ali of corruption. Boukhdeir had staged a fifteen-day hunger strike early in November in protest of government restrictions on the movement of political activists and confiscation of his passport. Click [here](#) for more information.

Morocco: Arrests of Homosexuals

Moroccan authorities arrested six men for organizing a homosexual wedding in the northern city of al-Qasr al-Kabir on November 26. Over 600 of the town’s inhabitants staged a protest demanding a government crackdown on homosexuals. Article 489 of the Moroccan Penal Code stipulates that homosexuality is illegal and is punishable by six months to three years in jail and a fine of 120 to 1,200 Moroccan dirhams (US\$15 to 155), but the law is rarely enforced. Moroccan homosexuals were recently allowed to found their own organization, which demands equal rights for homosexuals and aims to combat all forms of discrimination.

[Return to table of contents.](#)

Upcoming Political Events

- France: Palestinian Donors Meeting, December 17, 2007
- United States: President Bush visit to the Middle East, January 2008
- Egypt: Local elections, April 2008
- Qatar: Parliamentary elections, June 2008

Views from the Arab Media

- Saudi writer Samar al-Mogrin calls in a December 6 [article](#) in Bahrain’s independent daily *al-Waqt* for an overhaul of Saudi laws and court procedures to protect women’s rights. Al-Mogrin points to the unjust ruling in al-Qatif rape victim’s case and numerous other cases where women are victimized by the state institutions and biased male judges.
- In a December 5 [article](#) in the electronic daily *Elaph*, Syrian writer Nidal Naisa discusses the implications of Iranian President Ahmadinejad’s attendance at the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit. Naisa calls the summit “a Gulf Annapolis,” which potentially can launch a long-awaited reconciliation process between Arabs and Iranians.
- In a December 5 [op-ed](#) in the independent Egyptian daily *al-Masry al-Youm*, Egyptian writer Wael Nawara warns of

the dangers of defining Egyptian identity based on religion. Nawara adds that the concept of “Islamic” Egypt put forward by the Muslim Brotherhood undermines national unity and implies rejection of the very concept of Egyptian nationalism.

- Lebanese writer Sateh Nouredine criticizes the opposition in a December 4 [article](#) in *al-Safir* for its disregard of Lebanese unity and stability. He adds that the majority’s decision to accept General Michel Suleiman for the presidency shows shrewdness and concern for Lebanon’s future. He concludes that, while the opposition may have leverage in its ability to use force, the ruling majority emerged from the compromise a winner on the political and popular fronts.
- Saudi writer Tareq al-Homayed criticizes the Arab media for rushing to judge the Annapolis peace process as a failure. In a November 28 [article](#) in *Asharq al-Awsat*, al-Homayed calls for Arabs to support the peace process instead by facilitating reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas in order to form a strong, unified Palestinian negotiation front.
- In a November 20 [article](#) in Jordan’s *al-Arab al-Yawm*, Jordanian writer Taher al-Adwan criticizes Jordanians for not trying to change their political realities by voting to elect a strong, reformist parliament. According to al-Adwan, Jordanians continue to follow a voting pattern dominated by tribalism and selling of votes for petty financial gains.
- The November 30 [episode](#) of *al-Arabiya* satellite television’s “Sina’at al-Mawt” (Industry of Death) discussed the improvements in the security situation in Iraq. Egyptian terrorism expert Abdul Rahim Ali stated that the main reason for the improvement was the recent Sunni militias’ rejection of al-Qaeda’s ideology and Sunni tribes’ decision to expel al-Qaeda elements from their areas. Iraqi MP Abdul Karim al-Samarra’i argued that while support for al-Qaeda in Iraq is dwindling, the presence of sectarian militias supported by Iran continues to threaten security and stability in Iraq and hinders national reconciliation.

[Return to table of contents.](#)

Read On

Recent publications on **Lebanon** include:

- A new Human Rights Watch report, “[Rot Here or Die There: Bleak Choices for Iraqi Refugees in Lebanon](#),” documents the Lebanese government’s failure to provide legal status for Iraqi refugees and details the impact on refugees’ lives (December 4, 2007). Click [here](#) for Arabic.
- An International Monetary Fund Report, “[Lebanon: Report on Performance under the Program Supported by Emergency Post-Conflict Assistance](#),” concludes that most post-conflict quantitative fiscal targets for the first and second quarters of 2007 were achieved (Country Report no. 07/371, November 30, 2007).
- In “[Lebanon’s Presidential Crisis](#),” Robert Rabil argues that Hizbollah’s insistence on a candidate who would reject UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701 has been a major obstacle to electing a president (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Watch no. 1310, November 26, 2007).
- The United States and Russia should use their influence to press the opposing coalitions in Lebanon to agree on a president, argues Paul Salem in “[Prolonged Lebanese Stalemate Threat to Regional Stability, U.S. and Russian Initiative Critical](#)” (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Web Commentary, November 26, 2007).
- Lebanon faces a complete political breakdown and potential decline into civil war if its leaders fail to elect a president, according to Paul Salem in “[The Presidential Crisis in Lebanon Demands Urgent Attention](#)” (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Web Commentary, November 16, 2007).

- In *Hawl mu'awiqat al-tanmiya fi Lubnan: muqaraba ijtimaiyya-thaqafiya* (*Obstacles to Development in Lebanon: A Socio-Cultural Approach*), Ahmed Baalabaki analyzes the correlation between Lebanon's internal social structure and human and economic development efforts (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, November 2007).
- In *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War*, Anthony H. Cordesman, George Sullivan, and William D. Sullivan discuss major lessons learned from Israel's conduct of the war and its unintended consequences (Center for International and Strategic Studies, November 2007).
- In *The War on Lebanon: A Reader*, scholars examine the ethical, legal and strategic issues regarding the 2006 war and analyze its consequences for the region and the world (Ed. Nubar Hovsepian, Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2007).

New publications on **Palestine and the Arab-Israeli peace process** include:

- A shift in Israeli occupation strategies contributed to the dramatic increase of violence and Palestinian casualties in the occupied territories, contends Neve Gordon in "[From Colonization to Separation: Exploring the Structure of Israel's Occupation](#)" (*Third World Quarterly*, vol. 29, no.1, February 2008, 25-44).
- A recent Power and Interest News report examines the logistics of the negotiations planned between Israel and the Palestinian Authority government following the Annapolis summit ("[The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process after Annapolis](#)," December 4, 2007).
- In "[The Fragmentation of Palestine](#)," Glenn Robinson warns that without a concerted effort by all parties to forge a credible Palestinian state, a single binational state between the Jordan River the Mediterranean Sea will inevitably emerge (*Current History*, December 2007).
- A comprehensive peace settlement cannot be achieved while excluding Hamas, argue Robert Blecher and Mouin Rabbani in "[In Annapolis, Conflict by Other Means](#)" (*Middle East Report Online*, November 26, 2007).
- In order for the peace process to succeed, Palestinian reconciliation and negotiation over the Golan Heights must be integrated into peace talks, argues a recent International Crisis Group briefing ("[The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Annapolis and After](#)," Middle East Briefing no. 22, November 20, 2007).
- As the Israelis and Palestinians undertake more obligations, Arab states need to reinforce the peace process by negotiating with Israel and providing economic assistance to the Palestinian Authority, contends David Makovsky in "[Confidence Building after Annapolis](#)" (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Watch no. 1309, November 20, 2007).
- Even if Israeli and Palestinian leaders reach a compromise in the Annapolis process, their own societies might not accept any agreement they reach warns Paul Scham in "[Annapolis, November 2007: Hopes and Doubts](#)" (Middle East Institute, Policy Brief no. 2, November 2007).
- The Palestine Partners Center for Media Development (Shuraka)'s [Report of Press Freedom in the Palestinian Territories](#) documents violations of press freedoms in **Palestine** in October 2007 (November 16, 2007).

Recent publications on **Iraq** include:

- While reverberations from the 2003 invasion of Iraq may last for decades, an inexorable spread of Sunni-Shi'a conflict is unlikely, contends Augustus Richard Norton, ("[The Shiite Threat Revisited](#)," *Current History*, December 2007).
- Appalling consequences will continue to proliferate in Iraq as a result of President Bush's refusal to face up to

reality, warns Peter Galbraith in "[After Iraq: Picking up the Pieces](#)" (*Current History*, December 2007).

- In "Islamic Just War Theory and the Challenge of Sacred Space in Iraq," Ron Hassner demonstrates the potential contribution of just war reasoning to the management of conflicts at sacred sites in Iraq (*Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 61, no. 1, Fall/Winter 2007, 131-52).
- Uninformed and ideologically-driven attempts to export U.S. constitutional ideals to Iraq were doomed, contends Ann Elizabeth Mayer in "The Fatal Flaws in the U.S. Constitutional Project for Iraq" (*Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 61, no. 1, Fall/Winter 2007, 153-70).
- In *Ihtilal ma ba'd al-istiqlal: al-tada'iyat al-isteratijiya lil-harb al-'amrikiya 'ala al-Iraq* (*Occupation after Independence: Strategic Consequences of the U.S. War on Iraq*), Abd al-Wahab al-Qassab analyzes the performance of Iraqi Defense Forces at the time of the invasion and the emergence of Iraqi resistance (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, November 2007).
- In *Beyond the Green Zone: Dispatches from an Un-embedded Journalist in Occupied Iraq*, Dahr Jamail presents details of the siege of Fallujah and examines the origins of the Iraqi insurgency (Chicago, IL.: Haymarket Books, 2007).

New publications on **Egypt** include:

- Human Rights Watch's latest report, "[Anatomy of a State Security Case: The 'Victorious Sect' Arrests](#)," demonstrates how state security investigations use torture and arbitrary detention to force confessions (December 11, 2007). Click [here](#) for Arabic.
- In "[Public Debate on the Political Platform of the Planned Muslim Brotherhood Party in Egypt](#)," L. Azuri reviews major debates in the Egyptian and Muslim media of the draft Muslim Brotherhood platform (Middle East Media Research Institute, Inquiry and Analysis Series no. 409, December 11, 2007).
- A recent report by al-Nadeem Canter for the Rehabilitation of the Victims of Torture, "*al-Ta'thib fi Misr*" (*Torture in Egypt*), accused the Egyptian government of officially sanctioning torture and documented numerous torture cases in 2004-2006 (December 5, 2007).
- In *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun (The Muslim Brothers)*, Khalil al-Anani analyzes the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's intellectual, social, and political discourses, the evolution of its relationships with society and the ruling establishment, and its stances on various social and political issues (Cairo: Dar El-Shorouk, December 2007).
- In "[The New Protest Movements in Egypt: Has the Country Lost Patience?](#)" Ahmad Baha'eddin Shaaban documents the emergence of new protest movements in Egypt, including the peasant movement and the worker's movement (Arab Reform Initiative, November 2007). Click [here](#) for Arabic.

Recent publications on the **Gulf States** include:

- The [Climate Change Performance Index 2008](#), published by Germanwatch, criticizes **Saudi Arabia** for its growing emissions and lack of firm environmental policies. The report declares Saudi Arabia and the United States "the world's worst climate sinners" (December 7, 2008).
- The **UAE's** future will be determined not only by the effectiveness of its governance and reforms but also by its capacity to innovate and by regional dynamics, according to a new World Economic Forum report ([GCC Scenarios – the United Arab Emirates and the World: Scenarios to 2025](#), December 5, 2007).

- In "[Shaping the Saudi State: Human Agency's Shifting Role in Rentier State Formation](#)," Steffen Hertog recounts the emergence of the modern state in **Saudi Arabia** (*International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 39, no. 4, November 2007, 539-63).
- The November issue of *Araa'* (*Opinions*), published by the Gulf Research Center, includes analysis of Saudi Arabia's new succession rules, options for political reform in Arab Gulf States, Russian foreign policy, and Russian-Arab relations.
- In [Economic Instruments as an Environmental Policy Tool: The Case of GCC Countries](#), Mohammed Raouf explains economic instruments of environmental policy and their applicability in the Arab Gulf States (Gulf Research Center, November 2007). Click [here](#) for details in Arabic.
- A recent International Monetary Fund report commends **Dubai's** measures to build a new financial regulatory system, yet maintains that the effectiveness of the system remains to be tested ("[Dubai International Financial Centre: Financial Sector Assessment Program—Detailed Assessment of Observance of IOSCO Objectives and Principles of Securities Regulation](#)," Country Report no. 07/365, November 2007).

Several new publications discuss **North African countries**:

- A recent report by the Arab Committee for Human Rights, "[al-Ta'thib fi sujun al-Jaza'er](#)" (Torture in Algeria's Prisons), criticizes the widespread practice of torture in Algerian prisons and documents various cases of prisoner abuse (December 8, 2007).
- [The Maghrib in the New Century: Identity, Religion, and Politics](#) focuses on Islamic movements, Berbers in society and politics, and North Africa's ties to Europe (Eds. Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Daniel Zisewine, Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, December 2007).
- The latest issue of [Middle East Policy](#) includes several articles on reform, political Islam, women's rights, corruption, and U.S. policy in North Africa (*Middle East Policy*, vol. 14, no. 4, Winter 2007).
- The Winter 2007 issue of [Middle East Report](#) includes a special report by James McDougall on "**Algeria's** transition to uncertainty."

Several new publications focus on the **crisis in Darfur, Sudan**:

- With the Darfur situation deteriorating rapidly, the international community must revise its approach to a political settlement, asserts a new report by the International Crisis Group ("[Darfur's New Security Reality](#)," Africa Report no. 134, November 26, 2007).
- In "[Darfur and the Failure of the Responsibility to Protect](#)," Alex De Waal argues that fulfilling the "responsibility to protect" doctrine demands an international protection capability that does not exist and cannot be realistically expected (*International Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 6, November 2007, 1039-54).
- Implementing Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement requires sustained international pressure and imagination to resolve political, social, and economic issues, asserts Timothy Carney in "[Some Assembly Required: Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement](#)" (United States Institute of Peace, Special Report no. 194, November 2007).

Several new publications focus on **media freedom, academic freedom, and education**:

- State censorship, harassment, and persecution continue to challenge the independent media's freedom of expression in Sudan, according to the report "[Assessment and Outline of a Strategy for Media Support: Media in Sudan at a Crossroads](#)" (International Media Support, November 2007).

- “[Al-Taqrir al-fasli al-thani lil hurriyat al-academia fi al-jami’at al-urdunia](#)” (Second Quarterly Report of Academic Freedoms in Jordanian Universities) documents limitations and abuses to academic freedoms in **Jordan’s** universities between July and September 2007 (Amman Center for Human Rights Studies, November 2007).
- Despite increased efforts by Arab states to meet the basic learning needs of their citizens, progress has been slower than in other regions of the world, according to UNESCO’s latest Education for All Monitoring Report “[Education for All by 2015: Will We Make It?](#)” Click [here](#) for an Arabic summary.

Other publications discuss **economic reform**:

- In [Iqtisadiyat al-istithmar: al-nathariyat wa al-muhaddadat](#) (*Economies of Investment: Theories and Determinants*), Adel Abd al-Azim discusses factors and policies that determine investment decisions in Arab countries (Kuwait: Arab Planning Institute, Development Bridge Series, vol. 6, no. 67, November 2007).
- Governments in the Middle East should implement anti-corruption reforms in order to raise tax revenues and maximize social welfare, according to Patrick Imam and Davina Jacobs in “[Effect of Corruption on Tax Revenues in the Middle East](#)” (International Monetary Fund Working Paper no. 07/270, November 2007).
- In [Mawdu’at wa qadaya khilafiya fi tanmiyat al-mawarid al-‘arabiya](#) (*Contentious Topics and Issues of Arab Resource Development*), Ahmed Baalabaki studies the structural and institutional obstacles to resource development in Arab countries (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, November 2007).
- The Fall 2007 issue of [Buhuth iqtisadiya ‘arabiya](#) (*Arab Economic Research*), published by the Center for Arab Unity Studies in Beirut, includes a study on foreign economic aid to Bahrain, the interaction between the private and public sectors in Libya, and Egypt’s current economic policy.

New publications discussing the **impact of outside powers on the region** include:

- Success in promoting democracy requires building partnerships with Middle Eastern countries and establishing regional norms, confidence-building measures, and other forms of dialogue, according to Francis Fukuyama and Michael McFaul in “[Should Democracy Be Promoted or Demoted?](#)” (*The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 1, Winter 2007-08, 23-45).
- [U.S.-Middle East Historical Encounters: A Critical Survey](#) examines the complexity of U.S.-Middle East encounters and highlights the uneven evolution of U.S. hegemony in the region (Eds. Abbas Aamanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson, Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, December 2007).
- In “[Russia and Qatar](#),” Mark N. Katz discusses the improvement in relations between Russia and Qatar from 2004 to 2007 (*Middle East Review of International Affairs Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1, November 2007).

Several recent publications address **reform-related developments in various countries**:

- Reformers in Arab ruling establishments face difficult choices as they try to improve governance and economic competitiveness without sharing political power, write Marina Ottaway and Michele Dunne in “[Incumbent Regimes and the “King’s Dilemma” in the Arab World: Promise and Threat of Managed Reform](#)” (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Carnegie Paper no. 88, December, 2007). Click [here](#) for Arabic.
- [Against Corruption - The role of Arab Civil Society in Fighting Corruption](#) analyzes anti-corruption efforts in Arab countries and the evolving role of civil society in pushing for change, focusing on **Jordan, Bahrain, and Morocco** (Amman, Arab Archives Institute, November 2007).

- The November 2007 issue of the *Election Observer Bulletin*, published by Arab Election Watch (a project of the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies), includes analysis of the Omani Shura Council elections, the Jordanian parliamentary elections, and the Lebanese presidential elections. Click [here](#) for Arabic.
- The November issue of *al-Marsad al-Democrati (Democracy Watch)*, published by the Washington-based Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, includes analytical articles on recent political developments and reforms in **Tunisia, Palestine, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Algeria, and Mauritania**.
- In *al-Nitham al-Suri: awraq wa thagharat (The Syrian Regime: Strengths and Gaps)*, Zuheir Salem analyzes the internal and external factors behind the current **Syrian** regime's hold on power (London, The Arab Orient Center for Strategic and Civilization Studies, November 29, 2007).
- The Winter 2007 issue of *Middle East Report* focuses on "Youth in Politics," and includes articles by Ted Swedenburg and Marc Lynch.
- The October 2007 issue of *Democracy*, a quarterly of the al-Ahram publishing house in Cairo, discusses the correlation between democratic reforms and peace in the Middle East, reform and development in **Lebanon**, and the changing political landscape in **Morocco**. Click [here](#) for Arabic.

Other publications discuss **region-wide developments**:

- The December 2007 issue of *al-Mustaqbal al-'arabi (Arab Future)*, published by the Center for Arab Unity Studies in Beirut, includes analysis of the Annapolis peace process, Iraq's unity, torture in Abu-Ghraib, and the concept of Arab identity in new Lebanese curricula. The **November 2007 issue** includes detailed analysis of sectarianism in Iraq, the 2007 Moroccan legislative elections, and the Palestinian refugee crisis in Lebanon.
- The October 2007 edition of *Malaf al-Ahram al-istiratiji (The al-Ahram Strategic File)* published by the Cairo-based Center for Political and Strategic Studies, discusses the future of Israeli-Syrian relations, Prime Minister al-Maliki's options in Iraq, and implications of the recent parliamentary elections in Morocco.
- In *Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East*, Gawdat Bahgat argues that national security concerns of Middle East countries must be addressed to reduce the incentives for nuclear weapons proliferation (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, December 2007).

Subscriber Information

Click [here](#) to receive the *Arab Reform Bulletin* in English or [here](#) to receive it in Arabic.

Click [here](#) to read past issues of the *Bulletin* in English; click [here](#) for Arabic.

We welcome your comments or suggestions. Please e-mail the editor at arb@CarnegieEndowment.org.

[Return to table of contents.](#)

Copyright © 2007 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. All Rights Reserved.

URL: <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=19776&prog=zgp&proj=zdr1,zme>

Created by Matrix Group International, Inc. ®