
News Summary North Africa: Friday, May 31, 2013

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MUST READS

1. [Insight: Libya becomes 'the new Mali' as Islamists shift in Sahara](#)

-Reuters, David Lewis, 5/31

BLUF: Suicide attacks on a French-run mine and a military base in northern Niger have shown how an Islamist threat is spreading across the weak nations of the Sahara, meaning France may be tied down there for years to come.

- Regional rivalries are aggravating the problem for Paris and its Western allies, with a lack of cooperation between Saharan countries helping militants to melt away when they come under pressure and regroup in quieter parts of the vast desert.
- Security officials say lawless southern Libya has become the latest haven for al Qaeda-linked fighters after French-led forces drove them from strongholds in northern Mali this year, killing hundreds.
- "The south of Libya is what the north of Mali was like before," said a senior adviser to Mali's interim President Dioucondou Traore, asking not to be named.

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2. [Fascism is no solution to Egypt's problems](#)

-Ahram, Khalied Mansour, 5/31

BLUF: Today, after Mubarak's overthrow, remnants of his regime, including some of the opposition who are tainted by this regime's policies and morals, want authoritarian patriarchy – or partial fascism – to make a comeback.

- Among the neo-fascists are short-sighted secularists, minorities, Islamists, businessmen, workers, farmers and artists, and all social categories whose veins of innovation and maturity have been blocked by long decades of sociopolitical stagnation. Mubarak and his regime is the biological father of these fascist camps in their military and religious forms.
- Mubarak was a dictator of average intelligence who created by a dysfunctional system which for 30 years contributed to weakening state institutions, including the judiciary, military and others that many claim are the last coherent institutions.
- Egypt became a place of organised banditry, robbery and the most primitive forms of capitalism. Naturally, when this fort built on quicksand collapsed, fascists emerged demanding order because the country needs “someone to take control of it” or “a coherent institution to save it from going astray.”

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EGYPT

3. Rights Group Calls Egypt Draft NGO Law Restrictive

-ABC News, AP, 5/30

BLUF: New York-based Human Rights Watch and 40 Egyptian rights groups on Thursday said Egypt's draft law regulating non-governmental organizations would restrict the funding and operation of independent groups.

- The contentious bill, proposed by President Mohammed Morsi and currently under debate by the country's interim legislature, would allow the state to control NGOs' activity as well as their domestic and international funding, HRW said. The current form of the bill is a serious regression from earlier versions, it added.
- "This draft law dashes all hopes that independent groups could operate freely and independently after the revolution," said Sarah Leah Whitson, HRW's Middle East and North Africa Director.
- In a joint statement, 40 Egyptian rights groups accused Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood and its political arm of seeking to curb the freedom of rights groups through legal restrictions. They said the proposed law potentially gives Egypt's security apparatus the power to suppress rights group, drawing parallels to Egypt's recent past under the rule of longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak.

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4. Hundreds of journalists attacked in Egypt since revolution, study finds

-Fox News, 5/30

BLUF: Hundreds of journalists have come under attack in Egypt in the two years since a popular revolution toppled the Mubarak regime, according to a new report which experts fear could mean a chill wind blew in with the Arab Spring.

- Some 309 attacks, including three murders, 100 assaults and 42 cases of temporary imprisonment are documented in a study prepared by the Almasry (Egyptian) Studies and Information Center. Three journalists have been murdered since January 2011. Prior to that, the last journalist killed in Egypt was in 1992, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.
- "The evidence shows that most of these assaults are being committed by supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, who have established a months-long pattern of intimidating and harassing the news media," CPJ spokesman Sherif Mansour said after a recent wave of attacks on reporters.

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5. [‘No to Brotherhoodization’: Cairo Opera House workers strike to protest Islamist interference](#)

-National Post, Aya Batrawy, 5/30

BLUF: The Cairo Opera House has become a new battleground between supporters and opponents of Egypt’s Islamist president, this time fighting over the direction of the Middle East’s oldest music institution.

- The new culture minister fired the head of the opera house, part of a shakeup he said is aimed at injecting “new blood” across art and culture programs he says were stagnant and corrupt.
- But staffers are refusing any other boss to replace Enas Abdel-Dayem. Tuesday night, they protested outside her office, accusing the minister of bending to pressure from Islamists, and some held a sit in overnight to prevent any replacement from entering.
- Staffers have also closed the curtain on all performances. For the first time in the opera house’s history, the opera *Aida* — composed by Giuseppe Verdi and debuted to the world in 1871 in Cairo— was cancelled in protest. Singers instead held up posters on stage that said, “No to Brotherhoodization.”

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LIBYA

6. [Libya's revolutionary president resigns for not being revolutionary enough](#)

-Foreign Policy, Mohamed Eljarh, 5/30

BLUF: The president of the General National Congress (GNC), Mohamed al-Magariaf, has resigned his position in anticipation of the Political Isolation Law that's set to come into effect in June. Magariaf, despite his considerable status as a leader of the country's 2011 revolution, will be legally obliged to resign because he held senior government positions in Qaddafi's regime more than 30 years ago. During the first few years of Qaddafi's rule, Magariaf headed the audit bureau (with a ministerial profile) and served as Libya's ambassador to India. He defected over thirty years ago in 1980 and has opposed Qaddafi and his regime ever since.

- The controversial Isolation Law, which will bar Magariaf and several other prominent Libyan leaders from high-level governmental posts for the next 10 years, was adopted on May 5 amid violent turmoil in the capital and where armed militias pushed for its passage by staging an armed takeover of key ministries and government institutions.
- Magariaf's resignation is the latest disappointing turn of events in Libya's transition to democracy after 42 years of dictatorship and an eight-month armed conflict. The authorities in Libya are facing a multitude of challenges, including armed groups that have mushroomed in size since Qaddafi's fall and have exercised increasing influence on Libya's political scene. They recently forced the resignation of the popular minister of interior, Ashour Shuwail, because his plans for security collided with their interests.

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7. [Libya “a regional development engine” – Chuck Dittrich, USLBA](#)

-Libya Herald, Sami Zaptia, 5/30

BLUF: Next week's “Libya Projects 2013” conference and workshop to be held at the Corinthia hotel, Tripoli, Monday 3 to Wednesday 5 June is expected to attract around 300 key individuals representing major Libyan and international organisations.

- Co-organised by MEED and BM Libya, the large 3-day conference is supported by the GNC and will highlight the key developments, opportunities and projects in Libya across various critical industries.
- Local participating organizations include the National Oil Corporation, Ministry of Communication and Informatics, Ministry of Housing and Infrastructure, the Libyan Businessmen Council as well as the Central Bank in Libya.
- Delegations and trade associations from around the world attending and speaking will include the Libyan British Business Association (LBBC), the American Chamber of Commerce in Libya and the United States-Libya Business Association (USLBA).

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TUNISIA

8. [European topless protesters could face jail time in Tunisia, lawyer says](#)

-Al Arabiya, 5/31

BLUF: Three European women with radical activist group Femen, who were arrested after baring their breasts in Tunis, will be tried next week for public indecency, which carries a possible prison sentence, their lawyer said on Friday.

- “They will appear in court in Tunis on June 5... The trial will be an open hearing,” Souheib Bahri told AFP, information confirmed by French consular officials in Tunis.
- They will be tried for “public indecency” and an “attack on public morals,” crimes both punishable by six months in jail in Tunisia.

- The three young women, two French and one German, were arrested on Wednesday as they held a topless protest outside the central courthouse in Tunis, the first such protest organized by Femen in the Arab world.

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ALGERIA

9. Algeria siege widow wants answers about husband's death

-BBC, 5/31

BLUF: The widow of a British hostage killed in an attack on an Algerian gas plant in January has said she still does not know how her husband died.

- Garry Barlow, 49, from Liverpool, was one of six Britons killed by Islamist militants in the siege.
- Lorraine Barlow told the BBC she had been given no information about the progress of the investigation or whether there was sufficient security. The siege ended after Algerian forces stormed the site.

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