

## Headlines:

- **Partners in Crime**
- **More of the Same from Imran Khan**
- **Sissi's Treachery knows no Bounds**

## Details:

### Partners in Crime

The Middle East Eye has revealed Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt planned with the Jewish entity to welcome Syrian President Bashar al-Assad back into the Arab League. The diplomatic initiative was agreed at a secret meeting held in a Gulf capital last month which was attended by senior intelligence officials from the four countries including Yossi Cohen, the director of Mossad, Gulf sources with knowledge of the meeting have told MEE. The meeting was also convened in response to a noticeable "cooling" of relations between US President Donald Trump and Riyadh since the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October.

"They did not expect Bashar to break relations with Iran, but they wanted Bashar to use the Iranians rather than be used by them," a Gulf official briefed on the discussions said. "The message was: 'Return back to how your father treated the Iranians, at least as an equal at the table, rather than subservient to Iranian interests.'" A flurry of visits followed the intelligence meeting. Omar al-Bashir, the president of Sudan, arrived in Damascus on 16 December in the first official visit by an Arab leader since. Ali al-Shamsi, the deputy head of Emirati intelligence, visited Damascus for a week, and on 27 December the Emiratis announced the re-opening of their embassy after eight years. On the same day, Bahrain, announced it would restore its diplomatic mission. Three days earlier, Ali Mamlouk, the special security adviser to Assad, made a rare public visit to Cairo, and sources told MEE that an announcement of the full normalisation of relations is expected soon.

### More of the Same from Imran Khan

Since assuming office in August 2018, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's biggest problem has been the economy. During a visit by Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Pakistan and the UAE finalised an aid package for Islamabad worth \$3.2 billion in deferred oil payments and another \$3 billion in foreign currency support to boost Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves. The UAE's package on deferred oil payments, alongside similar measures by Saudi Arabia and the will enable Pakistan to save nearly 60% on its annual \$12 billion oil and natural gas bill. This, in turn, will ease pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserves and lower the risk of Pakistan defaulting on its debt obligations. Whilst Imran Khan lambasted the Nawaz Sharif government for the same actions, he is now saying Imran Khan has failed to implement different to his predecessor.

### Sisi's Treachery knows no Bounds

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi offered a rare Interview to America's CBS. The interview addressed numerous candid issues which Sisi answered revealing his relationship with Israel and treachery. Sisi acknowledged his close security cooperation with 'Israel' in the Sinai Peninsula. The Egyptian president admitted to the fact that his army has been closely collaborating with Israel in the Sinai Peninsula "That is correct," he said. "We have a wide range of cooperation with the Israelis." Sisi denied that Egypt was holding political prisoners after being asked directly with the interviewer pushing Sisi to address criticism he is "a military dictator." CBS cited one rights group's estimate of 60,000 political prisoners. "I don't know where they got that figure. I said there are no political prisoners in Egypt," Sisi said. "Whenever there is a minority trying to impose their extremist ideology ... we have to intervene regardless of their numbers."