

# EURO-GULF MONITOR

1 - 6 November 2020

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## WEEK IN BRIEF

1. Mohamed bin Zayed discussed religious tolerance and terrorism with French and German leaders.
2. The EU Council President discussed enhancing cooperation and dialogue with King of Bahrain, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and King of Jordan.
3. Saudi Arabia introduces key labour reforms, easing the Kafala system.
4. Qatar and GNA officials coordinate prior to the intra-Libyan peace talks.
5. Oman and Sweden eye closer cooperation.



## ROUND & ABOUT THE GULF

### KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

Tuesday, 3 November – Bahrain approved the emergency use of COVID-19 vaccine candidate for frontline workers due to their high risk of infection. The vaccine candidate is developed jointly by the Chinese biotech company, Sinopharm, and the UAE artificial intelligence and cloud computing company, Group 42 (G42).

### STATE OF KUWAIT

Monday, 2 November – Kuwait's Ministry of Commerce and Industry stated that several local stores were forcibly closed due to their selling of Israeli products, in violation of the law prohibiting the sale of Israeli-made goods in the country.

### SULTANATE OF OMAN

Sunday, 1 November – The Omani company, Amana Waqf Funds Management, launched a clean energy project to use solar power for mosques in the Sultanate. The plan aims to cut energy consumption in religious buildings by 40% and to generate 20% of extra energy. Revenues from the surplus energy will be invested in the mosques.

### STATE OF QATAR

Tuesday, 3 November – Qatar will hold the first elections for its Shura Council in October 2021, announced Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. The advisory body consists of 45 members, of which 30 are constitutionally provisioned to be elected, while the remaining 15 should be appointed by the Emir.

### KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Wednesday, 4 November – Saudi Arabia will introduce key reforms of the Kafala system in March 2021. The decision will ease foreign workers' contractual restrictions, which will allow them to change jobs or leave the country without the employers' consent. The measures are part of the private sector Labour Reform Initiative launched by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development.

### UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Sunday, 1 November – Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, held a phone call with French President, Emmanuel Macron, discussing religious tolerance and terrorism. MbZ condemned hate speech and terrorism and President Macron denounced interference in other countries' internal affairs. On Tuesday, MbZ and German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, discussed cooperation in combating terrorism.



- Tuesday, 3 November–The EU called for unity against the terrorist threat. The EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, stressed the need to distinguish Islam and extremists' violence and to establish dialogue among communities. HR/VP Borell also highlighted free speech as EU's core value, condemning hate speech and disinformation campaigns disseminated against France, particularly by Turkish political leaders.



- Wednesday, 4 November–The European Council's President, Charles Michel, held phone calls with the King of Bahrain, Hamad bin Isa AL-Khalifa, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohamed bin Zayed AL-Nahyan, and King of Jordan, Abdullah II, discussing counter-terrorism and counter-extremism cooperation and enhancing inter-religious dialogue.



- Wednesday, 4 November–Head of the EU Delegation to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman, Patrick Simonnet, and the EU members' Ambassadors to Saudi Arabia discussed investment opportunities and recent economic reforms in the Kingdom with Saudi Minister of Investment, Khalid AL-Falih.



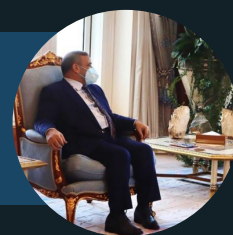
- Thursday, 5 November–Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan AL-Saud, received a phone call from the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell. They reviewed EU-Saudi relations and cooperation and the Kingdom's G20 Presidency.



- Monday, 2 November–Oman's Foreign Minister, Badr AL Busaidi, and his Swedish counterpart, Ann Linde, discussed bilateral cooperation, regional developments and the COVID-19 pandemic.

## KEY OFFICIAL VISITS

- Sunday, 1 November–Libya's High Council Chairman, Khaled Ammar AL-Mishri, visited Doha, where he met with Qatar's Emir, Tamim bin Hamad AL-Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamed bin Abdulrahman AL-Thani, among other senior officials. They discussed coordination between Qatar and Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) before the upcoming intra-Libyan peace talks.



- Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlut Cavusoglu, and his Qatari counterpart, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman AL-Thani, met in Antalya for a preparatory Ministerial meeting for the 6th Qatar-Turkey Supreme Strategic Committee meeting (26 November, Istanbul). The officials agreed to expand their countries' strategic relations and strengthen cooperation, notably in security, defence, development, and culture.



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About the Euro-Gulf Monitor: The Arabian Gulf is rapidly becoming a geopolitical pivot. As a result, it is important to understand the internal and international dynamics unfolding in the region and the countries that compose it. The Euro-Gulf Monitor includes a small, carefully selected, batch of the most important news and events unfolding in the Arab Gulf countries to help you map the region's trends and the dynamics of its relations with Europe, published weekly by the Euro-Gulf Information Centre.