



CBN04 | 09  
2018

**EGIC**  
Euro-Gulf  
Information  
Centre

# Arab Gulf

## C O U N T R Y B U L L E T I N S

### September 24 - 27



The Last Thing to Read this Week

*by*

NIKOLA ZUKALOVA



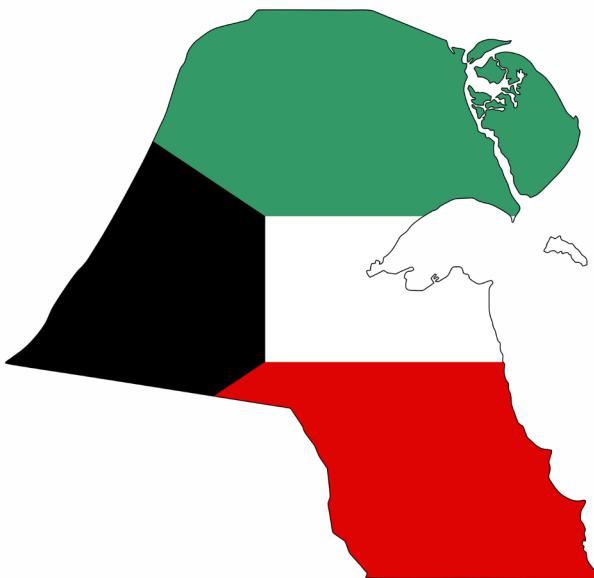
## Kingdom of Bahrain

Tuesday, 25 September — Prosecutors charged 169 people over membership in the Bahraini Hezbollah, a militia backed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and over terrorism related crimes. The same day, the police announced the arrest of 15 men over incitement, and alleged membership of the February 14 group, accused of being financed by the IRGC. On Wednesday, two members of the Al-Ashtar Brigades, a Bahrain-based Shia militia, also backed by Iran, were sentenced, for terrorism-related crimes, to 10 years and life (respectively) in prison and their citizenships were revoked.

Thursday, 27 September—The Bahrain Tech Week 2018, organised jointly by the Bahrain Economic Development Board (EDB) and Tamkeen public finance agency, will commence on Friday and will last until 8 October. The event will bring together government, private sector and start-up experts on technology to participate in summits, forums and workshops, including the MIT Innovation Forum, the AWS Summit, and Huawei events. The focus will be on investments in digital innovation and the role of education and training, to allow the transformation of industries across the Gulf region and drive economic growth.

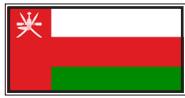


## State of Kuwait



Wednesday, 26 September—Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN, Jamal Al-Ghunaim, criticised the UN experts' report on human rights abuses in Yemen at the 39th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The Ambassador Al-Ghunaim highlighted how the report places disproportionate blame and responsibility on the Saudi-led coalition while largely omitting Houthi crimes.

Wednesday, 25 September—The United States will remove two Patriot Missile Defence Systems from Kuwait, and one each from Jordan and Bahrain in October. Kuwait's army Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khodhr, said that the 'routine procedure' was coordinated with Kuwait's military and it will not affect the country's defence capabilities. The move comes as the US shifts its focus from combatting Islamist militants to the "great power competition" with Russia and China. Kuwait has previously signed military agreements with the United Kingdom, Turkey and China.



## Sultanate of Oman

Wednesday, September 26—Oman plans to build four biogas plants to produce electricity and potentially other energy from food waste. This will save Oman over OMR 50 million (approximately EUR 111 million) for processing more than 500,000 tonnes of food waste every year and will provide an alternative source of energy, which are much more environment friendly.





## State of Qatar

Wednesday, 26 September—Amnesty International released a report mapping the exploitation of migrant workers by Mercury MENA, a company linked to some construction projects for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, among others. The company failed to pay the workers for months and to provide required residence permits to workers, who were consequently penalised as the company exploited Qatar's kafala system. This comes as concerns continue into high level corruption related to Qatar's 2022 World Cup bid.

Wednesday, 26 September—Qatar Petroleum will construct four new gas liquefaction plants by 2025 as it prepares to enter into a natural gas race with both the United States and Australia.

Thursday, 27 September—S&P Global Ratings have listed Qatar as being at the highest risk of being downgraded.

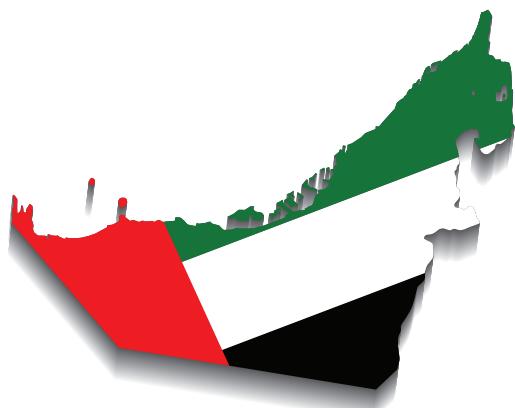
## Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Sunday, 23 September—Saudi Arabia celebrated its 88th National Day, commemorating the unification of various territories under the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud in 1930 and celebrating the ruling of the House of Saud. Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, commended the Kingdom's progress under King Salman and expressed his belief that the Kingdom will remain committed to promoting moderate Islam and achieving the goals of Vision 2030.



Tuesday, 25 September—King Salman bin Abdulaziz inaugurated Haramain High-Speed Railway connecting the holy cities of Mecca and Medina through Jeddah—450 km in little over two hours. The multi-billion dollar project is the first technology of its kind in the Middle East, devised to facilitate transport between the aforementioned cities for residents as well as pilgrims during Hajj and Umrah while generating employment.

Tuesday, 25 September—Germany's Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, announced his intention to enhance German-Saudi relations and was consequently invited by his Saudi counterpart to visit Riyadh. This follows the cooling of their bilateral relationship—over the past months—as a consequence of Germany's deepening ties to Qatar. This rapprochement was reflected in Germany's approval, last week, to recommend the delivery of arms to Saudi Arabia despite Berlin's earlier ban on weapons exports to countries fighting in Yemen.



## United Arab Emirates

Wednesday, 26 September—Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the UAE's Vice-President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, received Radek Vondráček, the Czech Parliament's Lower House Chairman. Vondráček arrived on a three-day official visit to develop relations between the Czech Republic and the UAE, in culture, tourism and economy. During the visit, Vondráček signed a Memorandum of Understanding, discussed Czech firms' investments in the UAE with Economy Minister, Sultan Al-Mansoori, and attended the 15th session of the Czech Business Council in Dubai. He then continued to Saudi Arabia, the Czech Republic's third most important trade partner in the Middle East.

Thursday, 27 September—The design for the UK Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, created by famous UK designer Es Devlin, was revealed. The 20 metre high and 52 metre long pavilion will be presented at Expo 2020 (October 2020-April 2021) titled “Connecting Minds, Creating the Future.” It will be the first Expo in history organised in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and also the first to be hosted by an Arab country.



*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. We at EGIC are proud to present “The Last Thing to Read this Week” segment which contains a small, carefully selected, batch of the most important events unfolding in the countries of the Arab Gulf to help you map the region’s trends.*

