



Kerry visits Iraq in show of support to the government



Secretary of State John Kerry realized an unannounced visit to Baghdad on 8th April, promising in his meeting with FM Jaafari continuing American military and humanitarian aid in the fight against the Islamic State, while calling for sectarian and political unity. Mr. Kerry arrived in Baghdad after attending the Gulf Cooperation Council conference in Bahrain.

French Defense Minister visits Iraq for anti-IS campaign

French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian visited Baghdad on April 11th and met with Iraqi President Fuad Masum, who praised France's support for Iraq in the war against terrorism. On his part, the French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian renewed his country's support for Iraq in the fields of training and arming. On April 11th Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani received France's Defense Minister in Erbil, where Minister Le Drian reaffirmed France's support to the Peshmerga forces, praising their role in the war against ISIS.

Nadia Murad visits Greece and Iraqi Embassy in Athens



On April 6th, Nadia Murad Basee Taha, who managed to escape from ISIS, visited Greece and the Iraqi Embassy in Athens and held talks with the First Secretary of the Iraqi Embassy, Mr. Haider Swadi and Second Secretary Mr. Mansour Jorani. Mrs. Murad also met with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on 3^{1st} March and discussed issues related to the refugee crisis. According to estimates, more than 3,000 Yazidi women and children remain prisoners of ISIS terrorists.

Annual Iraqi Business & Investment Forum held in Athens



The Arab-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce and Development hosted the "Annual Iraqi-European Business & Investment Forum", on April 21st-22nd at Divani Caravel Hotel in Athens. The Forum was attended by high-level representatives from the Government and private sector in Iraq, including the Dep. Minister of Industry and Minerals and Dep. Ministers of Constructions and Electricity. Under the theme "Iraq and Europe: Cooperation and Growth" the Forum constituted an opportunity for further enhancement of business relations between Greece and Iraq and assisted in the creation of new partnerships between Iraqi companies and their Greek and European counterparts.

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- Kurdistan Region President Barzani received a US government delegation headed by VP Biden and discussed the military operations against ISIS terrorists. 29/4
- Iraq's parliament approved a partial cabinet reshuffle of 6 ministers, following mass protests calling for political reform. 26/4
- Ambassador Zebari received the Ambassadors of Algeria and Serbia at the Iraqi Embassy in Athens to discuss enhancement of bilateral relations. 25/4
- Qatar donates \$10 million in urgent humanitarian aid to Iraqi families affected by violence. 25/4
- US Defense Secretary, Ashton Carter arrived to Baghdad on an official visit to hold meetings with senior Iraqi officials to discuss the developments of the security situation and the war against ISIS. 18/4
- Iraq is requesting Russia's assistance in the restoration of historic sites and cultural heritage damaged by ISIS. 16/4
- Iraqi army liberates Hit from ISIS terrorist organization. 15/4
- USA donates \$41 million to support World Food Program in Iraq. 14/4
- ISIS destroyed a 2,000-year-old gate near the Iraqi city of Mosul. The structure is known as the Gate of God, and used to guard the ancient Assyrian city Nineveh. 13/4

PM Tsipras receives Portugal's PM Antonio Costa



On 11th April, PM Alexis Tsipras received his Portuguese counterpart Antonio Costa at Maximos Mansion in Athens. Prior to the meeting at Maximos Mansion the Portuguese PM met with President Prokopis Pavlopoulos, where he reiterated his solidarity towards the Greek people in relation to the refugee crisis. In a letter to PM Tsipras and other European leaders, the Portuguese Prime Minister announced that his country is prepared to accept up to 6,000 refugees from Greece, on top of what it has already agreed to receive as part of the European plans.

Pope, Patriarch, Archbishop & Queen Rania visit Lesbos



On April 16th, Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Ieronymos visited refugees on Lesbos island. The Pope was welcomed by the Patriarch, Archbishop, the Head of Catholic Church in Greece Francis Papamanolis and Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras. After a private meeting, they visited the refugee camp at Moria, and signed a joint declaration. The Pope took 12 refugees with him back to the Vatican as a symbolic gesture to express discontent over the European Union's stance concerning the refugee crisis and the closure of borders. In addition, on April 25th, Queen Rania of Jordan also visited the refugee camp on Lesbos island.



Voudouris appointed General Secretary for refugees

Former MP Odysseas Voudouris has been appointed as General Secretary at the Ministry of Interior tasked with managing the refugee crisis. The newly-appointed General Secretary had previously acted as President of the Greek chapter of the Doctors Without Borders (1996-2001) and Vice President of the international Médecins Sans Frontières (1998-99).

Greece begins implementation of E.U.- Turkey deal

A group of 135 refugees was accompanied by Frontex departing from the island of Lesbos to Turkey on April 4th constituting the first such journey carried out under the Turkey- EU deal. However, a serious obstacle to the European Union-Turkey deal to return refugees has become the growing number of migrants applying for asylum in Greece. As a matter of fact, 95% of the refugees and migrants in Lesbos have applied for asylum. Also, nearly 80% of the people in Samos have sought asylum status, as well as approximately 30% of the refugees in Chios. A total of 53,042 migrants and asylum-seekers are currently in Greece according to the Greek government data as of April 6th.

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- The Presidency of the Republic of Iraq issued a decree to ban ISIS websites and communications channels. 13/4
- PM Barzani met with Turkish President Erdogan and PM Davutoglu in Istanbul and discussed the latest developments in the war against ISIS, as well as the anticipated liberation of the city of Mosul. 11/4
- The United States has allocated an additional amount of \$155 million in humanitarian aid to Iraq, as the US State Department announced in a press release. 8/4
- The Governor of Anbar announced the return of over 6,000 families to Ramadi in Anbar province. 5/4
- Iraq's monthly oil revenue has risen by more than 30 percent to reach \$2.9 billion despite low global prices. 2/4
- The UN Development Program in Iraq announced that Netherlands donated €5 million to support stabilization in areas liberated from ISIS terrorist group. 1/4

Iraqis return to homeland

For this month the Consulate has recorded that 60 Iraqi refugees have returned voluntarily to Iraq with the support of the Embassy and I.O.M.'s "Assisted Voluntary Returns" program. Since 2010, 6,218 Iraqis in total have returned.

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