



מרכז משה דיין ללימודי המזרח התיכון ואפריקה
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Middle East News & Views

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A weekly sample of news and opinions on current events from around the Middle East collected and brought to you by the Dayan Center.

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[OK to Talk to the Taliban But Not Hamas? / Osama Abu Katta](#)

US President Obama said throughout his campaign that he would meet with his Iranian counterpart. The media also reported that the White House did not rule out negotiations with the Taliban. Critics of the US policy of not negotiating with Hamas ask: Is Hamas more of a threat to the US than the Taliban and Iran? How can the US justify talking to one group categorized as a terrorist entity but not another one?

Source: **Ma'an News Agency (Bethlehem), March 16, 2009**

[Is the US Talking to Iran, Or Dictating? / Rami G. Khouri](#)

US President Barack Obama continues to make intriguing gestures that seem to soften or reverse the policies of the Bush administration, the latest being his videotaped message to the Iranian people. The American gestures to Iran seem sincere and serious, but from the Iranian perspective they still suffer from the persistent structural weakness of dictating the rules of the game to Iran and others in the Arab world and Asia, rather than engaging in a genuine dialogue.

Source: **The Daily Star (Beirut), March 21, 2009**

[Will Iran Become the Next Switzerland? / Tariq Alhomayed](#)



American President Barack Obama initiated the US policy of "soft power" regarding Iran with an important televised speech that indicated the beginning of a new stage; in short, Washington hopes to engage in dialogue with Iran. Let us assume that Washington can change the way that it deals with Iran; can the Mullahs change their approach towards the "Great Satan" that is America?

Source: **A-Sharq Al-Awsat (London), March 21, 2009**

[The Olmert Years: Talking One Way, Walking the Other / Ghassan Khatib](#)

Ehud Olmert, who was elected three years ago as prime minister of Israel, will be remembered here as someone with an unprecedented and unique ability to combine peaceful and positive rhetoric with hostile and aggressive action vis-a-vis the Palestinians and Arabs in general.

Source: **Bitterlemons-International, March 23, 2009**

[Afro-Arab Nations Reject ICC Decision on Bashir / Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali](#)

The recent warrant for the arrest of Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir, issued by the International Criminal Court is unwarranted and shocking, to say the least. The decision, mired in controversy and swamped by various interpretations, stands rejected by the government and the people of Sudan and carries no weight or value in the Arab and African countries.

Source: **Times of Oman (Muscat), March 15, 2009**

[Turkey Seizes Golden Opportunity to End PKK Terrorism / Fatma Dişli](#)

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, who traveled to Turkey earlier this week to participate in the 5th World Water Forum, said he would call on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to lay down arms during a Kurdish conference to be held in Arbil in April.

Source: **Today's Zaman (Istanbul), March 21, 2009**

[Egypt Violates International Law by Imprisoning Blogger, Says UN Body](#)

Blogger Karim Amer's imprisonment is a violation of international law, United Nations experts have concluded. In February 2007 Amer received a four-year prison sentence after being convicted of charges including defaming the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and inciting hatred of Islam.

Source: **Daily News Egypt (Cairo), March 24, 2009**