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Egypt in the Israeli Media

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This report deals with the most important reports and studies published by Israeli news websites on the Egyptian issues during the month of April, 2018.

I- INTERNAL AFFAIRS

- Egypt: Sisi officially won the elections with 97% of the votes cast (Maariv): Abdel Fattah al-Sisi officially won a second term at the end of the counting process, which gave him 97% of the vote cast. Surprisingly, the Egyptian national team and English Premier League player Mohamed Salah won second place, although he did not run for elections.
- Sources in the Egyptian defense ministry expect that the year 2018 will witness the end of the IS-affiliate Sinai Province organization in Sinai. (Maariv) - Yossi Melman, an Israeli journalist and writer who specializes in security and intelligence affairs, wrote that the Egyptian military expects that the year 2018 will be the last year for the existence of the Islamic State's local affiliate, Sinai Province, in the Sinai peninsula, due to several reasons, including the success of Western and Israeli intelligence in stopping the flow of jihadists to the Sinai, lack of sufficient military experience to the local Sinai residents, and erosion of the morale of the militant elements after the successive failures of the IS organization in Syria and Iraq.
- Egyptian army kills Naser Abu Zakoul, the Sinai Province leader in Central Sinai, in armed clashes in Sinai (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center Meir Amit)
- Suppression of freedom of expression among Egyptian students as seen by the social media (Moshe Dayan Center for Studies):

In a study published by the Moshe Dayan Center for Studies on the echo of the decision of Egyptian Criminal Court to declare a list of Egyptian individuals and organizations as linked with terrorism, including the names of four Egyptian students, the study surveyed the Egyptian social media, identifying and analyzing their reactions. The most important results that the study reached was that inclusion of the names of the students who are already detained by the Egyptian security services, was one of the most serious policies of repression practiced by the Egyptian government against many of the Egyptian individuals and bodies. Supporters of Strong Egypt (Misr al-Qawia) Party succeeded in drawing the sympathy of Egyptian left-wing parties in this issue. A petition of support was signed by Egyptian students from all walks of life, lecturers, journalists, as well as five left-wing parties. Left-wing students expressed their regret for voting in favor of Sisi in the 2014 presidential elections, and accused themselves of helping "the birth of a repressive regime."

- Egypt's Rice Farmers Brace for Crisis as Ethiopia Prepares Nile Mega-dam (Haaretz): Egypt will likely be a rice importer in 2019 after decades of being a major exporter, rice traders say, as Ethiopia moves to fill reservoir. Rice farmers in Kafr Ziada village in the Nile River Delta have ignored planting restrictions aimed at conserving water for years, continuing to grow a medium-grain variety of the crop that is prized around the Arab world. A decision thousands of kilometers to the south is about to change that, however, in another example of how concern about water, one of the world's most valuable commodities, is forcing change in farming, laws and even international diplomacy. Far upstream, close to one of the sources of the Nile, Ethiopia is preparing to fill the reservoir behind its new \$4 billion Grand Renaissance Dam, possibly as soon as this year. How fast it does so could have devastating consequences for farmers who have depended on the Nile for millennia to irrigate strategic crops for Egypt's 96 million people, expected to grow to 128 million by 2030.



Safeguarding Egypt's share of the Nile, on which the country relies for industry and drinking water as well as farming, is now at the top of President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi's agenda as he begins a second term. At the same time, authorities are finally tackling widespread illegal growing of the water-intensive rice crop, showing a sense of urgency that even climate change and rapid population growth has failed to foster. The crackdown means Egypt will likely be a rice importer in 2019 after decades of being a major exporter, rice traders say. Cairo has decreed that 724,000 feddans (750,000 acres) of rice can be planted this year, which grain traders estimate is less than half of the 1.8 million feddans actually cultivated in 2017 – far in excess of the officially allotted 1.1 million feddans. Police have started raiding farmers' homes and jailing them until they pay outstanding fines from years back.

- What Egypt's racist campaign against Nubians reveals about Sisi's regime (Arabs 48): As Abdel Fatah al-Sisi cruised toward reelection as president of Egypt, the state-controlled media launched an unprecedented wave of incitement against members of the Nubian minority. At least 10 articles appeared on the same day with the same content — most likely under instructions from intelligence agencies. The articles featured the photographs and full names of human rights defenders who were described in derogatory language as “Nubian elements,” although they are Egyptian citizens. They stand accused of trying to “internationalize” the Nubian issue and thereby tarnish Sisi's reputation. This concerted media campaign illustrates the regime's willingness to use racism against Egypt's Nubian minority in order to discredit peaceful dissent. It also contains elements of xenophobia — in attacking the Nubian minority by pointing out that its members are in contact with foreigners.



II- FOREIGN AFFAIRS

- Two Israeli ministers demand that Egypt prevent the entry of the body of "Al-Batash" to Gaza (The Jerusalem Post) - Israeli defense minister Avigdor Lieberman: We asked Egypt to stop return of Hamas engineer's body to Gaza. Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett, a member of the Security Cabinet, made a similar call.

Israel asked Egypt to stop the body of a Hamas-affiliated Palestinian engineer from being brought into Gaza through the Rafah crossing, Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said Sunday (April 22). Liberman's remarks came after the family of Hadar Goldin, an IDF soldier whose body is being held by Hamas—along with that of soldier Oron Shaul—demanded that the body of Dr. Fadi Muhammad al-Batash, who was assassinated near Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, not be returned until their son's is, as well. Education Minister Naftali Bennett, a member of the Security Cabinet, made a similar call. The demand to prevent the body's entry is unclear to me," Liberman told Army Radio. "We told Egypt our stance, that they shouldn't bring in the body through the Rafah crossing. We are working through the appropriate channels." "As for Hamas blaming the Mossad for Batash's assassination, Lieberman said: "You can blame James Bond. You are constantly looking for ways to harm Israel." Batash, 35, was an expert on attack-drone and rocket systems, according to Israeli sources. Hamas threatened retaliation against Israel for the slaying. However, Egypt allowed the entry of the body of the Palestinian martyr several days after his assassination.

- After escalating tensions between Fatah and Hamas, will Egypt save reconciliation? (Times of Israel). The Times of Israel has questioned Egypt's ability to salvage Palestinian reconciliation after recent tensions between Fatah and Hamas coincided with Abbas's demand that Hamas hand over the entire territory to the Palestinian Authority, which Hamas rejected.

It appears that the Egyptian efforts in Palestinian reconciliation are soon to be over. Since the assassination attempt of Prime Minister Rami al-Hamdallah, Palestinian reconciliation has reached a dead end. Soon after the assassination attempt, there were mutual accusations between Fatah and Hamas. The Egyptian efforts in the area of reconciliation were aimed at disarming Hamas, which is the same goal for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. These political efforts seem to have failed, and thus military efforts have become the alternative solution to disarm the Palestinian resistance.

- Report: Egypt, Saudi Arabia urge Hamas to end 'Great March of Return' protests - and the Rafah crossing will open in both directions (J. Post): Both Saudi Arabia and Egypt have called on Hamas to end the annual weekly protests it is holding for the "Great March of Return," according to an Egyptian source. An Egyptian Foreign Ministry official was anonymously quoted as saying that, in exchange for halting the protests, Egypt would ensure that the Rafah border crossing, which Egypt controls, would be regularly opened. The source said that the agreement had come under the direction of the Saudis.

- Behind the scenes: Egypt in contact with Israel and Hamas to prevent escalation (Maariv): Some sources said that Egypt is working to prevent escalation of the situation on the southern border with the Gaza Strip. According to some reports, Egypt has made diplomatic contacts with the United States, Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad in this regard. However, these efforts did not succeed in stopping the marches, especially after Head of Hamas Political Bureau Ismail Haniyeh said that the return marches is a popular decision and an important achievement cannot be dispensed with easily.

- Egypt warns Hamas against escalation of violence with Israel (Times of Israel):

An Egyptian intelligence delegation in the Gaza Strip told the Palestinian enclave's Hamas rulers that, should it seek out an escalation of violence with Israel, it would be "playing with fire," according to Israeli media, citing Palestinian sources.

