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Weekly coverage round-up (Mar 25 - 29)

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Al-Jumhuriya Collective



A quick English summary of our Arabic news coverage this week.

“What will become of Free Aleppo University?” (25 March, 2019) Students at the higher education institution known as Free Aleppo University, founded in 2015 in opposition-held northern Syria, have protested in recent weeks against attempts by the jihadist-led Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) to bring the institution under the aegis of its so-called “Salvation Government.” Students participating in the protests tell Al-Jumhuriya their education should be prioritized above all political and military considerations, adding they fear their degrees will become worthless in the event of an HTS takeover, given the group’s international designation as a terrorist organization. For more, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).

“Shisha in the Opera House” (26 March, 2019). The director of the Damascus Opera House has ordered the cutting down of the trees in the space between the Opera House and the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts to make way for a restaurant and café in their place. This disfigurement of what was once among the capital’s most significant cultural spaces is symbolic of the decline in cultural life over the past eight years of regime brutality. For more, read our [full report](#) (Arabic).

“Pedersen in the waiting room” (27 March, 2019) Five months on from his appointment as UN Special Envoy for Syria, it remains unclear how—if at all—Geir Pedersen differs from his predecessor, Staffan de Mistura, in terms of approach and aims. His emphasis on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2254, which calls for establishing a transitional government in line with the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, may suggest a departure from de Mistura’s acquiescence in the Russian-led constitutional council track. But with regional geopolitics still unstable, not

least as regards the United States' possible military withdrawal from Syria, Pedersen seems unlikely to achieve much of substance in the foreseeable future. For more analysis, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).

“Electoral turbulence in Turkey” (28 March, 2019). Turkey is due to hold nationwide municipal elections on Sunday, 31st March, in what could be the toughest electoral battle President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s AKP party has faced in years. A collapsed currency and double-digit inflation have combined with a recession to turn the economy—once Erdogan’s strong suit—into a stain on his reputation; one a united opposition may succeed in turning to their advantage at the ballot box. For more, including the widespread demonization of Syrians that has accompanied the electoral campaigns, see our [full report](#) (Arabic).