



Greetings from the Project on Middle East Democracy!

Last week Congress wrapped up its activity for the month before adjourning for the 4th of July recess. A handful of bills were introduced regarding Middle East policy, although the Senate did not consider the latest version of the Fiscal Year 2008 war supplemental bill as planned, and this will need to be done upon returning to session in July. In the region, observers examined the new standoff in Lebanon over the precise makeup of the cabinet, while concerns persist over the looming showdown in the Turkish Constitutional Court over whether to ban the ruling AK Party as a threat to Turkish secularism. Arguments in the Turkish case will be heard this week, while Washington will be a bit quiet, observing the American Independence Day holiday on Friday.

For more detailed coverage of the debates surrounding U.S. foreign policy and the prospects for democracy in the Middle East, be sure to check out POMED's blog, [the POMED Wire](#).

The Weekly Wire

June 30, 2007

Legislation

On Monday (6/23) Sen. **Edward Kennedy (D-MA)** introduced Senate resolution [S.3177](#), calling on the President to appoint a White House Coordinator for Iraqi Refugees. The Coordinator would be responsible for crafting and coordinating a policy to deal with the resettlement and humanitarian needs of Iraqi refugees.

On Tuesday (6/24) Rep. **Frank Wolf (R-VA)** introduced House resolution [H.RES.1303](#) calling on the Egyptian government to respect human rights and freedoms of religion and expression. The resolution criticizes Egypt's treatment of religious minorities, journalists, and detainees.

On Wednesday (6/25) Sen. **Charles Schumer (D-NY)** introduced Senate resolution [S.3193](#) to restrict nuclear cooperation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

On Thursday (6/26) Rep. **Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX)** introduced House resolution [H.RES.1310](#) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that Iran's lack of protection for internationally recognized human rights creates poor conditions for religious freedom in Iran.

On Thursday (6/26) Rep. **Gus Bilirakis (R-FL)** introduced House resolution [H.RES.1308](#) condemning the broadcasting of incitement to violence against Americans and the United States in media based in the Middle East.

Committee Hearings

On Wednesday (6/25) the full **House Committee on Foreign Affairs** held a hearing entitled, "[Foreign Assistance Reform: Rebuilding U.S. Civilian Development and Diplomatic Capacity in the 21st Century.](#)" Witnesses included The Honorable [J. Brian Atwood](#), Dean of the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota and former Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and The Honorable [M. Peter McPherson](#), President of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges and former Administrator of USAID. For POMED's complete notes on the hearing, [click here](#).

On Wednesday (6/25) the full **Senate Committee on Foreign Relations** held a hearing entitled, "[A New Strategy for Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan.](#)" Witness included The Honorable [Richard Boucher](#), Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs, [Mitchell Shivers](#), Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, [Mark Ward](#), Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia in the U.S. Agency for International Development, [General Anthony Zinni](#), Former Commander of Central Command, and The Honorable [Wendy Chamberlin](#), President of the Middle East Institute. Committee Chairman [Joseph Biden \(D-DE\)](#) and Ranking Member [Richard Lugar \(R-IN\)](#) made opening statements.

In Washington

Will sanctions on Iran work? Last week, commentators debated the [efficacy of international sanctions](#) and [multilateralism](#) to [deter Iran](#) from exerting its influence in the Middle East, while the British Parliament [removed the controversial People's Mujahedeen of Iran \(MEK\)](#) from its list of banned terrorist organizations. The issue of whether to engage with Iran continues after a Gallup poll showed that 59% of the American public "believes it's a [good idea for the President to meet with the Iranian leadership.](#)" Others [warn the Bush administration should not put all its eggs in the basket of a popular rebellion in Iran.](#)

How effective are counter-Islamist tactics? Commentators continued to examine the [increasing influence](#) of [various extremists in the Muslim World](#) and questioned whether some of the [tactics](#) intended to [win the war of ideas](#) have in fact been successful. These tactics include [education reform](#) in Algeria and the

[U.A.E.](#) and [Al-Hurra](#), the U.S.-backed Arabic language television network intended [to serve as an alternative to Al-Jazeera](#).

League of Democracies: Many weighed in on the role of the [U.S. reform in the Middle East](#). Some argued that [long-term stability can be guaranteed only by democratization](#) and criticized the Bush Administration for only a half-hearted effort. Others disagree and pointed to a more sobering diagnosis. Some suggested a "[League of Democracies](#)," while others [castigated such an approach as a flawed pipedream](#).

Energy Policies, Engagement, and the Candidates: **Barack Obama** delivered [his counterpart](#) to **John McCain's** [energy speech](#) this week. Both [address how a revamped energy policy will affect the Middle East](#). Meanwhile, many have criticized Obama's [policies](#) as [outdated](#) or "[oddly close to the Bush Doctrine](#)," while others used Obama's visit with **Iraqi President Jalal Talabani** as an opportunity to warn that talks with Iran will [undermine U.N. Security Council Resolutions](#). Some call on Obama to moderate [fear-mongering against Islam](#) by visiting a mosque on his campaign tour. In regard to media coverage, some insiders are dismayed at the current state of discourse on Iraq between the candidates and urge [the media](#) to facilitate a better discussion.

Also Worth Reading

Last week the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) and the Heinrich Boell Foundation hosted a panel discussion regarding the [role of women in the Middle East and strategies for improving their level of participation in society](#). Speakers included a delegation of three accomplished women activists from the Arab world: **Rama Chakaki**, Founder and CEO of the Dubai-based Baraka Group; **Lama Hourani**, Advisor to the PLO Secretariat General; and **Rahma Hugaira**, Co-Founder and Chairwoman of the Yemeni-based Media Women Forum. They were joined by Laura Schulz of the Middle East Partnership Initiative. The discussion examined the challenges faced by women in various countries of the region in the political, economic, and social spheres.

In the Middle East

Constitutional Problems in Turkey: Many continue to [speculate](#) as to the [possible ramifications](#) if Turkey's highest courts finds the [AKP party to be unconstitutional](#). Some cited examples of parties that were forced to reorganize after being banned, leaving them [more resilient and in a better position to challenge secularists](#). Others warn that AKP supporters may "opt for a harder path."

Iraq and Afghanistan: Many criticized the international community for neglecting the plight of [Iraqi refugees](#) in neighboring countries as well as [the situation for those in Iraq](#), especially Christians, as [some predict civil war on the horizon](#). Some warn that [time is running out for the NATO's mission in Afghanistan](#). The debate continues on [the merits of negotiating a truce with the Taliban](#), while a new poll shows that [negotiating with the Taliban has substantial public support](#) in Pakistan.

Lebanese Stability at Stake: Lebanon's security was a hot topic in light of Israel's recent offer to begin peace talks. Some suggested that the impasse in forming a new government in Lebanon [threatens last month's political compromise](#), while others [urge](#) the March 14 coalition to seriously tackle economic and social problems and develop a serious strategy to lessen sectarian differences. Others argued that a resolution of the [Palestinian issue](#), [peace between Israel and Syria](#), and inclusion of Hezbollah in negotiations are [necessary prerequisites for a viable, lasting peace agreement](#).

Reports of Egyptian Repression: Egyptian police are searching for American tourist who illegally ["marred Egypt's image"](#) by documenting the country's pervasive poverty and sectarian fighting. Others [reported examples](#) of alleged repression [in retaliation against public criticism of government officials](#).

Muslim Brotherhood Splintering? The recent rifts in [the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan](#) due to external pressures and generational, regional, and ideological differences have reduced its political effectiveness. Some question whether the splintering is permanent.