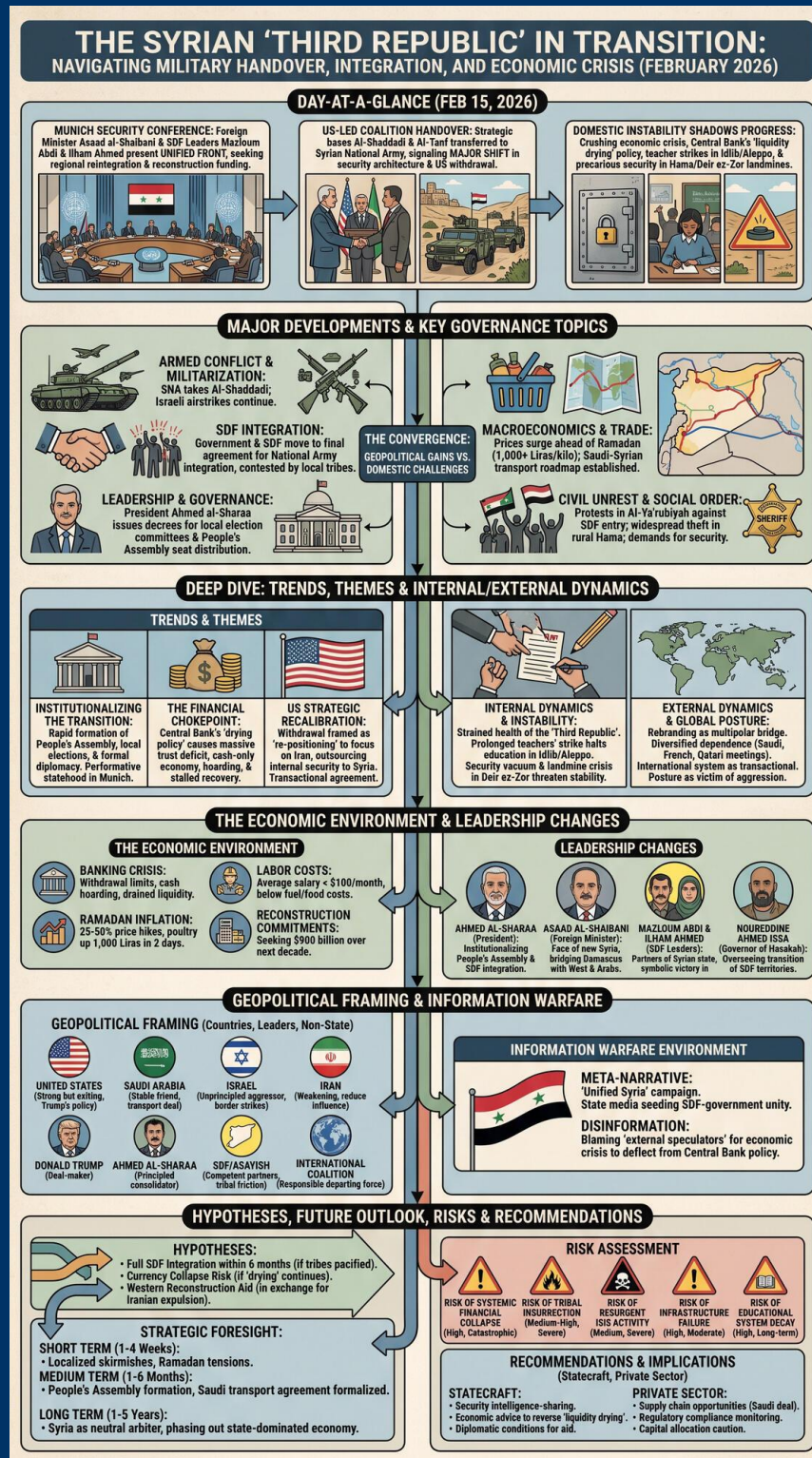


TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

SYRIATV

FEBRUARY 15, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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THE POST-ASSAD "THIRD
REPUBLIC" NEGOTIATES MILITARY
HANDOVER AND REGIONAL
INTEGRATION AMIDST DEEPENING
ECONOMIC CRISIS

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 15, 2026, marks a pivotal moment in the consolidation of Syria's "Third Republic," characterized by a complex transition from international military presence to centralized state control. The day's coverage is dominated by the Syrian government's high-profile participation in the Munich Security Conference, where Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani and SDF leaders Mazloum Abdi and Ilham Ahmed are presenting a unified front. This diplomatic outreach is inextricably linked to the ongoing handover of strategic military bases—specifically Al-Shaddadi and Al-Tanf—from US-led International Coalition forces to the Syrian National Army. These developments suggest a coordinated effort to finalize the state's territorial sovereignty under President Ahmed al-Sharaa, positioning Syria as a stabilizing regional actor rather than a pariah state.

However, this geopolitical progress is shadowed by severe domestic instability and institutional decay. While the government celebrates international rehabilitation, the domestic population faces a crushing economic environment. The Central Bank's "liquidity drying" policy has caused a massive trust deficit in the banking sector, leading to a cash-only economy and preventing citizens from accessing savings. This financial strain is compounded by pre-Ramadan inflation and persistent labor unrest, most notably the continuing teachers' strike in Idlib and Aleppo. Furthermore, the internal security situation remains precarious; while the state absorbs former SDF territories, it struggles to manage localized crime in Hama and the massive, lethal legacy of landmines in Deir ez-Zor.

The convergence of these events highlights the "Third Republic's" fundamental challenge: leveraging external diplomatic gains to provide domestic stability. The administration is using the Munich stage and the US withdrawal to project an image of a "competent and principled" state to the world, yet internally it relies on restrictive fiscal measures and reactive security policies to maintain order. The integration of the SDF into the national structure appears to be the linchpin of this transition, but as the transcripts reveal, this process remains contested by local tribes and fraught with logistical and trust-related hurdles.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **International Coalition Military Handover:** US-led forces have begun the process of evacuating and handing over strategic bases in Al-Shaddadi and Al-Tanf to the Syrian government, signaling a major shift in the regional security architecture [Coalition handover](#).
- **Syria's Rehabilitation at Munich:** A unified Syrian delegation, including government officials and SDF leadership, is participating in the Munich Security Conference to negotiate regional reintegration and reconstruction funding [Munich Security Conference](#).
- **Central Bank Liquidity Crisis:** The Syrian Central Bank's policy of restricting withdrawals has paralyzed the banking sector, leading to a total collapse of public trust and a shift toward hoarding cash [liquidity drying policy](#).
- **Labor Unrest in Education:** Teachers in Idlib and Aleppo are continuing a widespread strike, rejecting government-negotiated settlements and demanding higher wages amidst high inflation [teachers strike](#).
- **SDF Integration into the State:** The Syrian government and SDF are moving toward a final agreement to integrate SDF fighters into the National Army, despite significant opposition from local tribal factions in eastern Syria [SDF integration](#).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The Syrian National Army is preparing to take full control of the Al-Shaddadi military base following a coordinated withdrawal by US forces [Al-Shaddadi handover](#).

- Ongoing Israeli airstrikes continue to target Palestinian Islamic Jihad figures near the Lebanese-Syrian border, highlighting Syria's continued exposure to regional conflicts [Israeli border strikes](#).

Leadership Dynamics & Governance

- President Ahmed al-Sharaa is issuing decrees to appoint sub-election committees in Raqqa and Tabqa, signaling a push for local governance legitimacy [election committees](#).
- The High Election Committee has been empowered to distribute seats for the People's Assembly across Syrian provinces, reflecting a transition to formal institutionalism [People's Assembly seats](#).

Macroeconomics & Trade

- Prices for basic goods (meat, poultry, and vegetables) have surged by over 1,000 Liras per kilo ahead of Ramadan, placing immense pressure on the "Third Republic's" social contract [Ramadan inflation](#).
- A Saudi-Syrian transport roadmap was established to enhance land and rail links between the two countries, aimed at boosting regional trade [Saudi-Syria transport deal](#).

Civil Unrest & Social Order

- Protests have erupted in Al-Ya'rubiyah against the entry of "Asayish" (SDF) and the lack of transparency in government-SDF agreements [Ya'rubiyah protests](#).
- Widespread theft and lawlessness are reported in rural Hama, with residents demanding a permanent police presence to protect farms and crops [Salamiyah theft crisis](#).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

Institutionalizing the Transition: A primary theme is the rapid institutionalization of the "Third Republic." The state is no longer merely a revolutionary council but is actively forming a People's Assembly, holding local elections in Raqqa, and formalizing diplomatic protocols. The joint presence of Foreign Minister al-Shaibani and SDF's Mazloun Abdi in Munich is a performative act of statehood intended to show that Syria is a single, unified entity [Munich delegation](#).

The Financial Chokepoint: There is a dangerous trend of fiscal over-regulation. The Central Bank is attempting to control inflation and currency values by essentially locking up the nation's cash. This "drying policy" is creating a paradoxical situation where the state appears stronger in international boardrooms but is failing its most basic financial duties to its citizens, leading to a "hoarding" mentality that further stalls economic recovery [banking trust deficit](#).

US Strategic Recalibration: The withdrawal from Al-Shaddadi and Al-Tanf is framed as a "re-positioning" by the US to focus on higher-priority threats like Iran, while essentially outsourcing Syrian internal security to the new government. This suggests the Trump administration has reached a transactional agreement with Damascus to allow for a US exit in exchange for counter-terrorism commitments against ISIS [US exit strategy](#).

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

The internal health of the "Third Republic" is increasingly strained by the gap between political ambitions and local realities. In the

Idlib and Aleppo governorates, the education sector has effectively ground to a halt due to a prolonged teachers' strike. Despite government claims of a settlement, many teachers continue to boycott classes, demanding wages that reflect the new cost of living [teachers' strike persistence](#). This indicates that the government's mandate is not yet fully accepted in areas formerly held by opposition or local councils.

Societal stability is also threatened by a wave of crime in rural areas like Salamiyah, where residents report that security forces are absent or ineffective against farm thefts. This "security vacuum" in the heartland of the country suggests that the military is focused on high-level base handovers while neglecting basic policing. Furthermore, the lethal threat of landmines—with an estimated 300,000 points of contamination in Deir ez-Zor—remains a major barrier to the return of displaced persons and economic normalization [landmine crisis](#).

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

Syria is actively rebranding its global posture from a Russian/Iranian client state to a multipolar bridge. The heavy emphasis on meetings with Saudi, French, and Qatari officials in Munich indicates a strategy of "diversified dependence" [Munich meetings](#). The state is adapting to a regional environment that is increasingly weary of Iranian influence, positioning the "Third Republic" as the primary vehicle for expelling Iranian militias in exchange for Western and Arab investment.

The international system is portrayed as a transactional arena where US President Trump is willing to negotiate directly with

Damascus. This has emboldened Syrian diplomacy, leading to the public framing of Israeli strikes as "exaggerated" and the Syrian state as a victim of foreign aggression despite its new "friendship" with the West [Shaibani on Israel](#). This posture is designed to secure maximum leverage as the International Coalition draws down its footprint.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic climate is characterized by extreme austerity and a banking sector in crisis. The government is struggling to balance reconstruction needs with a population that is effectively bankrupt.

- **Banking Crisis:** The Central Bank has limited cash withdrawals to minimal amounts, causing citizens to abandon banks and resort to hoarding cash at home, which has drained liquidity from the market [bank liquidity crisis](#).
- **Ramadan Inflation:** Retailers in Aleppo and Hama report price hikes of 25-50% for basic foodstuffs, with poultry prices rising 1,000 Liras in just two days [food prices](#).
- **Labor Costs:** The average salary in many regions is reported as less than \$100 per month, which fails to meet the rising costs of fuel and food [salary levels](#).
- **Reconstruction Commitments:** Reports from Munich suggest Syria is seeking at least \$900 billion in reconstruction aid over the next decade [reconstruction costs](#).

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The transcripts confirm several key political and military appointments that solidify the "Third Republic's" governance structure.

- **Ahmed al-Sharaa (President):** Continues to issue pivotal decrees, moving from a revolutionary figure to a formal head of state. He is currently focused on institutionalizing the "People's Assembly" and integrating the SDF into a national framework [Presidential decrees](#).
- **Asaad al-Shaibani (Foreign Minister):** Has emerged as the "face" of the new Syria, engaging in high-level diplomacy in Munich. He is successfully bridging the gap between Damascus and both Western and Arab capitals [al-Shaibani's role](#).
- **Mazloun Abdi & Ilham Ahmed (SDF Leaders):** Now effectively operating as partners of the Syrian state. Their presence in Munich under the Syrian flag is a major symbolic victory for the government's integration narrative [SDF at Munich](#).
- **Noureddine Ahmed Issa (Governor of Hasakah):** Appointed as the new governor, his role is to oversee the delicate transition of SDF territories back to central government administration [Hasakah Governor](#).

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

SyriaTV maintains a nationalistic and celebratory tone regarding the state's diplomatic and military gains, while adopting a more critical, investigative posture toward internal issues like the landmine crisis and economic policy. The "Lead Stories" are consistently about the US withdrawal and the Munich Security Conference, framing these as

the ultimate proof of Syria's "victory" and return to the global stage [lead story on Munich](#). However, domestic "Buried Stories" include the depth of the education strike and the specific details of the SDF-government friction, which are often mentioned in passing or in the context of "resolvable local issues." There is a conspicuous omission of any critical analysis regarding the former regime's current status or the specifics of the Al-Sharaa administration's relationship with former opposition armed groups.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The day's reporting frames a world shifting from ideological conflict to transactional stability.

COUNTRIES

- **United States:** Portrayed as a "strong but exiting" power. President Trump is framed as a pragmatist who "believes in a unified Syria" and is willing to hand over bases to the new government [Trump's Syria policy](#).
- **Saudi Arabia:** Characterized as a "stable and supportive friend." Riyadh's transport deal with Damascus is presented as a major step toward regional economic recovery [Saudi transport deal](#).
- **Israel:** Framed as an "unprincipled aggressor" that continues to violate Syrian sovereignty with strikes on PIJ figures, even as Syria stabilizes [Israeli border strikes](#).
- **Iran:** Depicted as a "weakening and chaotic" actor. Discussions in Munich focus on how to reduce Iranian influence in Syria as a precondition for further Western normalization [Iranian influence](#).

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Framed as a deal-maker. He is quoted as finding it "difficult to reach a new nuclear deal with Iran" while simultaneously facilitating the Syrian military handover [Trump on Iran/Syria](#).
- **Ahmed al-Sharaa:** Portrayed as a "principled and competent" consolidator who is successfully navigating the transition to a Third Republic [President Sharaa](#).

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **SDF/Asayish:** Framed as "competent partners" in the process of transition, although their local presence remains a point of friction with Arab tribes [SDF status](#).
- **International Coalition:** Portrayed as a "responsible departing force" that is coordinating closely with Damascus [Coalition handover](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The primary meta-narrative of the day is the "Unified Syria" campaign. The state media is actively seeding the idea that the SDF and the central government are now a single entity. The presence of Mazloun Abdi in Munich is the centerpiece of this operation. However, there is a clear delta between this spin and the ground truth in places like Al-Ya'rubiya, where protesters explicitly reject the entry of the "Asayish," revealing that "national unity" is far from consolidated [Ya'rubiya protests](#).

Additionally, the government is weaponizing information regarding the economic crisis by

blaming "external speculators" and "hoarders" for the liquidity shortage, while transcripts suggest the crisis is a direct result of the Central Bank's own policies [banking meta-narrative](#). This disinformation is intended to deflect anger away from the Al-Sharaa administration's fiscal management.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Full SDF Integration:** Within the next six months, the SDF will likely be formally dissolved into the Syrian National Army's regional commands, provided the government can pacify Arab tribal concerns in Deir ez-Zor and Hasakah.
- **Currency Collapse Risk:** If the Central Bank continues its "liquidity drying" policy, a total collapse of the banking system is possible, leading to a massive social uprising similar to the 2011 events, but driven by financial desperation [banking collapse risk](#).
- **Western Reconstruction Aid:** The Munich meetings likely paved the way for the first tranches of Western humanitarian-led reconstruction aid, specifically for the power and health sectors, in exchange for the official expulsion of Iranian militias [reconstruction funding](#).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

- **Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect localized skirmishes between tribal militias and government-integrated Asayish forces in eastern Syria as the Al-Shaddadi handover completes. Ramadan will see heightened social tension if food prices continue to climb [Ramadan tensions](#).

- **Medium Term (1-6 Months):** The formation of the new People's Assembly will be completed, providing the Al-Sharaa administration with a thin veneer of legislative legitimacy. We expect a formalization of the Saudi transport agreement [Assembly formation](#).
- **Long Term (1-5 Years):** Syria will likely attempt to position itself as a neutral arbiter in the US-Iran conflict, leveraging its strategic geography to extract concessions from both sides, while slowly phasing out the state-dominated economy in favor of Arab-led private investment.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Risk of Systemic Financial Collapse:** Triggers: Prolonged lack of cash in banks and continued "drying" policies. Likelihood: High. Impact: Catastrophic; total halt of trade and potential for mass civil unrest. Mitigations: Immediate easing of withdrawal limits and a massive injection of foreign currency from regional allies [liquidity risk](#).
- **Risk of Tribal Insurrection:** Triggers: Perceived favoritism toward Kurdish factions in the new integrated security force. Likelihood: Medium-High. Impact: Severe; potential for a renewed civil conflict in resource-rich eastern Syria. Mitigations: Increased tribal representation in the Hasakah and Deir ez-Zor provincial governments [tribal unrest](#).

- **Risk of Resurgent ISIS Activity:** Triggers: The security vacuum created during the US withdrawal and handover. Likelihood: Medium. Impact: Severe; disruption of reconstruction and destabilization of eastern provinces. Mitigations: Enhanced intelligence sharing between the Coalition and the Syrian National Army during the transition [ISIS resurgence](#).
- **Risk of Infrastructure Failure (Health/Power):** Triggers: Inability to procure spare parts due to residual sanctions or lack of funds. Likelihood: High. Impact: Moderate; specifically in Idlib and rural Aleppo. Mitigations: Fast-tracking reconstruction deals discussed in Munich [hospital failures](#).
- **Risk of Educational System Decay:** Triggers: Continued failure to resolve the Idlib/Aleppo teachers' strike. Likelihood: High. Impact: Long-term social decay and loss of human capital. Mitigations: Direct wage subsidies provided through international aid organizations [teachers strike risk](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **Status of Russian Forces:** While the transcripts focus heavily on the US withdrawal, they are silent on the status and disposition of Russian forces at Khmeimim and Tartus. Their role in the Al-Sharaa administration is a critical missing piece of the security puzzle.
- **The "New" Constitution:** The broadcasts mention a "Third Republic" and "Transition Period" but provide zero detail on the legal framework or constitutional changes that underpin this new state.

- **The Fate of the Ba'ath Party:** There is no mention of whether the Ba'ath party has been dissolved, rebranded, or remains as a hollowed-out institution within the new administration.
- **Internal Conflict among Transition Elites:** The unified front in Munich likely masks significant infighting between former opposition leaders, military officers, and secular technocrats within the Al-Sharaa government.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Potemkin" Transition:** The US withdrawal and the Munich appearances may be an elaborate performance. The state may be far weaker than it appears, with the US withdrawing only because it believes the Al-Sharaa administration is a temporary placeholder that will soon collapse under the weight of the economic crisis.
- **The "Kurdish Trojan Horse":** Instead of integration, the SDF may be using the "unified army" narrative to preserve their autonomy and military capability. Once the US fully exits, the SDF could pivot back to a separatist stance, using their integrated positions to seize control of oil fields.
- **Black Swan Event: Assassination of al-Shaibani:** If Foreign Minister al-Shaibani were assassinated while in Munich or shortly after, the "Third Republic's" diplomatic architecture would likely shatter, as he appears to be the sole bridge between Damascus and the West.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Regional states should prioritize intelligence-sharing agreements with the new Syrian National Army to prevent ISIS from exploiting the handover of Coalition bases [ISIS intelligence](#).
- **Economic:** The IMF and regional central banks should advise Damascus on reversing the "liquidity drying" policy to prevent a total domestic financial meltdown [fiscal advice](#).
- **Diplomatic:** Western powers should maintain the "SDF integration" requirement as a hard condition for the release of any long-term reconstruction funds [diplomatic conditions](#).

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chains:** The Saudi-Syrian transport roadmap presents an opportunity for logistics companies to establish new routes for food and medicine transit [Saudi logistics deal](#).
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Investors must closely monitor the new People's Assembly for property law changes that could affect reconstruction contracts [People's Assembly legislation](#).
- **Capital Allocation:** High risk remains in the Syrian banking sector; investors should utilize offshore or regional escrow accounts until domestic liquidity is restored [capital risk](#).

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The Syrian government is in a period of intense legislative activity aimed at

regularizing the state and preparing for upcoming elections. These laws are designed to project institutional stability to the international community.

• BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Decrees 66 and 143 (2025):** Established the legal framework for the appointment of sub-election committees in newly recovered territories like Raqqa and Tabqa [Decree 66/143](#).
- **Decision No. 24:** Defined the distribution of People's Assembly seats across the Syrian provinces, aimed at ensuring regional representation in the "Third Republic" [Decision 24](#).
- **Media Code of Conduct:** A new 22-page document with 10 articles regulating professional ethics for journalists and content creators, though criticized as a tool for executive interference [Media Code](#).

• HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Munich Press Statements:** Foreign Minister al-Shaibani held a series of press events emphasizing Syria's "victory over terrorism" and its readiness for reconstruction [Munich press](#).
- **Idlib Teachers Strike Hearings:** The Ministry of Education held meetings with teacher unions to negotiate a return to work, though a final consensus remains elusive [Teachers hearings](#).

KEY STORIES

- **US Withdrawal from Al-Shaddadi:** The International Coalition has begun handing over the Al-Shaddadi base in Hasakah to the Syrian National Army. Forces are being relocated to Iraq and Al-Rumaylan [Al-Shaddadi handover](#).

- **Syrian Delegation in Munich:** Foreign Minister al-Shaibani and SDF leaders Abdi and Ahmed are meeting with world leaders (Saudi, US, France) to secure Syria's regional rehabilitation [Munich delegation](#).
- **Idlib/Aleppo Teachers' Strike:** Widespread strikes continue as teachers reject government salary offers, citing high inflation and the ongoing financial crisis [Teachers' strike](#).
- **Banking Liquidity Crisis:** The Central Bank's policy of restricting withdrawals has led to a total loss of trust in the banking system, with the public hoarding cash to avoid financial ruin [bank crisis](#).
- **Landmine Deaths in Deir ez-Zor:** Reports indicate over 300,000 points of mine/UXO contamination, with hundreds of civilian deaths in the past year [landmine report](#).
- **Saudi-Syria Transport Deal:** A new agreement to enhance rail and road connections between Saudi Arabia and Syria to facilitate regional trade [transport agreement](#).
- **Raqqa/Tabqa Election Prep:** The government has appointed sub-committees to begin the electoral process in formerly SDF-held areas [Raqqa elections](#).
- **Ramadan Inflation surge:** Meat and poultry prices have spiked by over 1,000 Liras ahead of the holy month, causing widespread food insecurity [food inflation](#).
- **Israeli Airstrikes on PIJ:** Israel continues to target Palestinian Islamic Jihad figures near the Syrian-Lebanese border, despite the diplomatic thaw [PIJ strikes](#).
- **US-Iran Talks in Geneva:** Reports from Geneva indicate the US (Trump administration) is pushing for a 20-point nuclear agreement with Iran, with major implications for Syrian security [US-Iran talks](#).
- **Mass Grave in Hjin:** A mass grave with four bodies was discovered in an SDF-held area of Deir ez-Zor, highlighting past atrocities [mass grave](#).
- **AI in Health Care:** A segment discussing the use of ChatGPT and other AI tools for medical diagnosis and health management in Syria [AI in health](#).
- **Drikish Dam Overfill:** The Drikish dam in Tartus has reached capacity due to heavy rains, assisting irrigation but raising pollution concerns [Drikish dam](#).
- **Teachers' Salaries Conflict:** Ongoing negotiations in Idlib over the "salaries and integration" file for former opposition-area educators [salary negotiations](#).

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a

richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

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