

PRESS RELEASE
27 November 2015

Global Militarisation Index 2015 \ **Massive military build-up in the Middle East continues**

More information:
SUSANNE HEINKE

*Head of Public Relations
Leiterin Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*

+49 228 911 96-44, Fax -22
pr@bicc.de

The Global Militarisation Index (GMI) 2015 developed by BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversion) shows an unbroken upward trend of militarisation in the Middle East, which the authors, Jan Grebe and Max M. Mutschler, relate to the violent conflicts across the region. This year's Index shows that Israel (position 1), Jordan (position 4) and Kuwait (position 9) are again in the Top 10. Besides the Israel–Palestine conflict, the civil war in Syria and the regional threat posed by so-called Islamic State (IS) may explain the high levels of militarisation.

“The multiple and complex conflicts across the region are a key factor behind the build-up and modernisation of the armed forces,” Jan Grebe and Max M. Mutschler explain the ranking of the GMI in the Middle East. The authors point out that Syria, also ranked amongst the Top 10 in recent years, is missing in this year's GMI. This is due to the fact that the civil war has made it impossible to draw on reliable data. Kuwait (position 9), Bahrain (position 15), Oman (position 13) and Saudi Arabia (position 17), all countries involved in the war in Yemen, are regional conflict parties with high levels of militarisation.

Author **Jan Grebe** makes the connection between Saudi Arabia's engagement in the conflict and its defence procurement costs for modern weapon systems amounting to billions of US dollars and points out: **“In view of the escalating situation in the Middle East, many states—including Germany—will have to ask themselves in how far their arms exports policy contributes to the conflict in this region.”**

Europe also in the Top 10

“In Europe, many countries show an average level of militarisation; still, for some states, a different picture could emerge in the years to come when the threat perception changes and leads to a new direction of security policy,” Grebe and Mutschler suspect.

The war in Ukraine, for instance, has led to a re-think in many countries. While between 2010 and 2014, spending on military procurements and equipment by European NATO states fell by about US \$14 billion, NATO estimates suggest there will be a significant rise in 2015.

“Today, we can only speculate on the impact the war with Ukraine and the deterioration of relations with NATO in its wake will have on the level of militarisation in Russia (position 6),” explains **Jan Grebe**. We may, however, assume that Russia will at least continue, if not increase, its efforts to modernise the armed forces. The ranking of Ukraine in this year’s GMI has shifted only a little, from position 24 in 2013 to position 23 in 2014. But it is too soon to tell the impact of the present conflict on the country’s relatively high level of militarisation over the longer term.

“The very high levels of militarisation in Armenia (position 3) and Azerbaijan (position 8) is a sign of a protracted arms race in the Caucasus,” **Max Mutschler** points out. Against the background of the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, both countries are still investing their resources to an inordinate degree in expanding and modernising their armed forces.

Militarisation and human development

Militarisation remains a controversial concept. **“While many observers assume that militarisation always means an excessive emphasis on military power, the GMI depicts the relative weight of the military apparatus of states in relation to its society as a whole,”** explains **Mutschler**. For this reason, the authors have explored the relationship between militarisation and human development for the first time by correlating the GMI 2015 with the Human Development Index.

The GMI

The Global Militarisation Index presents on an annual basis the relative weight and importance of a country’s military apparatus in relation to its society as a whole. It, for instance, compares military expenditures with a state’s gross domestic product (GDP) and its health expenditure (as share of its GDP). The GMI 2015 covers 152 states and is based on the latest available figures (in most cases data for 2014). The index project is financially supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ).