

## Headlines:

- **Rebels Lose Homs with 12,000 Displaced**
- **Turkey-Netherlands row**
- **EU Court Rules Employers allowed to ban the hijab**

## Details:

### **Rebels Lose Homs with 12,000 Displaced**

Al-Waer, the last rebel-held region within Homs was lost by the opposition as the regime allowed the 2,500 fighters to leave the town. The town was under siege since 2003 and had 75000 residents who despite being happy upon seeing the end of the siege, realised the repercussions of the lost in rebel control. Strategically this has led to the regime once again funnelling rebels into Idlib province which has been a gathering place for rebel fighters. This raises the chance for the further rebel infighting which has been seen over the past few weeks.

### **Turkey-Netherlands row**

Turkey has announced a series of measures in retaliation for a Dutch decision to block its ministers from campaigning for a referendum. Deputy PM Numan Kurtulmus said the Dutch ambassador would be barred from returning to Ankara, and high-level political discussions suspended. The row comes just two days before a general election in the Netherlands dominated by concerns about immigration and Islamic radicalism. The proposed rallies aimed to encourage a large number of Turks living in Europe to vote Yes in a referendum on 16 April on expanding the president's powers. The plans were criticised by senior EU officials on Monday. Mr Kurtulmus, who is also the Turkish government's chief spokesman, said: "We are not allowing planes carrying Dutch diplomats or envoys from landing in Turkey or using our airspace." Ambassador Kees Cornelis van Rij is currently out of the country, with his charge d'affaires standing in for him. Mr Kurtulmus added that all high-level political discussions would be halted, and parliament would be advised to withdraw from a bilateral friendship group. The measures would remain in effect until the Netherlands took steps to "redress its actions", the deputy prime minister added.

### **EU Court Rules Employers allowed to ban the hijab**

Employers are entitled to ban staff from wearing visible religious symbols, the European Union's top law court ruled on March 14, a decision that directly attacks Muslim women wearing hijabs at work. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) said it does not constitute "direct discrimination" if a firm has an internal rule banning the wearing of "any political, philosophical or religious sign".

The court gave a judgment in the cases of two women, in France and Belgium, who were dismissed for refusing to remove their hijabs.