



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procees of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

Energy Security

Enerji Güvenliđi

Economy News

Ekonomi Haberleri

Peace Process

Barıő Süreci

Ethnic and Secterian Groups

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

Non State Actors

Devlet-dıő Aktörler

Relations with the West

Batı'yla İliőkiler



ORSAM

ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES
مركز الشرق الأوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية

STRATEJİK BİLGİ YÖNETİMİ
ÖZGÜR DÜŞÜNCE ÜRETİMİ

STRATEGIC INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
AND INDEPENDENT THOUGHT PRODUCTION

MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

11 OCTOBER 2012

NO: 1473

HEADLINES

1. IRAQ.....	2
• AIN posts Presidency's statement over cutting off Hashimi's salary (alliraqnews)	2
• AIN posts Presidency's statement over cutting off Hashimi's salary (alliraqnews)	2
• White bloc calls to endorse Parties Law before PCs elections (alliraqnews)	3
• MP calls to provide protection for judges (alliraqnews)	3
• Al-Maliki says Iraq, Russia agree to avoid foreign intervention in Syria (INTERFAX)	4
2. IRAN	5
• IAEA denies chief to visit Iran for nuclear talks	5
• Iran denies threat to cut diplomatic ties with UAE	7
• UN nuclear chief to visit Iran: Salehi	8
3. SYRIA.....	10
• Turkey seizes 'suspicious' cargo aboard Syrian plane en route from Moscow	10
• Turkey releases Syrian passenger jet	12
• Syria rejects UN calls for unilateral truce	15
• Syria's main opposition bloc to restructure, seek new impetus	17
4. ISRAEL-PALESTINE	19
• Israeli warplanes hit Gaza after rocket attacks	19
• Israeli settlers uproot some 140 Palestinian olive trees	21
5. AFRICA and EGYPT	22
• Film about Egyptian Jews stirs 'normalization' uproar	22
• Egypt court acquits Mubarak loyalists in 'Camel Battle' case	24
6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA.....	24
• Tehran, Hezbollah aiding Yemeni Huthi rebels to manufacture missiles - Source	24
• Kuwait opposition may boycott elections	27
7. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN	28
• Obama nominates new Afghan commander	28
• Panetta promises action against Afghan insider attacks	30

1. IRAQ

- **AIN posts Presidency's statement over cutting off Hashimi's salary (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Oct 10 (AIN) –All Iraq News Agency (AIN) received a copy of the statement of the Iraqi presidency over cutting off the salary of the Vice-President, Tariq al-Hashimi who was sentenced to death in absentia.

The statement, which was sent to the parliament - The Parliamentary Integrity Committee, cited “We would like to inform you that the Iraqi presidency is adherent to the decisions and resolutions of the Legislative Authority represented by the Supreme Judicial Council and its courts.”

“We have done what is required and cut off the salary of the Judicially Wanted Vice-President, Tariq al-Hashimi, according to the statements sent by the judicial authority before stating the judicial decision over him,” the statement added.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20400

- **AIN posts Presidency's statement over cutting off Hashimi's salary (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Oct 10 (AIN) –All Iraq News Agency (AIN) received a copy of the statement of the Iraqi presidency over cutting off the salary of the Vice-President, Tariq al-Hashimi who was sentenced to death in absentia.

The statement, which was sent to the parliament - The Parliamentary Integrity Committee, cited “We would like to inform you that the Iraqi presidency is adherent to the decisions and resolutions of the Legislative Authority represented by the Supreme Judicial Council and its courts.”

"We have done what is required and cut off the salary of the Judicially Wanted Vice-President, Tariq al-Hashimi, according to the statements sent by the judicial authority before stating the judicial decision over him," the statement added.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20400

- **White bloc calls to endorse Parties Law before PCs elections (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Oct 10 (AIN) –The Secretary General of the White bloc, Jamal al-Batiekh, called "To endorse the Parties Law before the elections of the Provincial Councils."

Speaking to All Iraqi News Agency (AIN), he said "The Parties Law is very necessary for organizing the political performance in the country especially identifying the financial aspects of some parties and their real programmes."

"Endorsing this law will facilitate conducting the next elections," he added.

"Despite the huge number of parties in Iraq, there is no law to regulate their performance," he assured, noting that "Delay in endorsing this law consolidates the deterioration of the security breaches."

"Endorsing this law will reduce the foreign interferences in the Iraqi affairs," he concluded.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20420:white-bloc-calls-to-endorse-parties-law-before-pcs-elections-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

- **MP calls to provide protection for judges (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Oct 10 (AIN) –MP, Adil al-Maliki, of the Legal Parliamentary Committee called "To provide protection for the judges by training them and providing them with armored vehicles and weapons."

Speaking to All Iraqi News Agency (AIN), he said "The Committee addressed the Supreme Judicial Council to increase its budget for 2013," noting that "We have to take a more serious stance to protect the Iraqi professional figures."

"Under the current situation, we must have a true stance to stop the blood shed by the armed groups," he added.

"We have received the news of assassinating the judge, Abbas Hussien al-Ebadi, who is a great figure believe in justice, with great sadness," he concluded.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20391:mp-calls-to-provide-protection-for-judges-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

- **Al-Maliki says Iraq, Russia agree to avoid foreign intervention in Syria (INTERFAX)**

Russia and Iraq have agreed to make efforts to prevent incitement to outside interference in the situation in the Middle East and Syria, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has said, according to a report by privately-owned Russian news agency Interfax on 10 October.

"We have agreed to avoid such scenarios when it comes to settling the Syrian crisis without any foreign intervention, supporting the mission of the new special envoy of the UN secretary-general and the Arab League," Interfax quoted Al-Maliki as saying after talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

He stressed that Russia and Iraq had reached an agreement "which should consist in search for and finding a peaceful settlement of the internal Syrian crisis, which would completely satisfy the whole of the Syrian people".

According to Interfax, the Iraqi prime minister said that, apart from that, an agreement had been reached during the talks on the need to make efforts for democratic and free development of the peoples of the Middle Eastern region, using peaceful means for that, and "do everything possible

to prevent incitement, avoid outside interference in the region's affairs, as well as to prevent various scenarios of military solutions".

The Iraqi prime minister also expressed gratitude to the Russian leadership "for readiness to render assistance to Iraq in taking it out of the effect of Article 7, because our country completely fulfilled its obligations".

"We hope that we shall be able to solve all the remaining issues which need to be implemented by the Iraqi side already outside this article," Interfax further quoted Al-Maliki as saying.

Speaking of his visit to Russia, the Iraqi prime minister noted that all the talks that had taken place "reflect to the full extent both sides' desire and readiness to move along increasing the whole range of bilateral cooperation".

2. IRAN

- **IAEA denies chief to visit Iran for nuclear talks**

The U.N. atomic agency said Wednesday there were no plans at present for director general Yukiya Amano to visit Tehran, following comments by Iran's foreign minister suggesting that such a trip was on the cards.



"The IAEA has seen media reports that Director General Amano will visit Iran to discuss nuclear issues," said Serge Gas, head of media at the International Atomic Energy Agency. "There are no such plans at this time."

Earlier Wednesday, the Iranian state news agency IRNA quoted Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi as saying that Tehran's ambassador to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, was “scheduled to have a meeting regarding the visit.”

Diplomats in Vienna also expressed serious doubt that such a visit would happen any time soon in light of a string of earlier failed meetings between Iran and senior IAEA officials this year, including during a visit by Amano to Tehran in May.

“I think (this comment by Salehi) is, at best, highly aspirational on Iran’s part,” one Western diplomat told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Efforts to arrange a meeting in mid-October, either in Vienna or Tehran, appear to have gone nowhere, envoys added.

As a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty -- unlike Israel, the Middle East’s only if undeclared state with the bomb – Iran’s nuclear facilities are under constant IAEA surveillance and are subject to frequent inspections.

But the IAEA also wants Iran to explain indications that until at least 2003, and possibly since, Tehran carried out “activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device.”

It wants access to specific documents and to scientists involved in Iran’s program, as well as to sites, including the Parchin military base near Tehran, which it visited twice in 2005 but wants to look at again.

So far Iran has flatly rejected the claims, set out in a major IAEA report last November, saying they are based on forged documentation, and denied seeking -- or ever having sought -- to develop atomic weapons.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/11/243052.html?PHPSESSID=p0lpssv0t4bs0373fv84845dp1>

- **Iran denies threat to cut diplomatic ties with UAE**

Iran's foreign ministry denied on Wednesday that it had threatened to cut diplomatic ties with the United Arab Emirates, as state media outlets reported the previous day.



The ministry's spokesman, Ramin Mehmanparast, had been quoted as saying Tehran may cut diplomatic ties with the UAE because of a festering dispute over three Gulf islands claimed by both sides.

In a statement reported Wednesday, the ministry said it "denies the comments attributed to the spokesman by some local media regarding the Emirates," accusing those media of "distorting" what was said.

Mehmanparast's comments were reported by parliamentary news website icana.ir and official news agency IRNA, saying diplomatic ties could be cut should the UAE continue to claim the islands currently under Iran's control.

"If making such anti-Iranian claims reaches a level that national interests lie in reducing or severing political ties... (such a move) will be implemented," Mehmanparast was quoted as saying.

He warned the UAE could "suffer the fate of Britain" -- alluding to Iran's decision last year to downgrade diplomatic relations to Britain in anger over heightened Western sanctions.

Britain eventually cut direct diplomatic ties with Iran in December 2011 after pro-government demonstrators in Tehran stormed the British embassy.

Mehmanparast's alleged comments echoed Tehran's line that the UAE stance has no "rational, logical, historical, or legal basis."

Iran and the UAE are at loggerheads over the islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb, which lie in the strategic Strait of Hormuz in the Gulf.

Iran took control of them in 1971 when colonial-era Britain withdrew from that part of the Gulf.

The Islamic republic says the islands are a historic part of its territory, and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in April visited them to reassert that position.

However, the UAE claims ownership in line with an agreement signed with Britain, and has garnered support from other Gulf Arab states and its ally the United States.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/10/242939.html?PHPSESSID=p0lpssv0t4bs0373fv84845dp1>

- **UN nuclear chief to visit Iran: Salehi**

TEHRAN, (AFP) — The head of the UN nuclear watchdog, Yukiya Amano, will visit Iran to discuss the dimensions of Tehran's nuclear programme, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi was reported as saying on Wednesday.

"The visit of Mr Amano to Tehran is in line with discussions about possible military dimensions" of the programme, Salehi said, quoted by IRNA state news agency.

"Our ambassador in Vienna is scheduled to have a meeting regarding the visit," he added without providing any exact dates.

Last month, diplomats close to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of the continuation of negotiations between Iran and the Vienna-based UN agency in mid-October.

Amano has said he wants to pursue dialogue with Iran on suspicions of past nuclear weapons research activities, despite the failure of series of meetings since the beginning of the year.

"We will continue negotiations with Iran on a structured approach to resolve all outstanding issues. I hope we can reach agreement without further delay, to be followed by immediate implementation," Amano said on September 17.

The IAEA is seeking greater cooperation from Tehran to answer questions about a possible military dimension to Iran's nuclear programme.

The agency has failed to convince Tehran to grant access to sites, scientists and documents linked to suspected activities that the IAEA believes were "relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device".

Several meetings since early 2012, and even a visit from Amano to Tehran in May, did not bring the two parties into an agreement.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=31388>

Iran MPs mull questioning Ahmadinejad over economic issues

A number of Iranian lawmakers have signed a motion calling for the questioning of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad over economic issues.

Iranian lawmaker Ali Iranpour said on Wednesday that the motion, signed by 100 parliamentarians, has been presented to the Majlis (parliament) Presiding Board.

Lawmakers reportedly plan to question Ahmadinejad with regard to the country's economic issues and the recent fluctuations in the foreign exchange market.

However, spokesman of the Majlis Presiding Board, Abdolreza Mesri, said that the motion has not been presented to the board, adding that it might have been submitted after the end of the open session.

The first motion to question Ahmadinejad was submitted to the Majlis Presiding Board on June 27, 2011, and was signed by 100 Iranian lawmakers. However, it lost quorum after a number of lawmakers withdrew their signatures.

In December 2011, Majlis revived the motion and summoned Ahmadinejad for questioning.

On March 14, 2012, the Iranian president attended the Majlis session to respond to questions from lawmakers on a range of different issues.

According to Article 88 of the country's Constitution, the president must appear before Majlis within a month of being summoned, unless legislators decide to withdraw their bid to question him.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/10/265959/majlis-mulls-questioning-ahmadinejad/>

3. SYRIA

- **Turkey seizes 'suspicious' cargo aboard Syrian plane en route from Moscow**

Turkey seized Wednesday a suspicious cargo aboard a Syrian passenger plane that was intercepted by Turkish fighter jets and forced to land in Ankara en route from Moscow to Damascus, NTV news channel reported.



The cargo is believed to be missile parts, said NTV. The plane was still being inspected and is awaiting Ankara's approval to take off again with its 35 passengers. Al Arabiya carried live footage of the plane being held in Ankara.

The 35-passenger A-320 plane was escorted by Turkish F4 jets to Ankara's Esenboga Airport for security checks on its cargo by Turkish officials.

“We asked a Syrian civilian plane to land,” Foreign Ministry Spokesman Selcuk Unal told AP in an email. “We are investigating.”

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, interviewed by Turkey’s state-run TRT television in Athens, said that the plane was forced to land because of information that it may be carrying “certain equipment in breach of civil aviation rules.”

The move comes amid heightened tensions between Turkey and Syria, which have been exchanging artillery fire across the volatile border in the past week.

Private NTV television said there were 35 passengers on board the plane.

Meanwhile, Turkish authorities declared the Syrian airspace to be unsafe and were stopping Turkish aircraft from flying over the civil-war torn country, the Foreign Ministry said.

TRT television said a Turkish plane that had already taken off for Saudi Arabia made a detour and landed at a Turkish airport.

Earlier Wednesday, Turkey’s military chief vowed to respond with more force to any further shelling from Syria, keeping up the pressure on its southern neighbor a day after NATO said it stood ready to defend Turkey.

Gen. Necdet Ozel was inspecting troops who have been put on alert along the 910-kilometer (566-mile) border with Syria after a week of cross-border artillery and mortar exchanges escalated tensions between the neighbors, sparking fears of a wider regional conflict.

Turkey has reinforced the border with artillery guns and also deployed more fighter jets to an air base close to the border region since shelling from Syria killed five Turkish civilians last week.

"We responded and if (the shelling) continues, we will respond with more force," the private Dogan news agency quoted Ozel as saying during a visit to the town of Akcakale.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/10/243011.html?PHPSESSID=p0lpssv0t4bs0373fv84845dp1>

- **Turkey releases Syrian passenger jet**

Turkish minister says aircraft intercepted en route to Damascus was carrying "objectionable cargo".

Turkish officials say they have confiscated "objectionable cargo" from a Syrian passenger jet intercepted en route from Moscow to Damascus.

Aviation authorities diverted the airliner, carrying some 30 passengers, grounding it for more than eight hours on Wednesday. It has now been allowed to leave Turkey.

The A-320 plane had been escorted by two Turkish fighter jets to Ankara's Esenboga Airport on suspicion it was carrying military equipment.

The incident marks a further deterioration in relations between Turkey and Syria, already stretched by days of cross-border shelling.

"There is illegal cargo on the plane that should have been reported" in line with civil aviation regulations, said Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu.

"There are elements on board that can be considered objectionable," he added. "We are determined to control weapons transfers to a regime that carries out such brutal massacres of civilians. It is unacceptable that such a transfer is made using our airspace."

The Turkish NTV news channel suggested that the confiscated cargo might be missile parts, or other weapons systems.

Russia, from where the Syrian plane took off, is one of the closest allies of Bashar al-Assad's government and has blocked several UN resolutions against Damascus.

"Once a week, a Syrian Airlines airplane flies from Moscow bound for Damascus," Interfax quoted Vnukovo Airport spokeswoman Yelena Krylova as saying. "The plane took off normally, there were no incidents."

Syrian airspace 'unsafe'

In a related development, Turkish authorities declared Syrian airspace to be "unsafe" and were stopping Turkish aircraft from flying over the war-torn country.

TRT said a Turkish plane that had already taken off for Saudi Arabia made a detour and landed at a Turkish airport on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, Turkey's military chief pledged to keep up the pressure on its southern neighbour a day after NATO said it stood ready to defend Turkey.

General Necdet Ozel inspected troops deployed along the 910km-border with Syria after a week of cross-border artillery and mortar exchanges that have sparked fears of a wider regional conflict.

"We responded and if [the shelling] continues, we will respond with more force," the private Dogan news agency quoted Ozel as saying during a visit to the town of Akcakale.

Turkey has reinforced the border with artillery and also deployed more fighter jets to an airbase close to the border, after shelling from Syria killed five Turkish civilians last week.

Meanwhile, battles between government forces and opposition fighters continued across Syria on Wednesday.

Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary-general, urged the Assad administration to declare a unilateral ceasefire, calls which Syria rejected.

Instead, clashes intensified near the Syrian border town of Azmarin and heavy machinegun fire could be heard from Turkey.

Scores of civilians crossed a narrow river marking the border as they fled the fighting in Azmarin and surrounding villages. Residents from the Turkish village of Hacipasa helped pull them across in small metal boats.

"The firing started getting intense last night. Some people have been killed, some are lying wounded on the road," said Mune, a 55-year-old woman who fled Azmarin.

"People want to escape but they can't. Many have settled in a field outside the town and are trying to come."

The UNHCR says more than 90,000 Syrians are living in camps in southern Turkey.

Hillary Mann Leverett, senior foreign policy lecturer at the American University in Washington, DC, told Al Jazeera that the "increasingly militarised" tension between Turkey and Syria is "very, very destabilising", with potential for NATO to get involved.

"The precedent is certainly there. NATO got involved pretty quickly in Libya, and the plans are there to become involved in Syria," said Mann Leverett.

"The United States has deployed what it calls advisers, basically a military unit, to Jordan," she added.

US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta said on Wednesday that a team of US military planners is in Jordan to help the Amman government grapple with Syrian refugees, bolster its military capabilities and prepare for any trouble with Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles.

The uprising in Syria started in March last year and has claimed about 30,000 lives, according to the opposition.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2012/10/201210102183860603.html>

- **Syria rejects UN calls for unilateral truce**

Regime says opposition fighters must stop the violence first, as it deploys soldiers in rebel-held town in Idlib.

Syria has rejected a call by the UN chief for it to declare a unilateral ceasefire, insisting that rebels fighting the government must stop the violence first.

Jihad Makdissi, Syrian foreign ministry spokesperson, said on Wednesday that twice during the abortive UN military observer mission deployed to Syria between April and the end of August, the government had implemented a ceasefire.

But he said the rebels "used the opportunity to expand their armed deployment and increase casualties due to terrorist activities".

Makdissi's comments came as the government reportedly was sending tanks from Mastumah, in the northern Idlib province, to the town of Maarat al-Numan, where rebels and government forces are battling for control of the town.

Battle for strategic town

Soldiers were also said to have been deployed along the highway to Maarat al-Numan to secure the passage of heavy armour to the strategic town on the Damascus-Aleppo highway.

Opposition fighters were battling to halt their advance, using rocket launchers and improvised explosive devices, a rebel source told the AFP news agency, adding three tanks were damaged.

The intensifying battle for Maarat al-Numan was "very important", said the rebels who claimed control of the town on Tuesday after 48 hours of fierce fighting and heavy shelling.

Syrian fighters seek to create buffer zone on the Turkish border

Rebels also intercepted troops on the outskirts of Khan Sheikhun, south of Maarat al-Numan, where intense clashes erupted even as warplanes bombed rebel zones, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said.

"If the rebels, who already have Maarat al-Numan and Saraqeb, take Khan Sheikhun, they will completely isolate regime troops in Aleppo because redeployments will not be able to arrive," Rami Abdel Rahman of the UK-based opposition group said.

Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary-general, urged the Syrian regime on Tuesday to declare an immediate truce to bring an end to the conflict that he said had left 20,000 dead over the last 19 months.

"It is unbearable for the [Syrian] people to continue like this. That is why I have conveyed to the Syrian government [a] strong message that they should immediately declare a unilateral ceasefire."

Ban urged "the opposition forces to agree to this unilateral ceasefire when and if the Syrian government declares it" and he called on countries supplying arms to either side to stop in order to ease the suffering of the Syrian people.

'US military in Jordan'

Separately, the US defence secretary said a team of US military planners is in Jordan to help the government grapple with Syrian refugees, bolster its military capabilities and prepare for any trouble with its chemical weapons stockpiles.

"We have been working with Jordan for a period of time now ... on a number of the issues that have developed as a result of what's happened in Syria," Leon Panetta said in Brussels on Wednesday.

Panetta said those issues included monitoring chemical weapons sites "to determine how best to respond to any concerns in that area".

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the small team of planners were not engaged in covert operations and have been housed at the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center, north of the capital of Amman, since the early summer.

Jordan's army denied in a statement that the US has dispatched special forces to help the kingdom confront potential dangers posed by Syria's alleged chemical weapons.

The US military advisors are in Jordan for a long-term joint military training programmes that "have no relation" to the Syrian crisis, the statement said.

"The Jordan Armed Forces can confront any future challenges" without outside assistance, it added.

While the US has not intervened militarily in Syria, President Barack Obama has warned Syrian President Bashar al-Assad that any attempt to deploy or use chemical or biological weapons would cross a "red line" that could provoke US action.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/20121010145612639295.html>

- **Syria's main opposition bloc to restructure, seek new impetus**

PARIS, (Reuters) - Syria's main opposition bloc will restructure itself in Qatar next week to seek fresh impetus, Syrian National Council leader Abdulbaset Sieda said on Wednesday, after months of criticism that it is too fractious and influenced by Islamists.

Sieda, speaking in Paris, also said the SNC reorganisation would precede crunch talks in the Qatari capital Doha with other opponents of President Bashar al-Assad aimed at creating a Syrian transitional government.

Western and Arab countries that have called for Assad's removal are keen to improve cooperation among those trying to dislodge him, including the Istanbul-based SNC.

But the mainly-exiled political groups within the SNC have often been at odds with each other, and have not always agreed with rebel fighters or other political opposition movements operating within Syria, such as the Free Syrian Army, led by defected military officers.

"We want to create this government as quickly as possible, but speed doesn't mean rushing it," Sieda told reporters after being questioned by members of the French parliament.

"There is an urgency, but if we don't consult properly with the principle opposition forces on the ground, then we will have a weak government that we don't want."

The SNC was formed in Istanbul last year as an umbrella organisation to guide a democratic transition if Assad fell, but has been accused by some of being dominated by Islamists.

The disparate opposition to Assad includes majority Arabs and minority Kurds, majority Sunni Muslims and members of minority sects, Islamists and secularists, political exiles and those who have stayed behind or returned to fight.

Sieda, who is due to resign from his position next week, said the first step would be a general assembly of the Syrian National Council in Doha from October 15-17 to elect a new leadership and increase the numbers of women and young members.

It will also incorporate some 20 new groups into the organisation, including local coordination committees, business groups and smaller Kurdish, Turkmen and Syriac Christian representatives.

Sieda, who described himself as secular, reiterated that the SNC favours a secular, democratic Syria that respects minority rights and where power is to give local authorities, away from the centre in Damascus.

The mild-mannered professor, who is of Kurdish-Syrian origin and has lived in Sweden for the last 18 years, said that following the SNC re-organisation, "key" strands of the opposition would meet in Doha aiming to reach an agreement to move towards the creation of a provisional government.

Among those groups would be local co-ordinating committees, as well as revolutionary and military councils.

France, the first country to describe the SNC as a legitimate interlocutor, has said it will recognise an all-inclusive provisional government as soon as it is in place.

Sieda this week travelled for the first time to northern Syria, where he met internal groups, but he admitted there were still obstacles to uniting the opposition.

"The obstacles exist, but they aren't big. At times it's difficult to agree exactly on how to bring together the points of view," he said. "But we agree that this regime has to end. We think we can get over our differences."

Sieda added the SNC wanted to move its operations to the so-called "liberated zones" in the north, but that it would be very difficult until those areas were protected from bombardment.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=31393>

4. ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- **Israeli warplanes hit Gaza after rocket attacks**

The Israeli Air Force early Thursday morning launched a strike against what a spokeswoman



called “a terror activity site” in the northern Gaza strip, which she said was in response to earlier rocket attacks on Israel.

Palestinian officials in Gaza said the target was a training camp of Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades and said there were no casualties.

The Israeli strike came several hours after Gaza fighters fired two rockets into southern Israel on Wednesday evening in the latest of a wave of tit-for-tat fire across the border. Israeli police told AFP that nobody was injured.

On Wednesday morning the Israeli air force hit targets in the northern Gaza Strip, also without causing casualties.

Palestinian security sources said the air strike hit a training camp in Beit Lahiya which was used by fighters from the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of the ruling Hamas movement.

A statement from the Israeli military described the target as “a terror tunnel” and said that it was attacked “in response to over 40 rockets that were fired at Israel this week.”

A small group of radical Salafists had claimed early on Wednesday the rocket fire in a statement sent to AFP, saying it was in response to recent air strikes on Gaza.

Earlier this week, the armed wings of Hamas and Islamic Jihad fired a barrage of projectiles at southern Israel a day after the air force raided the southern city of Rafah, targeting two men who the military said were global jihad activists.

The two were critically wounded in the strike and one later died of his injuries. Another eight people were wounded, among them five children.

Monday's rocket fire by Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants marked a rare show of force given that the two group normally observe a de facto truce on rocket fire on Israel.

The last time Hamas fighters fired on Israel was during a flareup in June when militant groups fired more than 150 rockets, wounding five people, and Israel hit back with air strikes that killed 15 Palestinians.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/11/243059.html?PHPSESSID=p0lpssv0t4bs0373fv84845dp1>

- **Israeli settlers uproot some 140 Palestinian olive trees**

Nearly 140 Palestinian olive trees have been found uprooted in a village in the occupied West Bank just a week before the harvest season begins.



On Wednesday, Ramallah Mayor Faraj al-Naassaneh said Israeli settlers uprooted 138 olive trees in the northwestern part of al-Mughayyir village, which lies northeast of Ramallah.

This came only days after Palestinian officials blamed Israeli settlers for cutting down 70 other olive trees in the West Bank village of Qaryut.

Similar incidents have been reported in al-Khader, Fartaa, Kafr Qaddum, Beitillo al-Janieh, and Ras Karkar villages, where dozens of olive trees were cut down.

Settler violence against Palestinian farmers and their property sees a meaningful hike as the olive harvest season begins.

Earlier in the week, Palestinian Authority ministers held a meeting, condemning "the terrorist attacks by settlers against Palestinian farmers during the olive harvest."

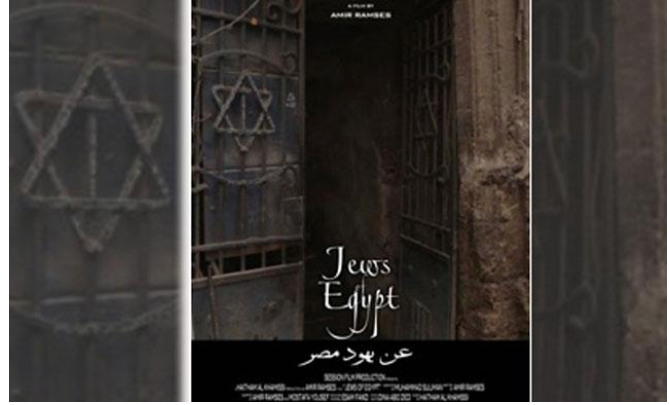
Olive farming is a main source of income for Palestinian farmers in the West Bank.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/11/266021/settlers-uproot-palestinian-olive-trees/>

5. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Film about Egyptian Jews stirs 'normalization' uproar**

"Jews of Egypt," an Egyptian documentary film that records the life of Jews in Egypt before their departure from the country in the 1950s, has stirred controversy after it was screened in a film festival in Cairo.



Amir Ramsis, director of the film, was accused of promoting normalization of ties with Israel through attempting to gain the audience's sympathy for Jewish Egyptians, currently seen as Zionists by many Egyptians.

"Those accusations are absolutely groundless," Ramsis told Al Arabiya. "Those who think the film promotes normalization either did not watch it or analyzed it very superficially."

It is very obvious, Ramsis explained, that the documentary is against Israel and against normalization.

"The film showed how Jewish Egyptians were against the creation of Israel before the July 23, 1952 Revolution and that many Egyptian anti-Israeli institutions were actually led by Egyptian Jews."

Ramsis noted that the purpose of the film is to set straight many of the misconceptions Egyptians have about Jews.

“Many people do not distinguish between being Jewish and being Israeli or Zionist. Many Egyptians automatically consider Jews enemies.”

Ramsis said the film does not seek to embellish the image of Jews either, but basically to “present the truth as well as his own point of view.”

Ramsis said that the people he interviewed in the film were either Jews who still live in Egypt or who are currently residing in Europe.

“Egyptian Jews were apprehensive about taking part in the film because they were afraid they would be hunted down by State Security at the time of Mubarak. They were actually given clear instructions not to make any media appearances.”

Despite the pre-production obstacles and the post-screening criticism, Ramsis said that the film was very well-received.

“I did not expect that it will be that much-admired by critics, journalists, and viewers alike when it was screened as part of the European Film Panorama in Cairo.”

The 95-minute film tackles the life of the Jewish community in Egypt in the first half of the 20th century, which is before their mass exodus following the 1956 Tripartite Aggression launched by Britain, France, and Israel against Egypt.

According to the filmmakers, the documentary seeks to address issues related to changes that Egyptians underwent in the twentieth century. This is done through shedding light on the shift from a general attitude of tolerance and diversity to mixing religion with politics and refusing to accept the other.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/11/243023.html?PHPSESSID=p0lpssv0t4bs0373fv84845dp1>

- **Egypt court acquits Mubarak loyalists in 'Camel Battle' case**

An Egyptian court acquitted on Wednesday 25 loyalists of ousted President Hosni Mubarak loyalists who were accused of orchestrating the bloody violence against pro-democracy protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square in February 2011, Egypt's state news agency reported.



During the violence, commonly referred to as the "Camel Battle," Mubarak's loyalists organized an attack in which assailants on horses and camels charged into crowds of anti-regime protesters last year.

The 25 were found innocent on charges of manslaughter and attempted murder. The defendants included the Mubarak-era parliament speaker Safwat El-Sherif, former president of the Shura Council Majid el-Sherbini, senior former ruling party members, as well as government ministers and businessmen.

The assault on the anti-Mubarak protesters at the height of last year's 18-day sit-in in Tahrir square was a turning point. The attack was blamed on Mubarak loyalists and was viewed as the regime's last ditch attempt to break up the protests that led to Mubarak's Feb. 11, 2011 ouster.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/10/243006.html?PHPSESSID=p0lpssv0t4bs0373fv84845dp1>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Tehran, Hezbollah aiding Yemeni Huthi rebels to manufacture missiles - Source**

By Mohammed Jameh

London, Asharq Al-Awsat – Well-informed Yemeni sources have confirmed that Yemeni authorities halted and seized a cargo ship travelling from Iran carrying suspected military equipment at the Red Sea port of Hodeidah on Saturday. The source revealed that the Iranian military hardware on this cargo ship included equipment to manufacture missiles and ammunition, and that ultimately the objective was to transport and reassemble this equipment to establish a secret arms factory in the mountainous Saada border province of Yemen, which is controlled by the Shiite Huthi rebels.

Asharq Al-Awsat spoke to Yemeni political and security sources, who confirmed that the Iranian ship had been halted in the port of Hodeidah earlier this week. The Yemeni sources, who spoke to Asharq Al-Awsat on the condition of anonymity, revealed that “the ship was headed to the port of Hodeidah in north-west Yemen, however it was stopped and boarded and the military equipment was discovered.”

As for where this equipment was headed, the Yemeni military source revealed that “the objective of this military equipment, which was seized last Saturday in Hodeidah, was for this to be transferred to establish a factory to manufacture short-range missiles and deploy these in mountainous regions of the Saada governorate that are controlled by the Huthi rebels, which is close to the port of Hodeidah.”

The source confirmed that “the Huthis are manufacturing short-range missiles to increase their [military] capabilities, with the help of Hezbollah experts and technicians.”

The Yemeni political and military sources also confirmed that “over the past period, Hezbollah experts have aided the Huthi rebels to manufacture and assemble some missiles in assembly workshops in the mountainous regions" adding "these experts have trained some Yemenis on how to assemble [missiles].”

As for the objective of deploying short-range missiles in northern Yemen, the sources said “it is likely that Tehran believes that there is an impending Israeli or American military strike [on Iran],

and it wants to store these missiles close to the Yemeni shoreline to use them to attack international power lines in the Red Sea and Arabian Sea”

Yemeni security sources previously revealed that Tehran has been attempting to utilize Yemeni territory as a “way-station” to manufacture and store missiles and arms. This was revealed following investigations into “espionage rings” working for Tehran uncovered by the Yemeni security authorities.

A high-ranking Yemeni security source, speaking to CNN, revealed that Tehran had planned to establish a secret weapons factory in Yemen. The source added that he had personally seen equipment that could be used to manufacture and assemble missiles and ammunition.

For his part, during his recent visit to Washington, Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi announced that Tehran was providing support to some political and armed movements in Yemen, as well as recruiting clandestine espionage rings.

The Yemeni Ministry of Defense revealed that Yemeni authorities had recently uncovered and dismantled a spy ring, including Iranian citizens who had entered the country posing as investors looking to set up a factory. Reports claimed that Iranian, Syrian and Yemeni nationals had been arrested. Sources also revealed that Iranian citizens had begun importing illegal “military” equipment through the port of Aden that could be used to make missiles and other weapons.

Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Hadi has accused Tehran of “supporting some armed and political movements in Yemen”, adding that “five spy networks working for Iran have been discovered and referred to justice, whilst a sixth network was recently dismantled.”

The Yemeni President also accused Tehran of attempting to “derail the political process in Yemen”, and even backing factions of Yemen’s separatist Southern Movement which is seeking to secede from Yemen by force of arms.

For its part, Iran strenuously denied the accusations, summoning the Yemeni ambassador to Tehran and handing him an official letter of protest, describing the Yemeni president's accusations as "baseless."

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=31386>

- **Kuwait opposition may boycott elections**

Kuwait's opposition groups have warned that they will boycott the upcoming general elections if Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah orders amendment to the electoral constituency law.



The opposition members held a large gathering south of the capital Kuwait City on Wednesday.

"If this (the amendment) happens, we will boycott the election and launch street protests," said Waleed al-Tabtabai, a former opposition lawmaker.

"We will not stop until we force abolishing the amended law and the elected parliament."

On October 7, the Kuwaiti ruler ordered the dissolution of the country's parliament to pave the way for snap elections for the second time this year. Kuwaitis are scheduled to go to polls within two months for the fifth time since mid-2006.

The opposition groups say the government plans to amend the electoral law, earlier confirmed by a court ruling, to reduce chances of the opposition to win in elections. They have also cautioned that any attempt by the government to affect the election results could lead to the country's destabilization.

“We are not less than Arab peoples who have retaken their rights. We have repeatedly warned of Arab Spring (in Kuwait),” said Nayef al-Merdas, a member of the 2012 parliament which was dissolved by the country’s constitutional court on June 20.

Khaled al-Tahus, also a former opposition lawmaker, said Kuwait was “passing through the most difficult and crucial period of its history,” and he urged the ruler to “exercise his powers in accordance with the constitution.”

Kuwait’s parliament enjoys relatively great powers in comparison with the legislative bodies in other Persian Gulf Arab countries, and Kuwaiti lawmakers openly criticize the ruling al-Sabah family, which has the key offices in the country’s administrative and executive branches.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/11/266044/kuwait-opposition-may-boycott-elections/>

7. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Obama nominates new Afghan commander**

US president names Joseph Dunford to replace General Allen, who is nominated to become NATO's supreme allied commander.

President Barack Obama has nominated General Joseph Dunford, the deputy Marine

commander, to lead the war effort in Afghanistan and oversee plans to withdraw most of the US combat forces from the country by the end of 2014.



Dunford, if confirmed by the Senate, would replace General John Allen, who was nominated by the president on Wednesday to become NATO's supreme allied commander for Europe.

Dunford, who served in Iraq, has been assistant commandant of the Marine Corps since October 2010 and had been widely expected to take charge of US and NATO troops in Afghanistan as Allen rotated out of the post.

"If confirmed by the Senate, he will lead our forces through key milestones in our effort that will allow us to bring the war to a close responsibly as Afghanistan takes full responsibility for its security," Obama said in a statement.

Dunford would assume command of 68,000 US troops who make up the bulk of the coalition force of about 100,000.

Allen, nominated to succeed Admiral James Stavridis in a post traditionally held by a US officer, led the NATO campaign in Afghanistan from July 2011.

Both nominations by Obama are subject to US Senate confirmation. If approved, the moves would take place in early 2013.

'Served with distinction'

"For more than a year, General Allen has served with distinction as the commander of US forces and NATO's International Security Assistance Force [ISAF] in Afghanistan, seeing us through a critical period in our military efforts and in Afghanistan's transition," Obama said in a statement.

"Under General Allen's command, we have made important progress towards our core goal of defeating al-Qaeda and ensuring they can never return to a sovereign Afghanistan."

From the perspective of one neighbourhood in Herat

Allen commanded a coalition force from 50 different countries, giving him the experience to deal with the often sensitive and conflicting wishes of NATO's 28 member states and 22 partners.

Dunford would become the fifth top allied commander in Afghanistan in a five year period.

Meanwhile, the UN defended on Wednesday its recommendation that the 15-member UN Security Council postpone a planned visit to Afghanistan this month over security concerns after some diplomats questioned the UN threat assessment.

Diplomats said the decision to postpone the trip came after UN security chief Gregory Starr recommended earlier this month that they not travel to Afghanistan in the coming weeks, citing concerns for the safety of council diplomats.

Some council diplomats privately questioned the UN recommendation as vague, but others told Reuters news agency that it would be unwise to question Starr's assessment of the risk level in Afghanistan.

UN spokesman Farhan Haq said a security assessment had been made to the council based on the best information available.

"We stand by the recommendation, but will not comment further," he said.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/10/20121010222158399860.html>

- **Panetta promises action against Afghan insider attacks**

BRUSSELS, (Reuters) - U.S. Defence Secretary Leon Panetta sought to reassure NATO allies on Wednesday effective action was being taken to stop "insider" attacks on their soldiers that have undermined trust between coalition and Afghan forces.

Panetta also told a meeting of alliance defence ministers the 11-year-old Afghan war had "reached a critical moment" after the pullout of 33,000 U.S. "surge" troops brought in two years ago to help counter a strengthening Taliban insurgency.

He said the coalition's response to attacks by Taliban insurgents disguised as Afghan policemen or soldiers and its efforts to improve its partnership with Afghan security forces would be critical to the success of the war with the Taliban.

Panetta and NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen told the gathering in Brussels there was no move to speed up the planned withdrawal of international forces.

"The handover to Afghan security responsibility is unfolding as planned. And as transition takes hold, you will see some of our forces redeploying or drawing down as part of the strategy we have all agreed. This is not a rush for the exit, but the logical result of transition," Rasmussen said.

At least 52 members of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force have been killed this year by Afghans wearing police or army uniforms, eroding confidence between the sides.

"Whatever motivates these attacks, the enemy intends to use them to undermine mutual trust and cohesion, driving a wedge between us and our Afghan partners," Panetta said.

"We can only deny the enemy its objective by countering these attacks with all of our strength."

He outlined steps the coalition and Afghan officials are taking to counter the attacks. They included enhanced training, better cultural awareness, continual review of partnering arrangements and expanded vetting of forces.

Panetta also announced changes in the top military ranks in Afghanistan and Europe.

General Joseph Dunford, assistant commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, has been chosen to lead U.S. and international forces in Afghanistan, Panetta said.

The current head of the International Security Assistance Force, Marine Corps General John Allen, will become the head of U.S. European Command and NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, taking over from Admiral James Stavridis, Panetta said.

Both positions require U.S. Senate confirmation and the changes are expected to take place early next year. Panetta said President Barack Obama had decided to nominate the two.

The defence ministers gave military experts the go-ahead on Wednesday to start detailed planning for the NATO-led training and advisory mission that will start after NATO ends combat operations in Afghanistan at the end of 2014.

AFGHAN WAR AT "CRITICAL MOMENT"

Panetta said a decision to send 33,000 extra U.S. troops into Afghanistan nearly two years ago had made a "decisive difference," sharply reducing casualties and forcing Taliban insurgents farther away from population centres.

The United States completed the withdrawal of the so-called "surge" forces in September, leaving 68,000 U.S. troops plus their coalition partners to carry on the mission. The coalition has trained some 350,000 Afghan forces and plans to hand over full security control to Kabul by the end of 2014.

With the pullout of surge forces, "we've reached a critical moment for this alliance and for this war," Panetta said.

To build the skill and capacity of the Afghan army and police, the coalition must "ensure they have the embedded trainers and mentors needed to assist them as they take security lead".

He said the coalition faced a shortfall of 58 security assistance teams to advise the forces and urged the NATO allies to help fill the gap.

Panetta said the size and composition of the NATO force that would remain in Afghanistan after 2014 had not been decided but its presence should be "steadfast and effective".

British Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said on Tuesday evening he expected Britain would be able to make a "significant reduction" in its troop levels in Afghanistan in 2013.

Any enduring British presence after 2014 would be modest and targeted on "specific niche capabilities", he said.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=31387>

This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Sercan DOĞAN. It covers news and commentaries as reported by the national media sources publishing in the Middle Eastern countries. The views expressed are not those of ORSAM and their inclusion does not imply factual accuracy.*

Bu bülten **ORSAM Ortadoğu Uzman Yardımcısı Sercan DOĞAN tarafından hazırlanmaktadır. Bülten Ortadoğu ülkelerinin yerel haber kaynaklarından derlenmektedir. Belirtilen görüşler bölge ülkelerinin haber kaynaklarına ve ismi geçen yazarlara ait olup ORSAM'ın görüşünü yansıtmamaktadır.*