



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procces of Iraq

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1. IRAQ

- **Talabani warns from the dangers of the current conditions in the Middle East**

Shafaq News, Oct 14 / The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) described the current situation in the Middle East as "serious and sensitive", and warned of the concerns arising from the developments that might affect Iraq and Kurdistan Region and stressed the need to deal sensitively with these conditions.

A statement of the party, in which "Shafaq News", received a copy of it stated that "President, Jalal Talabani headed on Saturday evening, a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in its headquarters in Erbil city to discuss the latest developments in Kurdistan Region and Iraq in general and developments in the region."

The statement added that "the latest developments in the Kurdistan Region and Iraq and the region have been assessed in general during the meeting and especially to solve the current crisis in Iraq and efforts of Talabani to bring the views closer among the political parties".

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3797-talabani-warns-from-the-dangers-of-the-current->

- **KDP reveals modifications and strategic talks on the strategic agreement and Constitution**

Shafaq News, Oct 14 / Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)revealed on Sunday, holding a series of amendments to the strategic agreement signed between it and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) before the conducting the next local election in Kurdistan, stressing that there are no closed doors to dialogue and negotiation on the constitution draft of the region.

The spokesman of KDP, Jaafar Ibrahim said in an interview with Rodaw Kurdish newspaper, briefed by "Shafaq News", that "the aim of the meeting between our party and the PUK is to inform them and public opinion in Kurdistan that we consider Change as an influential political force in Kurdistan Region and Iraq".

He stressed that, "We transferred to Gorran change party a good image of the KDP that we seek to normalize relations with them and their relations with the PUK and all other political forces in general, we told them that for us, there is no files closed files in front of dialogue and negotiation."

Ibrahim added that "our position is that we the people of this region did not come from somewhere else and that the existing political system in the region is a suitable system and we support it," stressing that "others who want to change have to convince us."

<http://www.shafaaq.com/en/news/3796-kdp-reveals-modifications-and-strategic-talks-on-the-strategic-agreement-and-constitution.html>

- **Christian party supports deleting Mujahidi Khalq from terrorism list**

WASHINGTON, Oct 14/ Aswat al-Iraq: Iraqi Democratic Christian Party supported here today the decision taken by US administration to delete anti-Iranian Mujahidi Khalq organization from terrorism list.

In an interview with Hadath (Event) news center, Party Chairman Minas Ibrahim al-Yousifi, copy received by Aswat al-Iraq, added that "this decision should have been taken for a long time", but criticized Iraqi government stand for rejecting this decision.

He expected that this organization and the Iranian National Council will replace the current Iranian regime.

US State Department announced the deletion of Mujahidi Khalq (The People) from terrorism list, which was registered there since 1997.

He added that "all pressures against Mujahidi Khalq will be meaningless due to US and European pressures on the Iranian regime and the possible support of Mujahidi Khalq internally and externally".

Yousifi called for opening Liberty Camp before the press and international organizations via the Red Cross to be acquainted with the situation there.

Iraq regarded the presence of Mujahidi Khalq as "illegitimate", despite US attempts to delete it from terrorism list.

<http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28d3oinj55vswrzn45n0akde45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=>

- **White bloc: Al-Ibrahimi's visit indicates International Community interest in Iraqi initiative over Syria**

Baghdad, Oct 14 (AIN) –The White bloc assured that "The visit of the UN and Arab Joint Envoy to Syria, al-Akhdar al-Ibrahimi, to Iraq to discuss the Syrian crisis on next Monday indicates the International Community interest in the Iraqi initiative over Syria."

Speaking to All Iraqi News Agency (AIN), the Secretary General of the White bloc, Jamal al-Batiekh, called "All the political to unify its foreign its stances especially towards Syria and to support the Iraqi stance," noting that "This initiative is full of positive points."

"The meetings that Ibrahimi will conduct with the Iraqi officials will participate in bringing the various views of the countries closer over the Syrian crisis," he added.

"The initiative involved many important aspects and it will be a main point in relieving the tensed situation in Syria," he concluded.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20694

- **Iraq one of most important markets for Turkey**

Turkish Economy Minister Zafer Caglayan said that Iraq was one of the most important markets in Turkey's exports.

Turkish Economy Minister Zafer Caglayan said on Sunday that Iraq was one of the most important markets in Turkey's exports.

According to the figures by the Turkish statistical authority, Turkey's exports to Iraq rose by 35 percent to 6.8 billion U.S. dollars year-on-year between January and August 2012, he said.

"We expect Turkey's exports to Iraq to exceed 11.5 billion U.S. dollars at the end of 2012 and Iraq to be the second most important export partner of Turkey," he said.

<http://www.aa.com.tr/en/rss/90628--iraq-one-of-most-important-markets-for-turkey>

- **UK, US munitions damage births in Iraq (press tv)**

A study has found that US and UK weapons ammunition were linked to local babies suffering heart defects, brain dysfunctions and de-formed limbs.

The study published by the Bulletin of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology on October 14, revealed a shocking rise in birth defects among children in Iraq after the US and Britain invaded the country in 2003, Russia's English-language news channel RT reported.

The report showed a connection between military activities in the Middle Eastern country and the rising number of miscarriage and deformity of babies being born.

The study documented 56 families in the city of Fallujah, which was invaded by US troops in 2004. It also examined births in Basrah in southern Iraq that was attacked by British forces in 2003.

Between 2007 and 2010 in Fullujah, over half of all the surveyed babies were born with birth defects. Before the US-led invasion of Iraq, the figure was one in 10.

In Basrah's Maternity Hospital, over 20 babies out of 1000 were born with defects in 2003, which makes the figure 17 times higher than it was in the previous decade.

The UK government has refused to take the survey seriously regarding birth defects in Iraq as a government spokesman said there was no "reliable scientific or medical evidence to confirm a link between conventional ammunition and birth defects in Basrah."

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/14/266687/uk-us-munitions-damage-births-in-iraq/>

- **UAE firms increase gas production in northern Iraq (AP)**

BAGHDAD, Oct 14 (AP) -- Two Emirati energy companies producing natural gas in Iraq's Kurdish region say they have boosted output to the equivalent of 80,000 barrels of oil a day.

Dana Gas and Crescent Petroleum said Sunday that production after four years of operation stands at 340 million cubic feet of gas a day and 15,000 barrels a day of condensed liquid gas.

They said the natural gas feeds local power stations that generate 1,750 megawatts of electricity for 4 million people in the three-province region.

The companies said that as of September, they have invested \$975 million to develop natural gas production in the Kurdish region since 2007.

The Kurdish section of northern Iraq has its own semi-autonomous government.

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_IRAQ_GAS?SITE=FLPET&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE

2. IRAN

- **Iran's FM arrives in Baku for ECO meeting**

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi has arrived in Azerbaijani capital Baku to take part in a summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

Salehi arrived in Baku late on Sunday to attend the 20th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of ECO, which will be held on Monday. He is also expected to meet with senior officials of the country.



The ministerial meeting of ECO is scheduled to be followed by the 12th Summit of Heads of State/Government of ECO, in which Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will partake on Tuesday.

Last week, Salehi met with ECO Secretary-General Shamil Aleskerov in Tehran, and he called on the organization to broaden its relations with other regional and international bodies.

“In the path of progress, the ECO should expand its relations with other regional and international organizations and identify opportunities for cooperation,” Salehi said on October 7.

For his part, Aleskerov described the Islamic Republic as an ECO “significant player” and appreciated Iran for hosting the ECO secretariat.

ECO is an intergovernmental regional organization established in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey for the purpose of promoting economic, technical and cultural cooperation among the member states.

In 1992, the ECO expanded its members to include seven new countries of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/15/266720/salehi-arrives-in-baku-for-eco-meeting/>

- **Iran to outperform Qatar in gas production at South Pars**

An Iranian natural gas industry official says the country's natural gas production from South Pars gas field will hit 800 million cubic meters (cu.m.) per day before the end of 2015, which will exceed the neighboring Qatar's output from the field.



Managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) Mousa Sourı noted on Sunday that at the moment 10 active refinery phases of the gas field located in Asaluyeh in the southern Iranian province of Bushehr are producing 254 million cu.m. of natural gas per day.

He went on to say that Qatar is currently producing 550-560 million cu.m. of gas per day from the field.

The official noted that refineries related to phases 15 and 16 of the field as well as offshore section of phases 17 and 18 will be made operational before the end of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20, 2012) and gas production will start in phases 17 and 18.

Sourı stated that 10 out of 24 phases of the huge gas field have become operational since 2002, with each phase yielding 25 million cu.m. of natural gas, 40,000 barrels of condensate, 200 tons of sulfur and one million tons of liquefied gas per day.

The managing director of POGC added that according to the contractor's projections, phase 12 of the field, whose output is equal to three ordinary phases of South Pars gas field, will come on stream during the current Iranian calendar year.

Iran, which sits on the world's second largest natural gas reserves after Russia, has been trying to enhance its gas production by increasing foreign and domestic investments, especially in its South Pars gas field.

The South Pars gas field covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which are in Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, i.e. North Dome, are in Qatar's territorial waters.

The Iranian gas field has 14 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, about eight percent of the world's reserves, and more than 18 billion barrels of LNG resources.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/14/266664/iran-to-outdo-qatar-in-south-pars/>

3. SYRIA

- **Four Workers Martyred, Others Injured in Terrorist Attack against a Bus in Homs**

An armed terrorist group on Sunday targeted a bus carrying workers with an explosive device near al-Aabrini crossroad on Zaydal – al-Jaberiye road to the east of Homs city, killing 4 workers and injuring 20 others, a source in the province said.



The source added that the engineering units dismantled 12 explosive devices of various weights planted by terrorists on Zaydal-al-Jaberiye road in Homs countryside.

The Armed Forces targeted a terrorists' gathering in the city of al-Rastan in Homs province, killing and injuring dozens of the terrorists.

SANA reporter was informed by a source in the province that terrorists Mahmoud Obeid, Iyad Idrees, Mahmoud Shahhoud, Samer Rahmoun and a terrorist of Tunisian nationality nicknamed Abu al-Qaqa'a were identified among the dead.

Another army unit clashed with and eliminated an armed terrorist group in al-Dayabyeh town in al-Qseir countryside, among the killed terrorists was the leader of the group, terrorist Abdul-Salam Harba.

Authorities clashed with an armed terrorist group in al-Husn area in Homs countryside, killing scores of terrorists, among them was terrorists Nizar Mirza, the leader of the terrorist group.

A unit of the Armed Forces on Sunday destroyed terrorists' hideouts and a number of anti-aircraft missiles near al-Zeraa school and al-Inzarat neighborhood in Masaken Hanana in Aleppo City.

The army members also killed scores of terrorists in the area.

Also, amilitary unit destroyed two cars equipped with DShK machineguns, two large trucks supplied with a mortar launcherand eight cars for carrying terrorists, killing dozens of them near Issam al-Ghadiri School in al-Halwaniyeh in Aleppo.

Authorities foil attempt to detonate booby-trapped truck loaded with about 3 tons of explosives near al-Layramoon Roundabout in Aleppo city.

Another military unit targeted terrorists' gatherings in Bab al-Nairab and near the Park in Aleppo, destroying four mortar launchers and ten vehicles for carrying terrorists and killing tens of them including terrorist groups' leaders.

The body of terrorist Ahmad Abdul-Rahman nicknamed with Sheikh al-Jabal, of non-Syrian nationality, was identified.

Units of the armed forces destroyed 4 dens for armed terrorists and two cars equipped with DShK machineguns, and several vehicles loaded with weapons and ammunitions in qualitative operations near al-Ajzeh roundabout and the Sports Institute in Bustan al-Basha in Aleppo city, killing and injuring scores of terrorists.

A unit of the armed forces destroyed three cars carrying weapons and ammunition in a qualitative operation that left several terrorists killed near al-Sroubian pool in Bustan al-Basha in Aleppo.

The terrorist Mohammad Mahmoud al-Sukhni, leader of a terrorist group, was killed, along with all his group's members in a qualitative operation by the armed forces near al-Marjeh roundabout in Aleppo.

In Aleppo countryside, a unit of the Armed Forces attacked a terrorist gathering in Arab Fattoumeh area and destroyed five pick-ups and killed all terrorists in them.

Among the killed terrorists were Riad al-Sarhan, the leader, of Egyptian nationality, Azz Eddin al-Masri, RPG shooter, of Egyptian nationality, and Khalil Abdul-Aziz, sniper, of Saudi nationality.

A number of terrorists were killed in a explosive device explosion in Khan al-Assal area and five cars and a truck loaded with weapons and ammunitions were destroyed.

In Aleppo city, the Armed Forces carried out qualitative operations attacking terrorist gatherings near Antakia Gate in the old City of Aleppo, Kastal Harami, al-Hatab and al-Tananir squares, al-Ahrar square in al-Kallaseh and al-Haj Bridge. Heavy losses were inflicted on the terrorists.

The Armed Forces attacked terrorist gatherings in al-Jandoul, al-Fursan, Deir Hafer, Ein Jara and Kafar Naha areas leading to killing and wounding tens of terrorists and destroying their DShK-equipped vehicles.

A Citizen Injured in Explosive Device Blast in Mazzeh, Damascus

Citizen Ayman Yousef Wannous was injured in a blast of an explosive device planted by an armed terrorist group inside a car near al-Fatah Mosque in al-Mazzeh area in Damascus city.

SANA reporter was informed that Wannous, who works for al-Azmena private magazine, was severely injured.

The reporter added that Wannous was admitted to the hospital to receive treatment.

Army Units Clean Some Towns in Eastern Ghota in Damascus Countryside from Armed Terrorist Groups

Units of the Armed Forces cleared towns of Zbdeen, Deir al-Assafir, Shaba'a, Muhamadiyah and Jisreen in the Eastern Ghota in Damascus Countryside of armed terrorist groups.

Army Eliminates Scores of Terrorists in Idleb

The Armed Forces eliminated large numbers of terrorists during qualitative operations carried out in several areas in Idleb province.

A source in the province told SANA that the army targeted terrorists' gatherings in the areas of Saraqib, Jabal al-Zawya, al-Alyah, al-Ghassanyeh and al-Zi'inyeh, eliminating large numbers of the terrorists and destroying a Mortar and DShK-equipped cars.

The source added that the army killed scores of terrorists in Heish town in Idleb countryside, destroying rocket launchers and dozens of DShK-equipped cars.

A unit of the Armed Forces clashed with an armed terrorist group in al-Doweila area in Idleb countryside, eliminating all of the group's members.

Among the killed terrorists was Salaheddin Ayyoub, leader of the so-called "Mohammad's Soldiers Battalion".

A Civilian Martyred, Two Others Injured by Terrorist's Gunfire in Hama

An armed terrorist group opened fire on civilians in al-Aaydeen Camp in Hama City, Killing a civilian and injuring two others.

An official source told SANA reporter that terrorists were shooting citizens in the Camp from their Taxi car causing the martyrdom of civilian Rashid Saadi and the injury of two others.

Authorities Arrest Terrorists in Hama City

The authorities in Hama city arrested two terrorists, one of them disguised as a woman, who were planting an explosive device in al-Hader area in the city.

A source in the province told SANA reporter that the authorities seized a bag including 15 kilo grams of highly explosive materials attached to batteries and a number of detonators.

The source added that the authorities clashed with a terrorist group which tried to cover the two terrorists while planting the explosive device and eliminated two members.

A Number of Terrorists Eliminated, Weapons Seized in Countryside of Hama

The authorities carried out a qualitative operation against terrorists near Kafr al-Ton crossroad in the countryside of Hama, Killing some of them and seizing their weapons.

Armed Forces Eliminate Terrorists in Deir Ezzor

A unit of the Armed Forces targeted on Sunday a number of terrorists gathering near al-Orfi Mosque in Bor Said street in Deri Ezzor city and killed several of them.

A source in the province told SANA reporter that a unit of the Armed Forces eliminated a gathering of terrorists in al-Takaya Street in al-Jbeilieh area and arrested one of the most wanted terrorists and eliminated an armed terrorist group near al-Rawdah Mosque.

Meanwhile, a terrorist was killed while he was planting an explosive device in Cinema Fouad Street.

Authorities eliminate a number of terrorists in Hama Countryside, Seize Weapons

The authorities in Hama province eliminated several terrorists in a qualitative operation against an armed terrorist group.

A source in the province told SANA reporter that machineguns and ammunitions were seized.

In Idlib province, the Armed Forces eliminated large numbers of terrorists in Hish town and destroyed missile launchers and tens of DShK-equipped vehicles.

Armed Forces Confront Terrorists Trying to Infiltrate into Prophet Younes mountain top

A unit of the Armed Forces confronted an armed terrorist group that tried to infiltrate into Prophet Younes Mountain top in Lattakia countryside and eliminated tens of them and injured others.

SANA reporter quoted a source in the province as saying that large amounts of ammunitions were seized including machineguns, NATO sniper rifles and RPG launchers.

Authorities Inflict Heavy Losses Upon Terrorists in Hasaka

Authorities clashed with an armed terrorist group in al-Kantari area on Hasaka-Raqqa road, inflicting heavy losses upon terrorists.

A source in the province told SANA that scores of terrorists were killed, adding that the authorities confiscated a DShK-equipped pick-up, 2 PKC machineguns and large amounts of munitions.

<http://sana.sy/eng/337/2012/10/15/446944.htm>

- **UN envoy welcomes Iran proposal on Syria**

Lakhdar Brahimi thanks Tehran for efforts to solve Syrian conflict after holding talks with Iranian officials.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi has given visiting UN-Arab League envoy Lakhdar Brahimi a proposal aimed at ending the 19-month-long conflict in Syria.

Salehi said that Tehran has "handed its unofficial detailed proposal in writing aimed at solving the Syrian crisis" to Brahimi as well as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, in comments broadcast on Arabic-language Al-Alam television on Sunday.

He did not go into details about the proposals, only adding that Iran, the main backer of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, would support efforts by the international envoy.

Brahimi, who arrived in Tehran from Turkey after meeting with Turkish officials, welcomed the Iranian initiative.

"I thank you for the proposals and as I told you, there are some ideas in your proposals which can help by adding to that forwarded by other nations who are also important with regards to the Syrian situation," Brahimi said in a joint press briefing.

"We hope all these ideas gather into a project to put an end to the Syrian people's nightmare.

"I am repeating the call by the United Nations secretary general (Ban Ki-moon) for the initiation of a ceasefire by the Syrian government and asking the opposition to reciprocate once the government commenced," he added.

Talks with Ahmadinejad

Brahimi later on Sunday met with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in talks during which the Iranian leader repeated his government's offer of help in solving the Syrian crisis.

Iran "is ready to co-operate and help in order for the Syrian people to live in calmness and security," the presidency website reported.

"Fighting in Syria means the spread of insecurity in the whole region and efforts exerted to break up Syria will lead to decades of insecurity in the region due to the country's ethnic structure," Ahmadinejad told the veteran Algerian diplomat.

"The solution to improve the Syrian situation is for all parties to reach this conclusion that with calmness and security, the Syrian issue can be solved," the Iranian president said.

"No one should seek to impose his opinion on others and the Syrian people in completely free elections should say their views and everyone should respect the Syrian people's choice," he added.

Brahimi was quoted by the website as saying that he sought Iran's "help and co-operation in bringing about stability and security in Syria".

The international envoy is due to meet Saeed Jalili, the top Iranian security official, on Monday before leaving for Baghdad, Iraq's capital, later that day, the state television's website said.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/20121014234245373603.html>

- **Rights group says Syria used cluster bombs**

Human Rights Watch report finds government forces have dropped anti-personnel cluster munitions on civilian areas.

Syrian government forces have dropped Russian-made cluster bombs over civilian areas in the past week as they battle to reverse rebel gains on a strategic highway, according to the watchdog group Human Rights Watch.

The bombs were dropped from planes and helicopters, with many of the strikes taking place near the main north-south highway running through the northwestern town of Maarat al-Numan, HRW said in a report released on Sunday.

Rebels seized Maarat al-Numan from President Bashar al-Assad's troops last week, cutting the route from the capital Damascus to Aleppo, Syria's biggest city. Government forces have been trying to retake the area since then.

HRW previously reported Syrian use of cluster bombs, which have been banned by most countries, in July and August but the renewed strikes indicate the government's determination to regain strategic control in the northwest.

Cluster munitions can drop hundreds of bomblets on a wide area as an anti-personnel weapon, designed to kill as many people as possible. Human rights groups say their use in civilian-populated areas can be a war crime.

More than 100 nations have banned their use, stockpiling, transfer or sale under a convention which became international law in 2010, but Syria has not signed it, nor have Russia, China or the US.

Long-term damage

Bomblets that do not initially explode can litter the ground, killing and maiming civilians long after a war is over. Towns targeted included Maarat, Tamanea, Taftanaz and al-Tah.

Cluster bombs have also been used in other areas in Homs, Aleppo and Lattakia provinces as well as near Damascus, the New York-based rights group said.

"Syria's disregard for its civilian population is all too evident in its air campaign, which now apparently includes dropping these deadly cluster bombs into populated areas," Steve Goose, arms director at HRW, said.

Syrian government officials were not immediately available to comment on the HRW report.

Initial information about the use of the explosives came from videos posted online by opposition activists although HRW investigators said it had confirmed the incidents in interviews with resident in two towns.

It had no information on casualties. The cluster bombs were Russian-made but it was not known how or when Syria acquired them, HRW said.

Residents from Taftanaz and Tamanea - both near Maarat al-Numan - told HRW interviewers that helicopters dropped cluster munitions on or near their towns last Tuesday.

One that hit Tamanea released smaller bomblets in an area between two schools, a resident was quoted as saying in the HRW report.

"The bomblets that exploded were the ones that hit the ground on the tip, we collected the ones that didn't explode, their tip didn't touch the ground," the resident said.

People were taking away unexploded bomblets as souvenirs, a highly dangerous action as they can still explode at the slightest touch or movement. Video showed some civilians carrying the bomblets around and throwing them on the ground.

"The cluster munition strikes and unexploded ordnance they leave behind pose a huge danger to civilian populations, who often seem unaware how easily these submunitions could still explode," Goose said.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/20121014103651157108.html>

- **Syria and Turkey ban flights as ties plummet**

Both countries ban civilian flights from their airspace, just days after Turkish interception of a Syrian passenger jet.

Syria has said Turkish civilian flights are banned from flying over its territory after a similar move by Turkey on Syrian flights, as relations between the former allies continue to plunge to new depths.

A Syrian foreign ministry statement, carried by the state news agency SANA, said the ban would take effect on Sunday.

The decision, "in accordance with the principle of reciprocity", was in retaliation for Turkey's move to stop Syrian civil aviation flights over its territory, SANA said.

The announcement came after Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkey foreign minister, said: "Yesterday we closed our airspace to Syrian civilian flights as we have previously done for Syrian military flights."

Ties between Turkey and Syria took a sharp turn for the worse when they engaged in sporadic cross-border shelling last week.

Turkey intercepted on Wednesday a Syrian passenger jet carrying what it said were Russian-made munitions for the Syrian army.

Syria has denounced the interception as air piracy, while Russia said the cargo was radar parts that complied with international law.

Turkey has not yet announced a similar ban but said it will ground Syrian civilian aircraft again if it suspects they are carrying military equipment for the forces of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Growing tensions

Davutoglu, held talks with Arab and European leaders in Istanbul on Saturday. He met Guido Westerwelle, German foreign minister, before the pair met Abdelbaset Sieda, the head of the Syrian National Council opposition group.

"The Syrian government is trying to export the crisis to the neighbouring countries so that the pressure on them will lessen," Sieda said.

Davutoglu also met Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN envoy to Syria, and Nabil Elaraby, the Arab League chief.

Brahimi was in Iranian capital, Tehran, on Sunday for talks with Ali Akbar Salehi, Iran's foreign minister, who handed him a proposal aimed at ending the conflict.

Salehi said Iran had "handed its unofficial detailed proposal in writing aimed at solving the Syrian crisis" to Brahimi as well as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, in comments broadcast on Arabic-language al-Alam television.

He did not go into details about the proposals, only adding Tehran would support efforts by the international envoy.

Brahimi welcomed the Iranian initiative and is due to meet Saeed Jalili, Iran's top security official, on Monday before leaving for Baghdad later that day, the website of state television reported.

Brahimi is on a regional tour aimed at finding a solution to the conflict in Syria after Damascus rejected a UN call to implement a unilateral ceasefire.

At a joint news conference with Westerwelle on Saturday, Davutoglu said Turkey was prepared to use force again if it was attacked, just as it did last week when a shell fired across the border from Syria killed five Turkish villagers.

SANA reported that Syrian government officials and Russia's ambassador in Damascus discussed ways to establish a joint Syrian-Turkish security committee that would "control the security situation on both sides of the border in the framework of respecting the national sovereignty of the two countries".

Turkey has made no comment on the proposal, and it is unclear whether Russia has presented it to the Turkish government yet.

Sieda said that "instead of suggesting a dialogue between Turkey and Syria, Russia should pressure the Assad regime they have been supporting and prevent them from massacring its own people as well as ceasing arms shipment to Syria".

Rallies in Lebanon

In another Syria-related development, hundreds of people took to the streets of Beirut in neighbouring Lebanon on Sunday for two separate rallies, one expressing support for the Assad regime and the other calling for its downfall.

Demonstrators held posters bearing slogans including "Thank you Russia!" and "Lebanon forever with Assad's Syria," and also chanted slogans against Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which support the revolt against the regime.

They also waved flags of Syria, Iran and the Lebanese group Hezbollah, which supports Assad.

Since the anti-regime uprising broke out in Syria in March last year, Russia and China have vetoed three draft UN Security Council resolutions aimed at pressuring Assad's regime.

Later, in the heart of Beirut, hundreds of supporters of a radical Sunni Muslim leader, Sheikh Ahmed al-Assir, gathered for a protest held for "our brothers in Syria".

The participants waved Syrian independence flags in support for the ongoing revolt.

Syria dominated Lebanon politically and militarily for three decades, and the small Mediterranean country is deeply divided over the conflict in its neighbour.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/2012101443838156982.html>

4. ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- **IAF strikes Gaza Strip 3 times in 24 hours; 5 killed**

Air force hits rocket-launching terror cell in Gaza, killing 2, wounding 2; PRC: "Occupation" to bear consequences for crimes.

The IAF struck a rocket-launching cell in the central Gaza Strip on Sunday evening soon after it fired projectiles at an Israeli farming district, the IDF said.

Palestinian medical sources said the air strike killed two men and wounded two others.

Israeli strikes killed a total of five global jihad members over the past 24 hours.

"The terrorist cell which fired rockets into Israel a short while ago was targeted," the IDF Spokesman's Office said, confirming the strike. "An accurate strike was identified."

Following the attack, the Popular Resistance Committees confirmed that the dead belonged to their organization, and vowed retaliation against Israel, Palestinian news agency Ma'an reported.

The terror group stated that Izz Addin Abu Nuseira, 23, and Ahmad Abu Fatayir, 22, were both members of the PRC's military wing.

"We hereby announce that it's time to pay the toll and the occupation will have to bear the consequences of its crimes," Ma'an quoted the PRC as saying. The group also confirmed that the two members had fired five mortar shells at Israel on Saturday.

Early on Sunday morning, the Israel Air Force struck a terrorist rocket-launching crew in Gaza that was about to fire at southern Israel, killing one member. The air strike came after Palestinian rocket attacks on the Eshkol region overnight.

An Israeli strike against two men on a motorbike in northern Gaza on Saturday night killed the commander of a jihadi-Salafi terrorist group, Palestinian medical sources said. The man has been named as Hisham al- Saedni, also known as Abu al- Waleed al-Maqdissi, believed to head the Tawhid and Jihad (“One God and Holy War”) group. Saedni and his accomplice had fired rockets into southern Israel, took part in terrorist attacks on Israel from the Sinai Peninsula, and were in the final stages of plotting a new attack, an IDF source said.

Tawhid and Jihad is a rival of Hamas, shares an Islamist ideology with al-Qaida, and sources have said that Saedni joined al-Qaida in Iraq at the beginning of the US-led invasion in 2003.

Hamas detained Saedni in March 2011, freeing him this past August after 17 months.

Last year, men identifying themselves with Tawhid and Jihad kidnapped and killed a pro-Palestinian Italian activist for the International Solidarity Movement, Vittorio Arrigoni, in an apparent attempt to secure the release of Saedni.

On Friday, a Palestinian Grad missile fired at Netivot triggered air raid sirens, sending residents running for cover, before exploding in the backyard of a family home. The projectile sent shrapnel flying into the home, piercing the walls of the building’s walls, including a boy’s bedroom. One civilian was treated for shock and then taken to the hospital, Negev police said.

A few hours after the rocket attack, the air force responded by striking three terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip overnight Friday.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu praised the IDF’s actions in Gaza during Sunday’s weekly cabinet meeting, saying Israel would continue to act aggressively and with full strength both in response to attacks from Gaza, and to prevent others.

In parallel, the prime minister said, the government was actively battling cyber attacks on the country's computers. Netanyahu said that he established a national cyber bureau last year to deflect such attacks.

This cyber staff was working on stopping such attacks by developing a "digital Iron Dome" to defend against "computer terrorism," he said.

"Just as we have the Iron Dome against missiles and a security fence against infiltrators and terrorism, we will also have a similar response to cyber attacks," Netanyahu said. "But just like the building of the fence, time is needed to complete it, and we are working on this non-stop."

<http://www.jpost.com/VideoArticles/Video/Article.aspx?id=287777>

- **Shas party leadership still hangs in the balance**

Mediation efforts between bitter rivals Eli Yishai and Arye Deri continue; no decision would mean Rabbi Yosef to rule on matter.

Eli Yishai and Arye Deri, bitter rivals for the political leadership of the Shas party, shook hands on Sunday at the brit mila of a great-grandson of Shas spiritual leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.



Deri, the founder and former leader of Shas, is seeking to return to his position as party chairman 13 years after his conviction and incarceration for accepting bribes.

Current chairman and Interior Minister Yishai refuses to vacate his position as the most senior Shas politician, however, which has led to rampant speculation over the future of the party's leadership.

On Sunday morning, the two adversaries stood shoulder to shoulder throughout the ceremony but did not exchange words or even look at each other.

After the service was complete Yishai approached Yosef, who served as sandak (one who holds the child on his lap during the ritual), and was warmly greeted by the rabbi with playful slaps to the face.

Deri received similar treatment after Yishai had moved away, with the two shaking hands perfunctorily a short while after the ceremony.

Mediation efforts between Yishai and Deri are ongoing in order to arrive at an arrangement where both politicians can agree to run in the coming elections together. If they do not reach an agreement soon, Yosef is expected to rule on the matter and declare one of them party leader.

Deri remains extremely popular with Shas voters and many inside the party despite his jail sentence for corruption.

Yosef, however, is reluctant to depose Yishai, despite a promise made to Deri, before he went to prison, that he would return as party leader.

Religious Services Minister Ya'acov Margi told Channel 2 on Sunday that Yishai will remain Shas leader for the coming elections, and if Deri wanted to return as number two in the party the door would be open to him.

“Under no circumstances will Eli [Yishai] play second fiddle to Deri,” Margi said.

Deri has publicly touted the possibility of establishing his own party if he is not able to return to Shas as party chairman – although Margi suggested this is merely a tactic to pressure the Shas leadership into allowing him to take up the leadership mantle.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=287841>

- **Islamic Jihad 'ready to respond' to Israeli aggression**

GAZA CITY (Ma'an) -- Islamic Jihad's military wing is ready to respond to Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, a spokesman said Sunday.

"Our group and the military wing of Hamas, the al-Qassam Brigades, are completely ready to respond to Israeli violations depending on the situation on the ground. We might have never been as ready as at this time," al-Quds Brigades spokesman Abu Ahmad told Ma'an.



After Israel bombed southern Gaza last Sunday, Islamic Jihad's military wing the al-Quds Brigades joined forces with Hamas' armed wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, to fire rockets at Israeli military sites.

Al-Qassam Brigades spokesman Abu Ubeida said the joint operation demonstrated the "high level of coordination" between the factions.

Israeli airstrikes over the past 24 hours have killed five people in Gaza.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=528936>

5. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Abou Hamed calls for mass demonstration Friday**

Former MP Mohamed Abou Hamed has called for a mass demonstration on Friday to enable secular forces to return to the Tahrir square.

Writing on his Twitter account, Abou Hamed called for protests against the Muslim Brotherhood whom he said "spoiled" the marches of the secular forces last Friday.

Members of the Muslim Brotherhood and secular-leaning groups held separate rallies in Tahrir Square Friday, later leading to clashes in which 110 people were injured, according to the Health Ministry.

Two buses used by the Muslim Brotherhood to bring in supporters were also set alight.

This was the first time in which supporters and opponents of President Mohamed Morsy have clashed since he took office in June. In August, Abou Hamed led a march of some 3,000 people to the presidential palace to protest against Morsy and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Abou Hamed's recent call comes a day after some 50 secular political parties and groups called for protests against what they call the "aggression of the Brotherhood" against peaceful protestors in Tahrir.

Leading figures in the Muslim Brotherhood, such as Essam al-Erian denied such accusations, saying that most of the injured protestors are members of the Brotherhood.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/abou-hamed-calls-mass-demonstration-friday>

- **Sunday's papers: Judiciary 'defeats' presidency, accusations over Tahrir violence fly**

The news dominating Sunday's papers revolves around Abdel Meguid Mahmoud, who walks out of a meeting with President Mohamed Morsy "victorious" as he retains his position as public prosecutor, despite the president's attempt to send him to the Vatican as Egypt's ambassador.

Coverage is framed in divergent ways, depending on the paper one reads; while privately-owned daily Al-Tahrir speaks of "the judiciary's triumph over the presidency" on its front page, ruling Muslim Brotherhood mouthpiece Freedom and Justice runs the headline, "The president accepts the Supreme Judiciary Council's request for the public prosecutor to retain his position."

State-run Al-Ahram reports that Morsy "backed down" after yesterday's meeting between him and the SJC ended the "crisis" between the president and the public prosecutor, who came

under fire after all 24 defendants in the Battle of the Camel trial were acquitted of killing protesters. In a letter sent from the SJC to the president, the former expressed their deep gratitude for Morsy's preservation of the independence of the judiciary, Al-Ahram reports. Mahmoud is paraphrased as saying they exchanged their points of view on the matter, after which president agreed to let him retain his position.

The Wafd Party's mouthpiece Al-Wafd, however, shows a much more defiant Mahmoud. He is quoted as saying nothing but assassination can make him leave his position. This narrative is also reflected in many of the privately-owned papers, like daily Al-Dostour, which emphasizes the judiciary's victory over Morsy.

State-run daily Rose al-Youssef quotes Mahmoud as saying that the effort to dismiss him is an attempt at the "Brotherhoodization" of the judiciary.

Conflicting reporting abounds today. Whereas most papers quote Mahmoud as saying that Morsy accepted a request submitted by the SJC asking for Mahmoud to retain his position, Al-Tahrir quotes him, as well as the SCJ, denying any such request was sent to the presidency.

Freedom and Justice features only a short piece on page three, with no mention of any of the above contentions. The piece does make a reference to "thousands" of protesters who supported Morsy's decision to dismiss Mahmoud and were calling for the purification of the judiciary in front of the Supreme Court.

Other news widely publicized is Friday's clashes between Brotherhood members and sympathizers and other protesters. Freedom and Justice dedicated a lot of space to the clashes. The paper reports the arrest of three suspects in the burning of buses that transported Brotherhood members to Tahrir Square, one of whom has a criminal record.

On page eight, the paper features a story about a lobby group meeting of businessmen and private satellite channel owners in one of Naguib Sawiris' hotels. "Media experts" are quoted as

saying the purpose of this closed meeting was to further develop anti-Islamist discourse, said to be widespread amongst privately-owned channels.

On the same page, the head of the Muslim Brotherhood central Cairo administrative office, Karem Dhawan, says the Brotherhood called upon its members to go the square at 3:00 pm Friday to stop the clashes, which led to 71 wounded members. Furthermore, he said they were given instructions to restrain themselves, and that they left Tahrir Square even though they were capable of facing the confrontation.

In the meantime, accusations of responsibility were made on both sides, from the Brotherhood against the protesters and from the protesters against the Brotherhood. Both sides hold the other accountable and say they are suing, Al-Ahram and Al-Wafd reported.

Managing editor for privately-owned daily Al-Shorouk, Wael Qandil, writes an opinion piece characterizing the day as “the Friday of swimming in the river of madness, where an absurdist war erupted, blood was shed in vain, so that everybody lost, and the only winner was looking from a distance laughing.” Slogans calling for the right of the martyrs, Qandil writes, were replaced by partisan war cries, and that in the shadow of the Battle of the Camel acquittals. “They did Mubarak’s feloul and the Battle of the Camel stars the greatest imaginable service.”

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/sunday-s-papers-judiciary-%E2%80%98defeats-presidency-accusations-over-tahrir-violence-fly>

- **Rival protesters clash in Egypt's capital**

At least 100 people injured after clashes erupt during rival rallies in Cairo's Tahrir Square after Friday prayers.

Clashes have erupted in Cairo's Tahrir Square as supporters and opponents of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi tried to wrest control of the iconic square in rival rallies.

The state news agency on Friday cited a doctor at a hospital near Tahrir saying at least 100 people have been injured as protesters showered stones at each other in some of the worst violence over the country's new leader.

The clashes started after Brotherhood supporters tore down a podium belonging to a group that was chanting anti-Morsi slogans, witnesses said.

Morsi's supporters, mainly his powerful Muslim Brotherhood movement, had called their rally to denounce this week's acquittals of Hosni Mubarak-era officials.

His opponents, a coalition of liberal and secular leaning groups, had previously called their own rally to denounce Islamist control over a body drafting the new constitution, and Morsi's performance in office.

"Down with the Supreme Guide's rule," Morsi's opponents chanted, referring to Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammed Badie.

Confusion reigned in the large square, the nerve centre of protests that toppled Mubarak early last year, as fighting broke out in several areas of the central Cairo hub.

Protesters torched two buses used by the Brotherhood to drive supporters into central Cairo, sending plumes of smoke into the air, witnesses said.

'Intensifying'

Al Jazeera's Sherine Tadros reporting from Cairo said that the clashes had intensified.

"The clashes were taking place just off Tahrir Square and on the side streets ... they are now happening right in the centre of the square," our correspondent said.

Despite multiple statements from Brotherhood leaders saying they would attend the rally, the group denied on Twitter that any of its members was involved in the fighting.

"We are not involved in Tahrir clashes, and none of our members were there," it wrote on its Twitter account, prompting a wave of derision from other people who posted videos of apparent Brotherhood members in Tahrir.

Morsi barely scraped through to win an election in June that presented voters with an unpopular choice between an Islamist president or Ahmed Shafiq, Mubarak's last premier.

Opponents of Morsi include influential judges who were again infuriated by the president when he tried sacking the state prosecutor on Thursday after the acquittals of 24 former regime figures accused of organising attacks on protesters.

The state prosecutor refused to step down and take Morsi's offer of an ambassadorship in the Vatican, and an influential judges' club described Morsi's decree as an attack on judicial independence.

After his election, Morsi had tried to reverse a court order that dissolved the Islamist-dominated parliament, sparking a backlash from the judiciary.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/20121012133639244689.html>

6. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Former Lebanese PM: UAV not a state decision**

Siniora criticizes Hezbollah leader Nasrallah for sending drone that implicates Lebanon in potential Israeli reaction, 'Daily Star' reports.

Former Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora said that the Hezbollah-dispatched unmanned aerial vehicle that flew over Israel was sent at Iran's behest, and was not a Lebanese decision, a statement issued by Siniora's press office said on Sunday.

"Sending the drone over Israel is not a Lebanese decision, however the move was made at an Iranian behest. Such act needs techniques only available in Iran," Lebanese news site The Daily Star quoted Siniora as telling his visitors at his Sidon's office.



The former prime minister did not condemn the infiltration, stating instead: "We are proud of any triumph against the Israeli enemy, however Hezbollah Chief Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah hasn't consulted the Lebanese state about sending a drone over Israel."

He added in the official statement that such behavior implicates Lebanon in possible military operations and Israeli reactions that threaten the security of Lebanese citizens.

"Nasrallah hasn't asked the Lebanese if they are prepared to get engaged in such battle or into a war against Israel," he said in his statement.

The former prime minister's comments come as a response to Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah's confirmation for sending a drone aircraft into Israel which was then shot down by the IDF.

Nasrallah said in a televised speech on the Al- Manar station that the drone was Iranian-made and that it was shot down near the Dimona nuclear reactor.

"The drone flew over sensitive installations inside southern Palestine," he said.

Nasrallah claimed the Ayoub drone was designed and manufactured in Iran and assembled in Lebanon, denying reports that the drone was a Russian design.

The Hezbollah leader said the drone was sent as a response to what he referred to as Israel's violations of Lebanese airspace since 2006.

<http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=287863>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Rights groups demand release of Bahraini activist Nabeel Rajab**

Human rights groups have called on the Manama regime to nullify the “politically motivated” conviction of prominent jailed rights activist Nabeel Rajab.

“The criminal court verdict cites no evidence, not even an allegation, that Nabeel Rajab participated in or advocated violent protests,” said Joe Stork, Human Rights Watch’s deputy Middle East and North Africa director, on Sunday.



On October 5, the Bahraini activist, who is serving a three-year term for taking part in rallies against the Al Khalifa regime, launched a “full hunger strike” in protest against being mistreated by prison officials.

Rajab, the president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, is scheduled to appear in court on Tuesday to appeal his verdict.

Stork also described Rajab’s conviction as a “politically motivated punishment.”

Washington-based Human Rights First also condemned the charges against Rajab as “politically motivated and a direct violation of his freedom of expression.”

“Just last month, the Bahraini government agreed to respect these freedoms and to abide by the recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review,” Human Rights First’s Brian Dooley said. “The kingdom has already abandoned that promise, as it did every promise of reform made before it.”

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders also criticized the Bahraini officials for judicial harassment and arbitrary detention of Rajab, calling it “evidence of the continued criminalization of human rights defenders’ activities.”

Other rights groups, including Amnesty International, have also called for Rajab’s immediate release, saying that he has been jailed only for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Bahrain’s revolution started in mid-February 2011, when demonstrators, inspired by the revolutions of Tunisia and Egypt, started holding massive anti-regime protests.

Dozens of people have been killed in the regime crackdown and the security forces have arrested hundreds, including doctors and nurses accused of treating injured revolutionaries.

A report published by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry in November 2011 found that the Al Khalifa regime had used 'excessive force' in the campaign of suppression and accused Manama of torturing political activists, politicians, and protesters.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/15/266739/bahrain-urged-to-release-rights-activist/>

- **Saudi-backed Bahraini forces clash with protestors**

Heavy clashes have been reported in Bahrain between Saudi-backed forces and protestors who have taken to the streets to show solidarity with political prisoners and jailed medics.



Earlier today, lawyers said in a statement that the five jailed medics have gone on hunger strike to urge “all international organizations to demand their release”.

“They were harshly tortured by authorities while being detained. Torture caused injuries and disabilities whose traces remain on the bodies of the medics,” the statement said.

The medics have been in prison since early October after Bahrain's Court of Cassation, the country's highest court upheld their sentences.

They were among twenty doctors and nurses who worked in Manama during the uprising against the Al Khalifa regime.

Reports say that the medics were given jail terms from up to one month to five years.

The Bahraini authorities charged the medical workers with using hospitals for anti-government activities, possession of weapons, and theft of medical equipment -- claims they denied. The medical workers say the government is only punishing them for treating people who took part in demonstrations.

Since mid-February 2011, anti-government protesters have been staging regular demonstrations in the streets of Bahrain, calling for the Al Khalifa royal family to relinquish power.

On March 14, troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were deployed to the country to assist the Bahraini government in its crackdown on the peaceful protesters.

According to local sources, scores of people have been killed and hundreds arrested in the crackdown in Bahrain.

Physicians for Human Rights say doctors and nurses have been detained, tortured, and even disappeared because they have "evidence of atrocities committed by the authorities, security forces, and riot police" in the crackdown on anti-government protesters.

A report published by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry in November 2011 found that the Al Khalifa regime had used "excessive force" in the campaign of suppression and accused Manama of torturing political activists, politicians, and protesters.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/14/266686/bahraini-forces-clash-with-protestors/>

- **Families of killed Yemenis demand Saleh trial**

Lawyers for families of those killed at anti-regime rally last year have filed charges against ex-government officials.

Lawyers for the families of protesters killed at an anti-regime rally last year have filed charges against several members of Yemen's former regime, including ousted leader Ali Abdullah Saleh.



The charges against Saleh and other ex-regime members, among them his nephew Yehya Abdullah Saleh who still holds a senior post in the central security services, include "inciting and participating in the killing of young protesters" on March 18, 2011.

Lawyers in court on Saturday alleged that according to some eyewitness accounts, several attackers were driven to the site of the killings by cars bearing presidential number plates, an AFP reporter at the hearing said.

On one of the bloodiest days in the year-long uprising against Saleh's rule, gunmen described as the ousted leader's "thugs" sprayed bullets from rooftops around a square at Sanaa University, killing 52 people and wounding scores.

The attack sparked diplomatic scorn and condemnation from Western powers and human rights monitors.

In addition to Saleh and his nephew, the charge sheet lists other top officials including former interior minister Motahar Rashad al-Masri and the former head of central security services, Abdulmalik al-Taieb.

The next hearing in the case is set to take place on November 23.

Hundreds of people were killed in Yemen's uprising that ended when Saleh agreed to step down in return for immunity for himself and his aides, based on a Gulf-brokered power transfer deal.

However, youth groups that have rejected the deal insist that Saleh and his former aides must be stripped of that immunity, and they still stage rallies demanding justice.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/20121013164152985575.html>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Pakistan's Malala has 'very limited' chances**

Military says Malala is making "satisfactory progress", as teenage activist shot by Taliban struggles for life

A Pakistani schoolgirl shot in the head by the Taliban is in critical condition and has slim chances of recovering, a source in the hospital where she is being treated has told Al Jazeera.



The source said on Sunday the next 12 hours were critical for 14-year-old Malala Yousafzai, who is hospitalised in the city of Rawalpindi.

Yousafzai has "very limited chance of life left", said the source, declining to be identified because he is not authorised to speak to the media.

"[The] face and head swelled alot. Face complexion [has] become dark. She could be removed from ventilator within a few hours," he said.

The Pakistani military said on Saturday that Malala's condition was stable. The military spokesperson said that "she was making steady and satisfactory progress, and possibilities of transfer overseas were still being considered".

A specially equipped air ambulance provided by the UAE has been kept as a contingency in case, board of doctors overseeing her, decide to shift her abroad.

The shooting of Yousafzai, who campaigned for the right for women to have an education, has been denounced worldwide and by the Pakistani authorities, who have offered a reward of more than \$100,000 for the capture of her attackers.

'Satisfactory' progress

The military earlier said Yousafzai's "vitals are okay" although they said she was on ventilator.

"A board of doctors is continuously monitoring her condition," the army said.

Raja Pervez Ashraf, prime minister, visited Malala on Friday, paying tribute to her and two friends who were also wounded when a gunman boarded their school bus on Tuesday and opened fire.

Al Jazeera discusses Pakistan's outrage over attack on Malala

"It was not a crime against an individual but a crime against humanity and an attack on our national and social values," he told reporters, pledging renewed vigour in Pakistan's struggle with so-called Islamist militancy.

Kainat, one of the other two girls injured in the attack, is in a stable condition and is expected to make a full recovery within two weeks. She was shot in her upper right arm.

Shazia, the third victim, is due to be released from the combined military hospital in Peshawar and return to swat soon, her family told Al Jazeera.

The attack has sickened Pakistan, where Malala won international prominence with a blog that highlighted atrocities under the Taliban who terrorised the Swat valley from 2007 until a 2009 army offensive.

Activists say the shooting should be a wake-up call to those who advocate appeasement with the Taliban, but analysts suspect there will be no seismic shift in a country that has sponsored radical Islam for decades.

Schools opened with prayers for Malala on Friday and special prayers were held at mosques across the country for her speedy recovery at the country's top military hospital in the city of Rawalpindi.

Schools open

Local police officials told Al Jazeera that the investigation into who was responsible for the attack was ongoing. The perpetrators were witnessed escaping into a nearby slum.

Police had taken in 60 to 70 suspects for questioning, but all were subsequently released. No one is currently being held in the Swat region in connection to the shooting.

Schools in Afghanistan opened Saturday with special prayers for the quick recovery of Yousafzai, in a move officials said was to show solidarity with her.

"To show sympathy to Malala Yousafzai around 9.5 million students all over the country in 15,500 schools and education centres offered prayers for her quick recovery," education ministry spokesman Amanullah Iman told the AFP news agency.

"The students also expressed their solidarity to their sister [Malala] because the attack on her was an attack on education," he said.

"Malala is just a girl and student like us, she shouldn't have been shot," Freshta, a 10 grade pupil told AFP.

"Today we recited Quran and prayed for her recovery," she said.

Clerics on Friday declared the attempt on her life, made by Pakistani Taliban gunmen while the 14-year-old girl was on her way home from school in the Swat valley, to be "un-Islamic".

The joint fatwa, or religious edict, was issued by at least 50 scholars associated with the Sunni Ittehad Council, and appealed to worshippers to observe a "day of condemnation" on Friday.

"Islam holds the killing of one innocent person as killing the entirety of humanity," Hamid Saeed Kazmi, a former religious affairs minister in Pakistan, told reporters.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/10/201210146102206474.html>

- **Militants attack check post in Matni: SP rural among seven killed**

PESHAWAR: Superintendent of Police (Rural) Khurshid Khan and six others, including police and Frontier Constabulary (FC) personnel, were killed whereas 12 others were injured when more 300 militants attacked a police check post set up on the main Peshawar-Kohat Road in the Matni area on the outskirts of Peshawar, DawnNews reported on Monday.

According to police sources, the heavily armed militants attacked the check post, resulting in a three hour gunfight.

Those killed included three policemen and four FC personnel. Sources said the militants had beheaded SP Khan on the spot.

The 12 injured included FC and police personnel who were shifted to the Lady Reading Hospital for treatment.

Federal Interior Minister Rehman Malik announced the Sitara-i-Jurat award for the slain SP in recognition of his bravery.

Funeral prayers of SP (rural) Khan would be offered today.

The militants ransacked the check post and set it on fire, reducing police equipment and weapons in the office to ashes. At least four vehicles and three motorcycles were also destroyed in the attack.

Police sources said the militants fled after the attack and there were no militant casualty figures available as yet whereas a number of security personnel were missing.

<http://dawn.com/2012/10/15/militants-attack-ghaziabad-checkpost-sp-rural-among-seven-killed/>

- **Malala sent to Britain for treatment: ISPR**

ISLAMABAD: Malala Yousufzai, the 14-year-old girl who was wounded in a Taliban attack last week, was sent to the UK for treatment, a statement issued by the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Monday, DawnNews reported.

The decision to send Malala to the United Kingdom was taken after consultations with her family members and all expenses for her treatment would be borne by the Government of Pakistan, the statement added.



Earlier today, an air ambulance had arrived from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to shift Malala abroad as part of contingency plans.

The government had said that the UAE royal family had decided to send the air ambulance for the 14-year-old girl in case doctors decided to send her abroad for treatment.

Meanwhile, an ISPR statement of Sunday said that Malala had been taken off the ventilator for a while, DawnNews reported.

Military spokesman Major General Asim Saleem Bajwa on Sunday had stated that the doctors had been monitoring Malala's condition and were satisfied.

<http://dawn.com/2012/10/15/malala-being-sent-abroad-for-treatmentispr/>

- **Afghan peace negotiator sees progress in talks with Taliban**

KABUL: The Afghan government's efforts to encourage Taliban insurgents to enter peace talks are making progress despite apparent deadlock, a senior government negotiator said on Sunday.



Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, who was wounded in a Taliban attack a year ago, suggested there was behind-the-scenes activity to start a peace process in Afghanistan.

"When politicians are on the stage, they will be always saying something different than what they are discussing in private," he said.

“There (is) progress,” he said, without giving details.

Stanekzai was badly hurt in an explosion detonated by a Taliban suicide bomber in September last year that killed Burhanuddin Rabbani, a former Afghan president and head of the High Peace Council, set up by President Hamid Karzai to liaise with insurgents.

Stanekzai, who suffered injuries to his feet and a lung and lost his hearing on one side in the attack, has returned to work as a senior advisor to Karzai and head of the peace council’s secretariat.

With most foreign combat troops due to pull out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014, a political settlement between the Afghan government and insurgents is widely seen as a way of bringing stability to the country.

Stanekzai said he was optimistic about the prospects for a political settlement but said it was hard to say whether one could be reached before the end of 2014.

“It is very difficult to set a timeline. Sometimes maybe a consensus can be reached when people are under the pressure of time ... that pressure sometimes brings people together,” he said, speaking to a group of foreign reporters visiting Afghanistan on a media tour organised by Nato.

Talks on a political settlement have so far failed to make much headway, while the Taliban said in March they were suspending nascent peace talks with the United States, blaming “shaky, erratic and vague” US statements.

Contacts between the Taliban and the Afghan government have continued, according to Afghan government sources.

Stanezkai also suggested there would be no need to hold separate talks from the Taliban with the Haqqani network, a Pakistan-based group accused of high-profile attacks in Afghanistan, and designated a terrorist organisation by the United States last month.

“They are counting themselves as a part of the Taliban,” he said.

<http://dawn.com/2012/10/15/afghan-peace-negotiator-sees-progress-in-talks-with-taliban/>

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.*

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