



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

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1. IRAQ

- **Kobler arrives in Kirkuk**

Martin Kobler, the Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Iraq arrived in Kirkuk on Thursday Oct.16.



Kobler met, upon arrival, the governor of Kirkuk province Nejem al_Din Karim, and the head of the provincial council, Hassan Turan in addition to the council members.

It is scheduled that Kobler is to meet the representatives of the components in Kirkuk from Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and Christians.

A source in the province said that Kobler's visit comes to discuss the general situation in the province and its elections.

http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GEDJEH

- **Barham Salih: There have been attempts in Baghdad to tarnish the image of Kurdistan.**

Sulaymaniyah / NINA /-- Vice General-Secretary of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Barham Salih,said : "There are illegal attempts in Baghdad to distort the image of Kurdistan region and to create an atmosphere against the Kurds there.

He added during a meeting with a number of journalists and intellectuals who were invited by the political bureau of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan : "President Talabani and Barzani had agreed to form a delegation to represent the Kurds in Baghdad and ask the Kurdish opposition to participate also.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNJIKaF8sJc&NR=1&feature=endscreen>

- **MP calls blocs to avoid interpreting constitution according to their interests**

Baghdad (IraqiNews.com) -MP, Mansour al-Timimi, of the State of Law Coalition called “The Political blocs to avoid interpreting the constitution according to their interests,” assuring that “It must interpreted according to the supreme national interests of the country.”

Speaking to Iraqi News (IraqiNews.com), he said “The dialogue that is based on the constitution is the best solution of the political crisis,” stressing that “The blocs have to realize that escalation of the disputes will not serve any side.”

“All the blocs should resort to the dialogue to solve the crisis through the national meeting,” he added.

“The constitution is the authority for all the politicians if they adhere to it, all the disputes will be settled,” he concluded.

<http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/mp-calls-blocs-to-avoid-interpreting-constitution-according-to-their-interests/#ixzz29Z45OxKl>

2. IRAN

- **Anti-Iran sanctions to harm European economy further: Mehmanparast**

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman has warned that the new EU sanctions against the Islamic Republic will destabilize the already-worsening European economy further.



Ramin Mehmanparast on Tuesday condemned the unilateral sanctions and described them as illegitimate and illegal. He said that the restrictions contravene the international law and regulations, including the freedom of trade and financial transactions between countries.

He went on to say that the EU insistence on using “threadbare and uncivilized tools” instead of diplomacy and negotiations based on mutual respect will only further complicate the matters at hand.

“This approach will not only fail to help resolve issues, but will also have a negative impact on the European economy at the time of present economic crisis and the Europe should be ready to face its consequences,” Mehmanparast added.

Reiterating that Iran has gained experience in dealing with the West’s sanctions over the past three decades, Mehmanparast said the country will not forego its interests under the pressure and will keep up its peaceful nuclear energy program in line with its inalienable rights.

On Monday, EU foreign ministers agreed on imposing a new round of sanctions against Iran despite a UN warning about the humanitarian ramifications of the restrictions previously imposed.

The illegal US-engineered sanctions were imposed based on the unfounded allegation that Iran is pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program.

Iran rejects the allegations and argues that as a committed signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, it has the right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/17/267178/sanctions-to-further-harm-europe-econ/>

- **Tehran to host 3rd Asia Cooperation Dialogue summit in 2018**

Heads of ACD states in the final statement of their first meeting on Wednesday in Kuwait City approved that the third summit would be held in Tehran.

The first ACD meeting wrapped up on Wednesday in Kuwait City while the second meeting will be held in Bangkok Thailand in 2015.



The first meeting also approved that Tehran would host the third expert-level meeting of ACD and the meeting on culture and globalization in December 2012.

Based on the first ACD final statement, Islamabad will host the energy meeting of ACD in 2012 and China would hold a workshop on a model city with the lowest level of carbone dioxide in 2013.

The statement also agreed that Dushanbe would host the 11th ACD ministerial meeting.

The statement also underlined the importance of respecting all regions, religious beliefs and freedom of speech while condemning insults to religious figures.

The Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) as the biggest Asian cooperation organization is a body created in 2002 by 18 members and currently comprises 31 states seeking to promote Asian cultural, economic and social cooperation among member nations at a continental level.

It is also to help integrate separate regional cooperation organizations such as ASEAN, SAARC and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council.

The main objectives of the ACD are to promote interdependence among Asian countries in all areas of cooperation by identifying Asia's common strengths and opportunities which will help

reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for Asian people whilst developing a knowledge-based society within Asia and enhancing community and people empowerment,

expand the trade and financial market within Asia and increase the bargaining power of Asian countries in lieu of competition and, in turn, enhance Asia's economic competitiveness in the global market, serve as the missing link in Asian cooperation by building upon Asia's potentials and strengths through supplementing and complementing existing cooperative frameworks so as to become a viable partner for other regions, and ultimately transform the Asian continent into an Asian Community, capable of interacting with the rest of the world on a more equal footing and contributing more positively towards mutual peace and prosperity.

<http://old.irna.ir/News/Politic/Tehran-to-host-3rd-Asia-Cooperation-Dialogue-summit-in-2018/80375422>

- **Iran President meets Emir of Kuwait**

Kuwait City, Oct 17, IRNA – Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad met with Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Wednesday morning on the sidelines of the first summit of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD).



The ACD is a body established in 2002 to promote Asian cooperation at a continental level and to help integrate separate regional cooperation organizations such as ASEAN, SAARC and the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council.

During the meeting, the two discussed issues of mutual interest including further expansion of all-out ties and reviewed the latest regional and international developments.

The ACD groups Iran, Thailand, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore, Cambodia, Brunei, Mongolia, Bhutan, India, Pakistan,

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Syria.

<http://old.irna.ir/News/Politic/Iran-President-meets-Emir-of-Kuwait/80374753>

- **President Ahmadinejad meets Arab elites in Kuwait**

Kuwait City, Oct 17, IRNA – Visiting President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran held a meeting with 30 scholars and elites of the Arab World at his residence here Wednesday morning.



The Iranian President is in Kuwait to attend the first summit of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD).

The ACD is a body created in 2002 to promote Asian cooperation at a continental level and to help integrate separate regional cooperation organizations such as ASEAN, SAARC and the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council.

A number of scholars from various Islamic sects as well as economic, political and legal Muslim and non-Muslim experts were present in the meeting.

President Ahmadinejad arrived in Kuwait from Azerbaijan where he attended the 12th Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization on October 16.

<http://old.irna.ir/News/Politic/President-Ahmadinejad-meets-Arab-elites-in-Kuwait/80374308>

- **China opposed to unilateral European sanctions against Iran**

Beijing, Oct 17, IRNA – Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman opposed unilateral decision of Europe to impose new sanctions against Iran.



Hung Lee said on Tuesday evening that China is opposed to imposing unilateral sanctions against Iran and considers dialogue and cooperation as the sole way to settle Iran nuclear issue.

Reacting to this week decision of the European Union, Lee said that imposing pressures and sanctions cannot solve Iran nuclear issue basically.

He added that such moves make issues more complicated and it is not beneficial for peace and stability in the region.

The spokesman continued China believes that there is still enough space for holding diplomatic talks and dialogue.

<http://old.irna.ir/News/Politic/China-opposed-to-unilateral-European-sanctions-against-Iran/80374083>

3. SYRIA

- **UN envoy warns spillover of Syrian crisis**

Lakhdar Brahimi, currently in Lebanon, says if the conflict is not solved, it will set the entire region ablaze.



Syria's 19-month conflict can set the entire region ablaze, international peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi tells reporters in Lebanon.

"This crisis cannot remain confined within Syrian territory," Brahimi said on Wednesday. "Either it is solved, or it gets worse... and sets (the region) ablaze. A truce for (the Muslim holiday of) Eid al-Adha would be a microscopic step on the road to solving the Syria crisis."

Brahimi admitted that solving the Syrian crisis was a "very, very difficult" process, but there was a "microscopic" chance that a truce may lead to a permanent ceasefire.

"The Syrian people will not enjoy a happy Eid al-Adha holiday, but they should at least enjoy a truce," he told reporters after talks with Lebanese officials in the capital Beirut.

"This will be a microscopic chance to lead to a permanent ceasefire, halting the smuggling of arms, and an agreement on a political solution," added Brahimi.

He said he was visiting Syria's neighbours to listen to their views on the crisis. He added he would visit Damascus, but did not specify the date.

Brahimi's call for a truce during the Muslim holiday Eid al-Adha, which falls later this month, has fallen on deaf ears in Damascus as state-run Al-Thawra newspaper, a government mouthpiece, said the initiative would likely fail because the rebels fighting to topple Bashar Assad's regime had no unified leadership to agree to it.

Al-Thawra said that the biggest obstacle to the truce was the lack of an authority to sign for the rebels.

"There is the state, represented by the government and the army on one front, but who is on the other front?" the paper asked in an editorial.

All international efforts to end Syria's civil war to date have failed. Both rebels and government forces have disregarded previous cease-fires, and the scores of rebel units fighting to topple the regime have no unified leadership.

Syrian Foreign Ministry spokesman Jihad Makdessi said in statement to the state news agency that the government was waiting for Brahimi to come to Damascus to convey to officials there the results of his tour. He said that his government would welcome any "constructive initiative", but affirmed that any step, regardless of its type, required commitment by all sides in order for it to succeed.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/20121017113625351396.html>

- **More than 100,000 Syrian refugees take shelter in Turkey**

The number of Syrian refugees housed in camps in southern Turkey has risen to 101, 834, the Turkish Disaster Management Agency (AFAD) said on Wednesday (October 16), in a written statement posted on its website.



The number of refugees reached a level beyond which Ankara had previously said it would struggle to accommodate any more.

Turkey, which has taken on an increasingly leading role in international opposition to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, has already called for the United Nations to build refugee camps in a safe zone within Syria's borders but the plan met with little enthusiasm from world powers.

Syrian refugees continued to flow into Turkey on Wednesday (October 16) morning as dozens of families crossed the border through the Cilvegözü crossing across Syria's Bab al-Hawa gate.

One of them, Mohammad, asked the world to put pressure on Syrian administration to stop the ongoing violence.

“We just want to stop the fighting and plane attacks against civilians. If people really care they should ask the regime to put an end to air assaults. What is happening in Syria is unbelievable. People don’t realize that one day what's happening there and all those killing might happen to them as well,” Mohammad said.

More than 30,000 people have been killed in the conflict which started out as a popular uprising against four decades of Assad family rule then descended into civil war.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/17/244274.html?PHPSESSID=a52nqjaue41dvuvj3oltevnvb6>

- **Syria battles rage as both sides weigh truce plan**

Syrian forces on Wednesday bombarded opposition belts in the country’s battle-scarred north, as both sides indicated they are ready to explore a truce proposal floated by peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi.



Warplanes targeted a rebel blockade of a highway in Idlib province which has halted the regime’s efforts to get reinforcements to Aleppo, theatre of intense fighting for the past three months, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The early morning air raids also targeted the Idlib town of Maaret al-Numan and nearby villages, which fell to the rebels a week ago as they pushed their quest to create a northern “buffer zone” abutting Turkey, the watchdog said.

The fighting raged even as Brahimi, who arrived in Beirut on Wednesday on the latest leg of his regional tour aimed at ending the conflict in Syria, appeared to have won tentative support from both sides for a ceasefire during the four-day Eid al-Adha Muslim holiday starting on October 26.

The Syrian foreign ministry said it looked forward to talks with Brahimi on the ceasefire proposal he has been promoting on his tour, which has included stops in Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq.

But spokesman Jihad Maqdisi stressed the rebels and their backers would also need to be involved.

“In order to succeed in any initiative, it takes two sides,” Maqdisi said in answer to a question from AFP.

“The Syrian side is interested in exploring this option and we are looking forward to talking to Mr Brahimi to see what is the position of other influential countries that he talked to in his tour,” he said.

“Will they pressure the armed groups that they host and finance and arm in order to abide by such a ceasefire?”

The opposition Syrian National Council said it expected the rebel Free Syrian Army to reciprocate any halt to the violence but that it was up to the government to act first.

“We would welcome any halt to the killings but we think the appeal needs to be addressed first to the Syrian regime, which has not stopped bombarding Syrian towns and villages,” SNC leader Abdel Basset Sayda told AFP.

Rebel fighters “are only acting in self-defense, so it is normal that they would halt hostilities when the war machine does so,” he added.

Brahimi was expected to discuss the truce proposal in his talks Wednesday in Beirut with Lebanon’s leaders, among them President Michel Sleiman, Prime Minister Najib Mikati and parliament speaker Nabih Berri.

His office had earlier said the envoy had appealed for Iranian help to broker the truce.

“He reiterated the call by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for a ceasefire and a halt to the flow of arms to both sides. A ceasefire, he said, would help create an environment that would allow a political process to develop.”

The UN chief had previously called for a unilateral government ceasefire to be matched by the rebels afterwards, but that idea was rejected by Damascus as its troop losses mount.

On the battlefield, fighting raged near Maaret al-Numan even as the warplanes were carrying out their bombings raids, the Britain-based Observatory said.

It said the violence erupted early Wednesday when rebels attacked a six-tank convoy of government troops in the town of Maarhtat as it was making its way to reinforce the nearby Wadi Deif army base, the largest in the region.

At least five people were killed across Aleppo province, including in the city of the same name, as government forces pounded the area and clashed with rebels who fired rockets into an army base, the Observatory said.

The Observatory -- which relies on a network of activists, medics and lawyers for its information - - says some 33,000 people have been killed since the revolt began in March last year, among them 2,300 children.

A UN commission investigating rights abuses in the war-torn country warned that foreign militants fighting in Syria “could contribute to an increased radicalization.”

“The presence of foreign militants, radical Islamists or jihadists, worries us very much,” commission head Paulo Sergio Pinheiro told reporters in New York, estimating there were hundreds of foreign combatants on the ground in Syria.

“Their presence can contribute to radicalization... this presence is particularly dangerous in a very volatile conflict,” he said.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/17/244268.html?PHPSESSID=a52nqjaue41dvuvj3oltevnvb6>

4. ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- **75 percent of Israelis fear economic collapse, survey says**

A vast majority of Israelis have expressed serious concern about the collapse of their failing economy, a survey shows.



Some 75 percent of Israelis fear that their economy may collapse, which shows a huge increase in the figure compared with that of 2010, according to the results of a survey conducted by the Israeli humanitarian aid organization, Latet.

The poll also indicated that 78 percent of those surveyed said the Tel Aviv regime has no plans for fighting poverty and bridging the widening social gap.

The ailing economy of the Israeli regime has also taken its toll on politics.

On October 15, Israeli parliamentarians voted to dissolve the Knesset and hold snap elections on January 2013, which were initially scheduled for next October.

The decision was taken after the gridlock among different coalition partners over the passage of the 2013 austerity budget.

In recent months, Israelis have held protests against a package of sweeping austerity cuts, which the regime of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says were necessary to reduce the budget deficit and protect the economy.

“I’m asking to hold elections on Tuesday, January 22, 2013,” Netanyahu told the Knesset at the start of the debate on October 15.

Netanyahu has formed committees to address the demands of the anti-austerity protesters, but the demonstrators say no single concrete step has been taken.

Netanyahu has also ruled out the idea of spending from outside the budget for economic reforms, a response that Israeli protesters say disillusioned them.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/17/267190/israelis-fear-economic-collapse-poll/>

- **Israeli regime calls on UN to act against Gaza-bound ship**

The Israeli regime has called on the United Nations to act against a Swedish ship attempting to break the blockade of the Gaza Strip.



“I call on the Secretary General, the Security Council, and all responsible members of the international community to take immediate action to end this provocation,” Israeli envoy to the UN Ron Prosor said in a recent letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, and the security council’s president for October, Guatemalan envoy Gert Rosenthal.

The Swedish vessel Estelle is transporting 17 activists and a cargo of humanitarian aid for the Palestinians. The ship left the Italian port city of Naples on October 6 and is expected to arrive near Gaza in about a week.

Prosor also stated that Tel Aviv remained “determined to enforce its naval blockade of the Gaza Strip” and that it will take any action to stop the vessel.

On May 31, 2010, Israeli forces attacked the Gaza-bound humanitarian Freedom Flotilla in international waters in the Mediterranean Sea, killing nine Turkish nationals aboard Turkey's Mavi Marmara and injuring about 50 other activists who were part of the six-ship convoy.

Also in November 2011, a Canadian and an Irish yacht were prevented by Israeli forces in international waters to transport pro-Palestinian activists and medical supplies to Gaza.

The Tel Aviv regime denies about 1.7 million people in Gaza their basic rights, such as freedom of movement, jobs that pay proper wages, and adequate healthcare and education.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/17/267146/israel-asks-un-to-stop-gazabound-ship/>

- **Gaza militants fire rocket into Israel**

Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired a rocket into southern Israel on Wednesday, but it fell on open ground close to the border, police said.

“No injuries or damage were caused,” police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld told AFP.



Early in the morning, Israeli aircraft struck what a military statement called “a terror activity site in the northern Gaza Strip.”

That raid was itself in response to Palestinian rocket fire on Tuesday night which exploded near a home in southern Israel, causing property damage and hysteria, police said, after a two-day lull in cross-border violence.

On Sunday, five projectiles from the coastal strip hit southern Israel, part of a wave of tit-for-tat duels beginning on October 7 when an air strike targeted two Salafists in the southern city of Rafah, killing one and critically wounding the other.

Five children and three adults were also wounded in the strike, prompting a rare armed response from Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants, who fired a barrage of rockets at Israel.

The previous time Hamas militants had fired on Israel was during a flare-up in June when militant groups fired more than 150 rockets, wounding five, and Israel hit back with air strikes that killed 15 Palestinians.

The latest violence rumbled on until the weekend, when several air strikes killed five militants, including a top Salafist leader.

According to the Israeli military, Palestinian militants in Gaza have fired more than 505 projectiles at southern Israel since the beginning of 2012, and upwards of 45 this month alone.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/17/244298.html?PHPSESSID=a52nqjaue41dvuvj3oltevnvb6>

- **In letter, Abbas tells Obama still wants 2 states**

RAMALLAH (Ma'an) -- President Mahmoud Abbas sent a letter to US President Barack Obama on Tuesday insisting his government was still committed to the two-state solution.



The letter, according to Abbas' political adviser Nimir Hammad, explains that the intended bid to the UN General Assembly to obtain the status of a non-member state was not a unilateral move.

Abbas explained in the letter that the UN bid was meant to maintain that the Palestinian people's land was occupied rather than disputed, the official Palestinian news agency Wafa quoted Hammad as saying.

The move, Hammad added, was never meant to isolate Israel, but rather to obtain international recognition which will make the negotiation process easier. The letter highlighted that the Palestinians would be willing to resume negotiations with Israel after they obtain international recognition as a non-member state.

Having failed last year to win recognition of full statehood at the world body, Abbas now seeks a less ambitious promotion to "non-member state", which would likely be approved by a vote in the UN General Assembly.

Israel sees the Palestinian campaign as an attempt to circumvent bilateral negotiations deadlocked since 2010 over its Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem -- opposition echoed by the United States.

On Monday, US envoy to the United Nations Susan Rice said the Palestinian bid "would only jeopardize the peace process".

"Any efforts to use international fora to prejudge final status issues that can only be resolved directly by the parties will neither improve the daily lives of Palestinians nor foster the trust essential to make progress towards a two state solution," she said.

The PLO's current UN status is an "observer entity". If Abbas wins, that would change to "observer state", granting Palestinians access to bodies such as the International Criminal Court, where they could file complaints against Israel.

The president of the 193-member UN General Assembly, Vuk Jeremic, has said the issue will likely be debated in mid-November, after the US presidential election.

The Palestinians need a simple majority for the upgrade, but predict that between 150 and 170 nations will vote in favor.

The US Congress froze some \$200 million in much-needed financial aid to the Palestinians after they took their statehood campaign to the United Nations last year.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=529541>

- **New Egyptian ambassador: We're committed to peace agreement**

New ambassadors to Israel present their credentials to President Peres; Jordanian envoy: Guarantee equal freedom of religious rites in J'lem; Egyptian envoy: I'm optimistic the Egyptian people can overcome anything.



Incoming Egyptian ambassador to Israel Atef Salem presented President Shimon Peres with his official credentials at the President's Residence in Jerusalem on Wednesday.

Salem, the first ambassador sent by new Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, said at the ceremony that Cairo is committed to all agreements with Israel, including the peace agreement.

"Egypt is currently going through the first steps of the democratic Egyptian society, and sometimes these steps are met with difficulties. However, I remain optimistic and certain that the Egyptian people can overcome anything," Salem said.

Walid Obeidat, the new Jordanian ambassador to Israel, also presented President Peres with his official credentials on Wednesday.

Obeidat asked Peres to guarantee "the protection of equal freedom of religious rites in the holy places in Jerusalem."

Obeidat is the first ambassador to Israel to be appointed in over two years after the previous envoy returned to Amman from Tel Aviv.

Amman’s decision to send a new ambassador came after Cairo decided to name a new envoy to replace Yasser Rada, who finished his term in July.

In late 2010, it was reported that Jordan was delaying appointing a new ambassador to Israel due to its dismay over the state of peace talks with the Palestinians at the time.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=288200>

5. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Evidence of mass murder after Qaddafi’s death: HRW**

New evidence implicating militias in executions after ousted Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi was captured and killed in Sirte last October 20 raises fresh questions over his death, a watchdog said on Wednesday.



“The evidence suggests that opposition militias summarily executed at least 66 captured members of Qaddafi’s convoy in Sirte,” his home town, said Peter Bouckaert, emergencies director at Human Rights Watch (HRW).

“It also looks as if they took Mutassim Qaddafi, who had been wounded, to (the port city of) Misrata and killed him there,” he said of Qaddafi’s son.

“Our findings call into question the assertion by Libyan authorities that Muammar Qaddafi was killed in crossfire, and not after his capture,” Bouckaert said of a Human Rights Watch report documenting the executions.

The 50-page report, “Death of a Dictator: Bloody Vengeance in Sirte,” also details the final hours of Qaddafi’s life and the circumstances under which he was killed on the basis of witness testimony and mobile phone footage.

HRW said its evidence suggests that Misrata-based militias captured and disarmed members of Qaddafi's convoy and, after bringing them under control, subjected them to brutal beatings.

“They then executed at least 66 captured members of the convoy at the nearby Mahari Hotel,” said the report, adding that some still had their hands bound behind their backs.

That finding matches reports by an AFP correspondent who visited Sirte last October and documented the discovery of between 65 and 70 rotting bodies on the lawn of al-Mahari Hotel, many with a bullet in the head.

HRW said it collected mobile phone video clips taken by anti-Qaddafi fighters that show a large group of captured convoy members being cursed and abused.

The watchdog added that it used hospital morgue photos “to establish that at least 17 of the detainees visible in the phone video were later executed at the Mahari Hotel.”

To document what happened on October 20, 2011, HRW said it had interviewed officers in opposition militias who were at the scene and surviving members of the Qaddafi convoy in hospital, in custody or at home.

“These killings constitute the largest documented execution of detainees by anti-Qaddafi forces during the eight-month conflict in Libya,” the report said.

The watchdog stressed that evidence regarding the deaths of Muammar and Mutassim Qaddafi also calls into question the official account given by the Libyan authorities, which said the two “died during fierce crossfire.”

Video footage shows that the dictator was captured alive but bleeding heavily from a head wound. In the footage, he is severely beaten by rebels and appears to be stabbed with a bayonet in his buttocks.

“He appears lifeless” by the time he is filmed being loaded into an ambulance half-naked, the organization said.

On the basis of separate footage, the watchdog said Mutassim was caught alive and taken to Misrata where he is seen smoking and having a “hostile conversation” with his captors.

“By the evening, his dead body, with a new wound on his throat that was not visible in the prior video footage, was being publicly displayed in Misrata,” which had suffered a brutal siege by Qaddafi’s forces, the organization said.

HRW said it presented its findings to transitional officials immediately after the killings and has repeatedly urged the new authorities to carry out a full investigation into these killings which amount to a war crime.

It added that it had not seen “any evidence” of any inquiry under way.

“In case after case we investigated, the individuals had been videotaped alive by the opposition fighters who held them, and then found dead hours later,” Bouckaert said.

“One of Libya’s greatest challenges is to bring its well-armed militias under control and end their abuses.

“A good first step would be to investigate the mass executions of October 20, 2011, the most serious abuse by opposition forces documented so far,” Bouckaert said.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/17/244246.html?PHPSESSID=a52nqjaue41dvuvj3oltevnvb6>

- **State news: Judicial source denies rumored travel ban on Tantawi and Anan**

A judicial source has denied reports that a travel ban would soon be imposed on former Supreme Council of the Armed Forces leader Hussein Tantawi and former Armed Forces Chief of Staff Sami Anan.



The comments came in response to a headline published in a local newspaper Wednesday, the source said, without specifying which publication.

A Justice Ministry-appointed official tasked with investigating reports against Tantawi, Anan and former Military Police Administration leader Hamdy Badeen, has opened the inquiry by talking to the complainants, the source said.

The source called on the media to “maintain accuracy and act responsibly” when reporting on cases under investigation, claiming that the newspaper that published the report bears criminal responsibility for the allegedly false information.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/state-news-judicial-source-denies-rumored-travel-ban-tantawi-and-anan>

6. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Syria conflict deepens sectarian rifts in Lebanon**

This Lebanese border town has become a safe haven for war-weary Syrian rebels, a way station for wounded fighters and home to hundreds of frightened Syrian refugee families.



Residents of Arsal, a Sunni Muslim town of 40,000, say they have strong motives to help those trying to topple Syria's regime: they themselves were harassed and abused by it during three decades of de facto Syrian control of Lebanon.

But in siding with the rebels, many of them fellow Sunnis, Arsal is also deepening rifts with its Shiite Muslim neighbors in the Bekaa Valley that runs along Lebanon's eastern border with Syria. Large areas of the scenic valley are controlled by Hezbollah, the powerful Shiite militia that is supporting and - according to the U.S. and the Syrian opposition - also fighting alongside Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces.

For now, Lebanon's rival political and religious groups have largely tried to keep a lid on domestic tensions stoked by the conflict next door, with collective memories here still scarred by Lebanon's own 15-year civil war that ended in 1990. But any major escalation in Syria or miscalculation by the combatants' Lebanese supporters could ignite Lebanon's explosive sectarian mix.

Unlike some parts of Lebanon, the Bekaa has not been hit so far by sectarian violence linked to the bloodshed in Syria, although a drive along the valley's bustling main thoroughfare and the string of towns that line it, shows where the region's Shiite and Sunni loyalties lie.

In predominantly Shiite Baalbek, one of the Bekaa's larger towns, a downtown billboard shows Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah next to Assad, who is decked out in a military uniform and aviator glasses. "They will not weaken our resolve," reads a defiant caption.

The presence of Iran, the region's Shiite power and a patron of both Hezbollah and Assad, is also visible: A poster of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, with the slogan, "We can," hangs from roadside poles along a four-lane highway that signs boast was partially funded by Tehran.

A turn off the highway and down a winding uphill road, leads east toward the Syrian border and Arsal.

Homes here are bare-bones, made of raw gray cinderblock, without stone facades. A spray-painted Syrian rebel flag - with green, white and black horizontal stripes and three red stars on the white - decorates one of the walls in the center of town.

Bassel Hojeiri, principal of the local middle school, said people in Arsal back the rebels as fellow Sunnis fighting a regime controlled by Alawites, an offshoot of Shiite Islam, but also because of deep-seated hatred of Syria's rulers.

As a border town, Arsal suffered under a particularly oppressive Syrian military presence when Damascus held sway in Lebanon from 1976 to 2005. Syrian troops at checkpoints near Arsal would sometimes beat area residents, arrest them without reason, demand cash or even seize cars, said Hojeiri, 37, a former mayor of Arsal.

"People hated them," Hojeiri said of the Syrian occupiers. "Now hopefully their time is ending."

The town has stood by the rebels from the start, and now is deeply involved in the conflict. Last month, Syrian warplanes in pursuit of rebels fired missiles that struck near Arsal. Lebanese media have also suggested weapons smuggled from Lebanon to the rebels go through Arsal; residents acknowledge there's a rich tradition of smuggling in Arsal, but say they don't know anything about arms smuggling.

Volunteers from Islamic charities have sneaked scores of wounded rebels into Lebanon, driving them from there to hospitals in Tripoli, a Sunni stronghold in northern Lebanon, and bypassing clinics in Hezbollah-run areas in the valley, said Mohammed Hojeiri, a local activist.

Arsal has also taken in hundreds of Syrian refugee families, most from villages in Homs province, about 25 kilometers to the northeast. Some of the refugees rent apartments, while others live with Arsal families or in a small camp on the outskirts of town, where tents are being replaced by cinderblock shacks to prepare for the harsh mountain winter.

Rebel fighters have also used Arsal as a temporary haven to rest from the fighting across the border.

Peach farmer-turned-fighter Mohammed Yousef left his village of Zara in Homs province late last month after airstrikes destroyed his home and many others in the village. He reached Arsal after a seven-hour cross-border trek across mountainous terrain, he said, adding that several dozen of his fellow rebels do the same from time to time.

“Arsal is the ... mother of the revolution,” the 25-year-old said affectionately of his Lebanese hosts who have sheltered his extended family of 10 in an empty building.

Yousef dismissed Syrian troops as largely ineffective, saying most can be bribed, but swore to exact revenge from Hezbollah, which he blamed for the destruction in his village.

“We want to slaughter Hassan Nasrallah, the dog,” Yousef said of the Hezbollah leader, “he shelled us, he destroyed our houses, and killed our children.”

Hezbollah denies that it is fighting alongside regime forces, and a spokesman declined further comment Monday.

Lebanese security officials have said a number of Hezbollah activists recently buried in the Bekaa Valley had been killed in fighting in Syria, while Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council on Monday that “Nasrallah’s fighters are now part of Assad’s killing machine.”

Hojeiri, the school principal, said tensions between Shiites and Sunnis in the valley have been rising since the start of the Syrian revolt. Each side is aware of the other’s loyalties, and people are careful not to talk about politics when someone from the other sect is present, he said.

“People here don't want another (sectarian) war,” he said.

In the past, ties between the communities were civil and even warm, he said, noting that some 200 men in Arsal are married to Shiite women from nearby villages.

For years, religious differences seemed unimportant, he said. Even during Lebanon's civil war, with its frequently shifting alliances, Shiites and Sunnis were partners more often than they were foes.

Timor Goksel, a former official in the UN peacekeeping force in south Lebanon, said he believes the two sides have too much to lose by bringing the Syrian conflict home.

"Sunnis are very much involved in stone quarrying and the Shiite families are mostly involved in the hashish business," he said.

"Both sides respect each other's turfs and have their own livelihoods, hashish and stone," added Goksel.

Perhaps that's why the valley has not seen sectarian clashes - unlike the majority-Sunni Tripoli, where sporadic fighting between pro- and anti-Syrian groups has killed more than two dozen people since May.

However, Sarkis Naoum, a columnist for Lebanon's An-Nahar daily said the sectarian tensions bubbling under the surface could erupt at any time.

"If anything major happens, what is happening in Syria could expand into Lebanon," he said.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/17/244244.html?PHPSESSID=a52nqjaue41dvuvj3oltevnvb6>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Amnesty International says Saudi regime must end crackdown on protests**

Amnesty International has called on Saudi authorities to stop excessive use of force against anti-regime protesters in the country.



“The Saudi authorities must end their repeated moves to stifle people’s attempts to protest against the widespread use of arbitrary detention in the country,” Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Director Philip Luther said on Tuesday.

“The right of people to peaceful protest must be respected and the security forces must refrain from detaining or using excessive force against people who exercise it.”

Amnesty’s statement comes in reaction to a recent threat by the Al Saud regime to take harsh measures against the protests, which are staged for the release of political prisoners.

On October 11, the Saudi Interior Ministry warned the Saudi public against staging demonstrations in the kingdom in support of the prisoners and pledged to deal “firmly” with those participating in such protest rallies.

Saudi authorities are facing a rise in protests against arbitrary detentions and widespread demands for the release of political prisoners.

According to the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association, there are about 30,000 political prisoners in the kingdom.

Since February 2011, protesters have held demonstrations on an almost regular basis in Saudi Arabia, mainly in the Qatif region and the town of Awamiyah in Eastern Province, primarily

calling for the release of all political prisoners, freedom of expression and assembly, and an end to widespread discrimination.

However, the demonstrations have turned into protests against the repressive Al Saud regime, especially since November 2011 when Saudi security forces killed five protesters and injured many others in the province.

Saudi police make random arrests of people who allegedly look suspicious. The detainees are often held behind bars for years without any indictment.

According to Human Rights Watch, the Saudi regime “routinely represses expression critical of the government.”

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/17/267172/saudi-regime-must-end-crackdown-amnesty/>

- **Bahrain protesters voice support for jailed medics on hunger strike**

Anti-regime protesters have taken to streets in several villages in Bahrain to display solidarity with a group of jailed medical personnel who are on hunger strike.



The demonstrators chanted anti-regime slogans and called for the immediate release of the prisoners during the rallies on Tuesday.

At least five medical personnel, who have been in prison since early October, went on hunger strike on Sunday to urge international efforts for their release.

They were among 20 doctors and nurses, who were working in Manama during the uprising against the Al Khalifa regime.

Bahrain's Court of Cassation has rejected the appeals filed by nine of the medics and upheld their prison sentences ranging between one month and 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 had taken part in demonstrations.

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's crackdown on the demonstrations and the security forces have arrested hundreds of protesters.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/17/267164/bahrain-rallies-support-jailed-medics/>

- **Yemeni debate over drones emerges after Saleh's fall**

Yemen's interim president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, has won U.S. praise for cooperating in a war on al-Qaeda, but his recent public support for drone strikes that sometimes kill civilians could undermine his domestic popularity and stir sympathy for militants.



Yemen, an Arabian Peninsula country where al-Qaeda militants exploited a security vacuum during last year's rising against Ali Abdullah Saleh, has witnessed an escalated campaign of U.S. missile strikes in recent months, often using the pilotless aircraft known as drones.

In a departure from Saleh's policies, Hadi spoke openly in favor of the drone strikes during a trip to the United States last month. Praised by the U.S. ambassador in Sana'a as being more

effective against al-Qaeda than his predecessor, Hadi was quoted as saying that he personally approved every attack.

The comments came after a September strike that killed 12 civilians in Radaa, a small Yemeni town south of Sana'a, and the storming of the U.S. Embassy in the capital by protesters angry over an anti-Islam film made in California.

Youth activist Ibrahim al-Mothana said Hadi, elected in February for a two-year transitional period, was trying to win favor with international donors but imperils support at home.

“He’s trying to get international legitimacy, and he needs American and European support, so I think that’s what drove him, rather than being more open and frank about it,” he said.

“Al-Hadi’s main task is the national dialogue, which will create a new national contract. But if the process is undermined by drones, that will be problematic.”

Leaked U.S. diplomatic cables said that Saleh had agreed in 2009 to a covert U.S. war on Islamist militants and accepted to take responsibility for attacks when necessary.

Bashraheel Hesham Bashraheel, chairman of the al-Ayyam newspaper group, said Hadi had won short-term respect from some Yemenis for being more open about drones than Saleh.

“He wants to make a clear distinction, he wants to say I approved every raid. It gives the impression he is in control and not the Americans,” Bashraheel said, “It impressed people and earned him some respect. He's not lying like Saleh used to.”

However, with public anger rising, politicians are becoming more vocal in their opposition to U.S. operations.

The Shiite Islamist Houthi movement and influential Sunni cleric Abdul-Majeed al-Zindani - on a U.S. terrorism list - have stepped up criticism of drones in the past month.

“At first people didn’t talk, but after Radaa, things have changed, said Ali Abd-Rabbu al-Qadi, a parliamentarian from Maareb where many attacks have taken place, “these air strikes prepare the ground for al Qaeda and terrorism,” he carried on.

Yemenis complain the U.S. focus on militants is a violation of sovereignty that is driving many towards al Qaeda and diverting attention from other pressing issues such as unemployment, corruption, water depletion and economic revival.

Hadi is under U.S. pressure to prioritize the war on militants, who set up al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in 2007 by merging the Yemeni and Saudi branches of the network founded by Osama bin Laden.

“The Americans only think of use of violence, they need to think of using development,” said Mohammed al-Mutawakel, a political science professor, “they failed in Afghanistan and Iraq, I hope they don’t make the same mistake again in Yemen.”

Parties tacit support

Parties in the post-Saleh interim government have been largely silent or even expressed muted public support over drone strikes, in an effort to win the favor of a country seen as the real source of political power in Yemen, analysts say.

The United States, eager to see Yemen recover from upheaval that put the impoverished state on the verge of collapse, has said it would provide \$345 million in security, humanitarian and development assistance this year - more than double last year’s aid but much less than needed, one government official said.

Western diplomats say they believe most Yemenis support the operations, but acknowledge that public opposition is rising.

“Nobody wants to see the drones (but) we have people who are posing an imminent threat to the security and stability of Yemen as well as threatening security throughout the world,” a senior diplomat said.

“The solution ultimately will be on the basis of building up Yemeni capabilities,” he added.

While Washington usually avoids comment, the UK-based Bureau of Investigative Journalism, which tracks U.S. operations, says between 36 and 56 civilians have died this year.

At a recent funeral for those who died in the attacks in Radaa, relatives suggested tribes would take revenge if Sana’a did not do something to stop them.

“We are just farmers, in our homes, who are disturbed constantly in the middle of the night by American planes above,” said Jamal Abdu al-Sabouri, a relative of one of the Radaa victims, “we want a solution and we demand that Hadi pay attention to this issue... We want security and stability but if they’re going to disturb us, we’ll disturb everyone too.”

In the chaos of the disintegration of Saleh’s system of tribal and religious alliances, tribes have taken steps to express displeasure with Hadi’s government. Electricity lines were attacked in Maarib last month after a court issued death sentences against kinsmen accused of al Qaeda militancy.

“A strike like this isn’t a simple thing. It makes us lose hope in the state or that there even exists a Yemeni state here,” said Muhammed Muqbil, who lost three relatives.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/17/244266.html?PHPSESSID=a52nqjaue41dvuvj3oltevnvb6>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Suicide bomber hits joint NATO-Afghan base**

Attack on an army base in eastern Afghanistan has wounded at least 45 Afghan soldiers, local officials say.

A suicide car bomb attack on a joint NATO-Afghan army base in eastern Afghanistan has wounded at least 45 Afghan soldiers, local officials said.



The Taliban took responsibility for Wednesday's attack in the Zurmat district of Paktia province, saying they had also despatched a group of fighters in suicide vests who managed to enter the base.

A spokesperson for NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said Taliban fighters fired at the base after the explosion. There were no NATO casualties, she added.

Paktia, a small province about 100km south of the capital Kabul, has been beset by increasing violence over the past two years.

Civilians wounded

"The bomber detonated explosives right in front of a joint base shared by the Afghan army and foreign forces, wounding 45 soldiers," the deputy governor for Paktia, Gul Rahman Mangal, told the Reuters news agency.

Seven civilians were among the wounded, hospital officials in Zurmat added.

Violence has been increasing across the country as the deadline of end-2014 looms for most foreign combat troops to leave Afghanistan, leaving the 350,000-strong Afghan security forces in control.

Heavy casualty rates amongst Afghan security forces - NATO says 243 Afghan soldiers and 292 policemen were killed or wounded in an average month this year - have raised concerns that their ability to tackle fighters may be dwindling along with morale.

A senior government negotiator on Saturday denied that plans by Kabul to seek peace talks with the Taliban were in deadlock, saying progress was under way.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/10/201210175143448651.html>

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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