



# MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

## GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

**Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries**

**Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset**

**The Restructuring Procees of Iraq**

**Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci**

**Energy Security**

**Enerji Güvenliđi**

**Economy News**

**Ekonomi Haberleri**

**Peace Process**

**Barış Süreci**

**Ethnic and Secterian Groups**

**Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar**

**Non State Actors**

**Devlet-dış Aktörler**

**Relations with the West**

**Batı'yla İlişkiler**



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02 OCTOBER 2012

NO: 1466

<b>1. IRAQ</b> .....	<b>2</b>
• Call for "just and honest" elections in Kirkuk, Nujaifi (Aswat al-Iraq).....	2
• Partnership government obstructs achievements, Premier Maliki (Aswat al-Iraq).....	2
• Heads of 15 provincial councils support infrastructure bill (Aswat al-Iraq).....	3
• Awadi: INA agrees to positively vote on Infrastructure law draft.....	3
• IS MP calls Maliki to reconsider decision of eliminating contracts of Daughters of Iraq.....	4
• Othman calls Baghdad to respond to Ankara by PKK (Shafaq News).....	4
• Iraq announces five-year national development plan (al-shorfa).....	5
• Iraq's 2013 Budget Allocates Considerable Amount to Oil Sector (Rudaw).....	6
• Gas production on increase, official (Aswat al-Iraq).....	7
<b>2. IRAN</b> .....	<b>8</b>
• MP urges exchange of views between Iran, European parliaments.....	8
• FM calls for full eradication of nuclear, chemical weapons.....	8
• Iran FM confers with UN Middle East envoy.....	9
• Georgian FM: Good Tehran-Tbilisi relations model for regional countries.....	10
• New Egypt continues to support Iran.....	12
• Protesters destroy police post at French embassy in Tehran.....	14
<b>3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE</b> .....	<b>15</b>
• Racist graffiti sprayed on Jerusalem monastery.....	15
• US asks Europe not to support Palestinian bid at UN.....	16
• PA releases Zakaria Zubeidi on bail.....	17
• Published today (updated) 02/10/2012 10:45.....	18
• Police: 2 Israeli officers injured in Jerusalem clashes.....	18
• Palestinians commemorate killing of 13 protesters in Israel.....	19
<b>4. AFRICA and EGYPT</b> .....	<b>20</b>
• Nour Party to form reconciliation committee, continue elections.....	20
• Egypt says no free trade zone with Gaza.....	21
• Troops 'in control of Somalia's Kismayo'.....	22
• Amnesty urges Egypt to reform army and police.....	25
<b>5. JORDAN and LEBANON</b> .....	<b>26</b>
• Mikati, Abadi discuss bilateral agreements.....	26
• Pattern of stolen cars prompts terrorism investigation in Lebanon.....	27
<b>6. SYRIA</b> .....	<b>28</b>
• Syrian capital sees renewed violence.....	28
• Russia urges NATO not to intervene in Syria; Turkish troops kill Kurd on border fire.....	31
• Yemeni officers in Syria not involved in fighting: official.....	32
<b>7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA</b> .....	<b>33</b>
• Bahrain medics jailed after losing appeal.....	33
• Assad behind deadly mall blaze in Qatar: leaked documents.....	35
<b>8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN</b> .....	<b>37</b>
• Deadly bombing in eastern Afghanistan.....	37
• Moscow beckons Pakistan's Kiani.....	38

## 1. IRAQ

- **Call for "just and honest" elections in Kirkuk, Nujaifi (Aswat al-Iraq)**

BAGHDAD, Oct 1/ Aswat al-Iraq: Parliament Speaker Usama Nujaifi called today for "just and honest" elections in Kirkuk, pointing "it was delayed for long time".

During a meeting with Parliamentary Committee on Elections in Kirkuk, with the attendance of UN deputy representative in Iraq, matters of the province election process were discussed, according to official statement.

The statement, copy received by Aswat al-Iraq, quoted Nujaifi as saying "the importance of such meetings is to reach to a solution that will satisfy all parties in the province for just and honest elections".

He added that the elections were delayed for a long time with dangerous consequences and urged the participants to continue their meetings to end the election question.

The meeting discussed the main pending topics and entrusted the UN to assist in

preparing a report on the security situation in the province and the mechanisms to sustain security during the elections.

[http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%284lekfg5503r1v555cbbpie45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article\\_page&id=150768&l=1](http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%284lekfg5503r1v555cbbpie45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150768&l=1)

- **Partnership government obstructs achievements, Premier Maliki (Aswat al-Iraq)**

BAGHDAD, Oct 1/ Aswat al-Iraq: Premier Nouri al-Maliki regarded the experiment of partnership of his government was turned into obstruction, and "will work not to be repeated".

In an interview with Russia Today TV, he added that "the partnership government has turned to an obstruction to the projects".

"Minority political hegemony over the majority has become a converted picture of democracy", he added.

Commenting on the Syrian question, he pointed out that "Iraq calls for political solution to the Syrian crisis and rejects the style of violence and armament".

"Iraq did not interfere in the Syrian question not for the regime or the armed opposition", Maliki confirmed.

He pointed out that the expected coming visit to Moscow aims to revive economic and trade relations, in addition the military cooperation between the two sides.

[http://en.aswatiliraq.info/%28S%284lekgf5503r1v555cbbpie45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article\\_page&id=150763&l=1](http://en.aswatiliraq.info/%28S%284lekgf5503r1v555cbbpie45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150763&l=1)

- **Heads of 15 provincial councils support infrastructure bill (Aswat al-Iraq)**

KARBALA, Oct 1/ Aswat al-Iraq: Presidents of 15 provincial councils underlined on Monday in Karbala the importance of the infrastructure draft law to develop the provinces which suffer neglect and lack of financial allocations.

This came during a conference held in Karbala with the participation of 15 chairmen of Iraqi provincial councils to discuss the infrastructure law.

The law, which has been in the pipeline for several years already, would allow the government to enter into contracts with international firms on infrastructure projects in Iraq, improving services in areas like water supply, power and education.

All of these are things that ordinary Iraqis would very much like to see working properly in their country.

The infrastructure law would allow the Iraqi state to basically take out "loans" with companies tasked with the jobs and then repay them at a later date.

[http://en.aswatiliraq.info/%28S%284lekgf5503r1v555cbbpie45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article\\_page&id=150758&l=1](http://en.aswatiliraq.info/%28S%284lekgf5503r1v555cbbpie45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150758&l=1)

- **Awadi: INA agrees to positively vote on Infrastructure law draft**

Baghdad, Oct 1 (AIN) –MP, Ihsan al-Awadi, of the State of Law Coalition within the Iraqi National Alliance stated that the constituents of the INA agreed to positively voting on the Infrastructure law draft, noting that "Some modifications were made to the Infrastructure law draft and properly the parliament will vote on it next week."

In a press conference held at the parliament building on Monday, Awadi said "There is a clear development over the Infrastructure law draft where the suggestions of most of the political blocs were considered and some essential points were added such as obligating the Council of Ministers to contract with International Consulting Companies in the rebuilding field to evaluate the bidding companies in this law."

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19749:awadi-ina-agrees-to-positively-vote-on-infrastructure-law-draft-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19749:awadi-ina-agrees-to-positively-vote-on-infrastructure-law-draft-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

- **IS MP calls Maliki to reconsider decision of eliminating contracts of Daughters of Iraq**

Baghdad, Oct 1 (AIN) –MP, Nahida al-Daini, of the Iraqi people called the Premier, Nouri al-Malik, to reconsider the decision of stopping the services of the Daughters of Iraq in Diyala province.

In a press conference held on Monday, she said "In 2007 the Prime Minister accepted (300) women of Diyala province

to work as inspectors to search for the female suicide bombers, but few days ago the Department of Disarmament has eliminated their contracts."

She called Maliki to "Reconsider this decision and bring those women their jobs back", noting that "Those woman have lost their husbands and supporters in addition to being threatened by the terrorist because of their jobs."

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19753:is-mp-calls-maliki-to-reconsider-decision-of-eliminating-contracts-of-daughters-of-iraq-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19753:is-mp-calls-maliki-to-reconsider-decision-of-eliminating-contracts-of-daughters-of-iraq-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

- **Othman calls Baghdad to respond to Ankara by PKK (Shafaq News)**

Shafaq News, Oct 1 / The independent MP in Kurdistan Alliance, Mahmoud Othman considered on Monday, the attendance of the wanted by judiciary , the vice president, Tariq al-Hashimi in the Justice and development Conference as "provocation" to Iraq, calling on Baghdad to open the headquarters of the Kurdistan workers party anti-Turkey as a reaction to the positions of Ankara.

Othman said for "Shafaq News", that " inviting, Tareq al-Hashemi to attend the conference of the Justice and Development party yesterday in Turkey is considered a clear provocation to Iraq, for the fact that al-Hashemi is wanted by the Iraqi judiciary."

He added that "Turkey's actions towards Iraq is not the positions of a country that wants to reform relations with Baghdad, in the same time we see (Baghdad's) very shy positions toward the ongoing violations of Turkey".

Othman explained that "the Iraqi government has taken a number of positions against these actions, such as opening the headquarters of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Baghdad," noting that " PKK is a national party not a terrorist party as Turkey claims."

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3685-othman-calls-baghdad-to-respond-to-ankara-by-pkk-.html>

- **Iraq announces five-year national development plan (al-shorfa)**

By Khalid al-Taie in Baghdad

The Iraqi Ministry of Planning announced September 25th that it prepared a five-year national development plan for the years 2013-2017.

"Under this plan, we allocated between \$200 billion and \$250 billion to execute various development projects in the country," ministry spokesperson Abdul Zahra al-Hindawi told Mawtani.

"Some of these projects will be funded by annual state budgets by way of their investment plans, while others will be financed by way of the Iraqi private sector and foreign company investments," he said.

"We also sought to focus in this plan on completing projects in sectors other than the energy sector," he said. "This new trend on the part of the planners is based on a future reading of several possible internal and external political, security and economic developments."

Internal developments could include "the steady improvement of stability in Iraq's political and security conditions, and the positive impact such a development would

have on energising and expanding the investment process", al-Hindawi said.

"Planners also took into account the possibility of shocks in oil prices in international markets, which would make it necessary for Iraq to move away from relying entirely on oil revenues, and to search for other sources of funding for its general budgets," he said.

Diversifying revenue sources

For the first time, the new development plan pays considerable attention to the tourism sector and opens new investment opportunities in this sector, considering it an important source of revenue, according to al-Hindawi.

The plan also focuses on the implementation of agricultural projects and the development of this sector in view of its vital role in achieving food security and providing work for thousands of unemployed people, in addition to supporting industrial development, he added.

[http://mawtani.al-shorfa.com/en\\_GB/articles/iii/features/2012/10/01/feature-01](http://mawtani.al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/iii/features/2012/10/01/feature-01)

- **Iraq's 2013 Budget Allocates Considerable Amount to Oil Sector (Rudaw)**

By HEVIDAR AHMED

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region, Oct 2 -- The Iraqi Ministry of Finance estimates that the 2013 budget will be around 138 trillion Iraqi dinars (ID).

Next year's budget is larger than this year's due to an increase in oil export revenues. In 2012, the budget was 117 trillion ID; the Kurdistan Region's share was 12.6 trillion ID.

According to Rafi Issawi, the Iraqi minister of finance, this is the biggest budget in Iraqi history.

The sovereign expenses in this budget are estimated to reach 41.16 trillion ID and the governance expenses 10.21 trillion ID. After extracting figures these from the total, 78.2 trillion ID will remain. Seventeen percent of this amount – or 14.27 trillion ID -- is to be given to the Kurdistan Region.

This is an increase of 1.6 trillion ID from the Kurdistan Region's share in 2012.

According to the budget law, the Iraqi government is required to prepare a bill for the upcoming year's budget in September and pass it to parliament. Parliament is required to vote on the bill before the new year.

As the prime minister of Iraq and commander in chief of the Iraqi armed forces, Nuri al-Maliki is entitled to spend 20 billion ID from the budget. Hussain Shahrستاني, the deputy prime minister for energy, is entitled to 15 billion ID to develop the oil sector.

The 2013 budget bill allocates 5 billion ID to the office of Shahrستاني and 3.15 trillion ID to the development of the oil sector. There is also 13.6 trillion ID set aside for foreign oil companies that was not part of last year's budget.

Ninety-five percent of the Iraqi budget comes from oil revenues.

Abdulkhaliq Rafiq, a financial advisor in Kurdistan's Ministry of Finance, said, "The Iraqi government is allocating huge amounts of money for sovereign expenses every year, but it is not ready to pay the

share of the Kurdistan Region in some sectors."

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/news/iraq/5273.html>

- **Gas production on increase, official (Aswat al-Iraq)**

BASRA, Oct 1/ Aswat al-Iraq: Director General of Basra Gas Company Ali Hussein Khudhair announced that the company, in cooperation with Shell Company, achieved good increases in liquid and dry gas production, pointing that the company will commence it is actual work at the beginning of 2013.

Khudhair told Aswat al-Iraq that the increase in production reached to 30 million cubic feet/day, while the liquid gas production reached to 200 million cubic feet.

He added that the company is negotiating to add new establishments to develop and increase its production.

Iraqi Cabinet endorsed establishment of Basra Gas Company, in cooperation with Dutch Shell and Japanese Mitsubishi companies.

[http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%284lekgf5503r1v555cbbpie45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article\\_page&id=150766&l=1](http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%284lekgf5503r1v555cbbpie45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150766&l=1)

## 2. IRAN

- **MP urges exchange of views between Iran, European parliaments**

Tehran, Oct 2, IRNA – Iranian parliamentarian Kazem Jalali here on Tuesday stressed the need for further exchange of views between Iran and European parliaments.



Jalali who is also the head of Iran-Europe Parliamentary Friendship Group made the remark in a meeting with the Cypriot Ambassador to Iran Andreas Ignatiou.

Jalali expressed happiness with Cyprus presidency over the European Union and voiced readiness of the Iranian Majlis to

receive friendship groups from the European Parliament.

Ignatiou said that his country, as the current EU chief, is enthusiastically seeking to expand cooperation with the Iranian parliament.

He said further cooperation would pave the way for the exchange of visits between parliamentary delegations of the two countries.

He expressed hoped that the Cyprus presidency over the European Union will enhance mutual understanding between the parliaments of the two countries.

<http://old.irna.ir/News/Politic/MP-urges-exchange-of-views-between-Iran,-European-parliaments/80351510>

- **FM calls for full eradication of nuclear, chemical weapons**

New York, Oct 2, IRNA – Iran's Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Salehi called Monday for the complete eradication of chemical and nuclear weapons and underlined the need for cessation to their further production.

He made the statement while addressing a high-level meeting of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) at the UN Headquarters to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Convention against Chemical Weapons (CWC).



The visiting Iranian minister said that full implementation of the CWC could effectively help restore global peace and security.

Salehi addressed the meeting as the first speaker on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) member states.

Iran has recently received rotating presidency of NAM from Egypt for the next three years.

The CWC meeting was held on the sidelines of the 67th session of the UN General Assembly.

During the past 15 years, Salehi said, NAM has greatly helped eradication and prohibition of nuclear weapons proliferation.

The participants of the latest NAM summit in Tehran, held on August 26-31, have taken clear stands on CWC and its implementation, said the minister.

<http://old.irna.ir/News/Politic/FM-calls-for-full-eradication-of-nuclear,-chemical-weapons/80351432>

- **Iran FM confers with UN Middle East envoy**

New York, Oct 2, IRNA – Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi conferred with the United Nations Special Envoy to the Middle East Terje Roed-Larsen.



During the meeting which took place at the sidelines of the 67th meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on Monday, Larsen stressed the importance of continuing talks and lobbying with Iran.

The two officials also focused on Iran's effective role in the region and exchanged views on latest Mideast developments.

They discussed situation in Syria and reviewed ways out of the crisis there through peaceful means and diplomatic solutions.

Salehi and Larsen also talked about Iran's political initiatives and activities to help settle the Syrian crisis.

In related developments, on Monday evening Salehi met with his Armenian counterpart Edward Nalbandian and reviewed bilateral and regional issues with him.

<http://old.irna.ir/News/Politic/Iran-FM-confers-with-UN-Middle-East-envoy/80350804>

- **Georgian FM: Good Tehran-Tbilisi relations model for regional countries**

New York, Oct 2, IRNA – Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze here Tuesday asked for boosting Georgia Republic's cooperation with Iran, evaluating current level of bilateral ties as a good model for regional countries.



According to IRNA, Vashadze who was speaking in an exclusive interview with the IRNA correspondent at the UN New York Headquarters referred to the historical, cultural, linguistic, and other commonalties between Iran and Georgia, saying, "We, as two neighbors, enjoy good and broad cooperation in various fields."

The Georgian top diplomat referred to the visits of the two countries' citizens of each others' cities as tourists, as well as the cultural ties and historical relations as very major fields for bilateral cooperation, adding, "We also have good relations in such fields as agricultural, scientific exchange, and transportations fields."

The foreign minister reiterated, "I am very glad to say that the relations between the two countries, in a region where tensions prevail, is at a good, and I had better say excellent level, and can serve as an appropriate model for the regional

countries, showing how two neighbors can have constructive, good and friendly cooperation.”

Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze on Tuesday on the sidelines of the 67th UN General Assembly met and conferred with his Iranian counterpart Ali-Akbar Salehi, and asked for further expansion of bilateral economic cultural, scientific and technological relations between Tehran and Tbilisi.

In the meeting between the two foreign ministers in addition to exchanging viewpoints on international developments, the existing challenges in the world and the regional issues, they discussed ways for bilateral cooperation in agricultural field, increased presence of the Iranian companies in Georgia, increased visits of the Iranian tourists of Georgia, and broader air transportation between the two countries.

Iran and Georgia have had relations for centuries, although official diplomatic relations between the two nations in the 20th century was established on May 15, 1992.

Georgia, throughout its history, has several times been annexed by the Persian Empire, specifically under the Achaemenid, Parthian, Sassanid, and Safavid dynasties. Due to this, there has been a lot of political and cultural exchange, and thus Georgia was often considered a part of Greater Iran.

#### Historical relations

Iran (Persia) and Georgia, or the Georgian tribes, have had relations in different forms starting from the Achaemenid Era through trade. The relationship got more complex as the Safavids took power in Iran and attempted to maintain Iranian control of the Georgian kingdoms. This continued until Russia conquered the Caucasus in the 1800s from the Qajars.

#### 20th century until the early 1990s

Iran-Georgia relations were merged into Iran-Soviet relations. Since Georgia's independence from the Soviet Union, the two nations have cooperated in many fields including energy, transportation, trade, education, and science. Iran is one of Georgia's most important trading partners and an Intergovernmental Joint Economic Commission is functioning between the two countries.

2010 to present

The beginning of the year 2010 saw increasing cooperation between the two countries. Agents from Iran's foreign ministry visited Tbilisi in May 2010 to discuss the Iranian investment in the construction of a hydroelectric plant as well as Iran's intention to import electricity from the country. The meeting led to President Mikhail Sakashvili inviting his Iranian counterpart Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Tbilisi.

In late May 2010 Iranian Ambassador Majid Samadzadeh-Saber announced that Iran and Georgia intends to lift visa restrictions for travel between the countries.

According to the Iranian ambassador, Iran and Georgia are holding talks on opening an Iranian consulate in Batumi.

The announcement was scheduled during the former Iranian foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki's visit to Tbilisi, when the visa requirement between the two countries was lifted.

Courtesy: Wikipedia, for the background on the two countries' relations

<http://old.irna.ir/News/Politic/Georgian-FM,-Good-Tehran-Tbilisi-relations-model-for-regional-countries/80350627>

- **New Egypt continues to support Iran**

By Hossein Ruivaran

TEHRAN, Oct. 1 (MNA) -- Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi's recent criticism of Israel at the United Nations General Assembly should be analyzed from two perspectives.

The first is Morsi's approach to Israel's policies toward Egypt and the Middle East, and the second is what many analysts have called Morsi's special emphasis on Iran and its influence in the region.

Since the very beginning of his rise to power, Morsi has used each and every opportunity to criticize Israel's refusal to abide by the terms of the Camp David Accords, especially the clause calling for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 242, which calls for Israel to withdraw from the territories it occupied in 1967.

Morsi has also repeatedly criticized Israel's anti-Iran policies and has described Israel's hostility toward Iran as one of the main factors behind the turbulent situation in the Middle East.

Morsi's position on Iran, however, needs more clarification, especially given the sensitive situation of relations between the two major regional powers. Morsi is an Islamist, and of course he is expected to defend Iran against the Israeli threats. Although there are many differences between the Camp David Accords and the political orientation of the Islamist parties of Egypt, Morsi is compelled to respect the agreements, at least for the time being.

However, the general policies adopted by the new Islamic Egypt are mostly in line with Iran's approach to regional issues. The Egyptian government has indicated that it wants to restore full diplomatic ties with Iran, and this has been repeatedly emphasized by Egyptian officials since the victory of their revolution.

The reopening of the diplomatic channel between Tehran and Cairo will prove that Egypt's foreign policy will no longer be

subservient to the United States and Israel and the popular demands for change in the system are being respected by the government.

However, the Egyptian government is facing great pressure, from both inside and outside of the country, with regard to Iran. Inside Egypt, the pro-Western forces and remnants of the former dictatorship are opposed to the restoration of diplomatic ties with Tehran. At the external level, some Arab states, especially members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, are continuing to provide the Egyptian government economic and political incentives in order to convince it to refrain from strengthening ties with Iran. Egypt also relies on a massive amount of U.S. economic assistance, and this is clearly another reason why the moves to fully restore diplomatic ties with Iran have been postponed.

Hossein Ruivaran is a Middle East expert based in Tehran.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1709987>

- **Protesters destroy police post at French embassy in Tehran**

A small group of protesters, most of them women, on Tuesday destroyed an Iranian police post protecting the French embassy in Tehran and threw stones at visitors to the mission before being arrested, a diplomat inside told AFP.



The violent demonstration lasted 90 minutes and involved around 15 people, the French diplomat said.

“There was no damage to the embassy itself,” though the visitors -- all of them Iranians applying for French visas -- had to take refuge inside, he said.

The diplomat said the protest happened suddenly, with none of the advance notice given in previous demonstrations. As a result there was no added police presence.

He said the protesters yelled “God is greatest,” but he could not discern any other slogan.

He stressed that “it is up to the Iranian authorities to ensure our security.”

Just before the French embassy attack, a bigger demonstration was held at the nearby Tehran University in which the crowd shouted “Death to America,” “Death to Israel” and “Those who insult the prophet should be executed,” according to the Fars news agency.

Demonstrations have taken place in several Muslim countries in the past two weeks over a film made in the United States and cartoons in a French magazine, both of which made fun of Islam’s Prophet Mohammed.

Embassy security in Tehran is a sensitive issue.

Britain late last year closed its embassy after it was stormed by protesters during a state-sanctioned demonstration. Canada last month also closed its mission in Tehran, citing concerns for the safety of its diplomats.

In 1979, following Iran's Islamic revolution, students broke into the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took 52 Americans inside hostage for more than a year, leading to a rupture in U.S.-Iran diplomatic ties.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/02/241402.html>

### 3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Racist graffiti sprayed on Jerusalem monastery**



BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- Racist and pro-settler graffiti was discovered on a Jerusalem monastery on Tuesday, Israeli police said.

"Price-tag" and anti-Christian slogans were sprayed on the gate of the Monastery of Saint Francis, just outside of the Old City, Israeli police spokesman Mickey Rosenfeld told Ma'an.

"Jesus is a son of a bitch" was also reportedly sprayed on the Christian site, Israeli media said.

Police have opened an investigation into the incident, which has "nationalistic motives," Rosenfeld added.

PLO official Saeb Erekat slammed the latest attack on religious sites and called on the international community to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law.

"This culture of impunity that some countries have granted to Israel has allowed settlers to escalate their racist attacks against Palestinians without any legal accountability," he added.

Israeli president Shimon Peres condemned the attack, saying "holy sites must not be harmed," a statement said.

In early September, suspected Jewish extremists torched the wooden door of a Jerusalem monastery and sprayed "Jesus is a monkey" and pro-settler graffiti on the walls.

In February, suspected Jewish extremists wrote "Death to Christianity" on two Jerusalem churches. The graffiti also included profanity about Jesus, and the vandals slashed the tires of several cars parked in one of the church compounds.

"Price Tag" attacks have targeted mosques, Palestinian homes and Israeli military installations in the occupied West Bank.

An ancient mosque in Jerusalem was torched on Dec. 13, and sprayed with the Star of David, "price tag," "Muhammad is a pig" and "A good Arab is a dead Arab" in Hebrew.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=525277>

- **US asks Europe not to support Palestinian bid at UN**

LONDON (Ma'an) -- The US has asked European governments not to support the PLO's bid to upgrade its status at the UN, The Guardian reported Monday.

In a memo seen by the UK-based newspaper, the US urged European governments "to support [US] efforts" to

block the bid, and threatened "significant negative consequences" including financial sanctions if Palestine secured an upgrade to its UN status.

President Mahmoud Abbas told the UN General Assembly on Thursday he would seek "observer state" membership at the world body, a downgrade from the full membership he requested last year. The 2011 bid was staunchly opposed by Israel and the US and failed to pass the Security Council.

Washington holds veto power at the Security Council but not in the 193-member General Assembly, where a vote for "observer state" membership would likely be supported.

The US memo, which was communicated to representatives of European governments, said the upgrade "would have significant negative consequences, for the peace process itself, for the UN system, as well as our ability to maintain our significant financial support for the Palestinian Authority."

It noted that "observer state" membership of the UN would allow Palestine access to

the International Criminal Court. At the ICC, Palestine could challenge Israel's settlement building, occupation and blockade on Gaza, which breach international law.

"We hope you are willing to support our efforts ... We would appreciate knowing where your government stands on this issue. We would also be interested in knowing whether you have been approached on this matter by Palestinian representatives," the US document said.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=525199>

- **PA releases Zakaria Zubeidi on bail**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- Former Fatah fighter Zakaria Zubeidi was released from Palestinian Authority jail on Monday evening, his lawyer said.



Zubeidi has been charged with connection to the shooting on the late Jenin

governor's house in May, attorney Farid Hawash said. Qaddura Musa died hours later of a heart attack.

Hawash said Zubeidi would plead not guilty at the next hearing on Oct. 7.

The Jenin court released him on bail of 5,000 Jordanian dinar, he added.

Zubeidi had been jailed without charge for more than four months, until he received the formal charge last Sunday.

The director of the Jenin theater co-founded by Zubeidi, the Freedom Theater, said Zubeidi told his brother earlier Monday he was re-starting a hunger strike against his continued detention.

"A few hours later we heard he was being released, but we didn't believe it until we heard he was standing outside the doors of the prison," Jonathan Stanczak said.

In recent weeks, Zubeidi twice launched hunger strikes in jail, before suspending them on assurances he would immanently be released.

Zubeidi left the Fatah-affiliated Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, which he led in Jenin during the second intifada, to co-found the theater in Jenin refugee camp in 2006 with Juliano Mer-Khamis, who was shot in 2011.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=525155>

Workers block checkpoint to protest mistreatment

- **Published today (updated)**  
**02/10/2012 10:45**

TULKAREM (Ma'an) -- Hundreds of Palestinian workers held a protest outside a northern West Bank checkpoint into Israel on Tuesday, slamming what they described as mistreatment by Israeli soldiers, a Ma'an reporter said.



Workers blocked the crossing and demanded that Israeli officials allow them to cross at 5 a.m. instead of 7 a.m. as the checkpoint is always overcrowded.

Palestinian workers, seeking better wages in Israel, must secure special permits from Israeli employers and regularly queue for hours at checkpoints to reach their place of work on time.

Taybeh crossing is located in the northern city of Tulkarem.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=525252>

- **Police: 2 Israeli officers injured in Jerusalem clashes**

JERUSALEM (Ma'an) -- Two Israeli border guards were injured Monday during clashes with Palestinians in East Jerusalem, Israeli police said.



Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld told Ma'an that two officers were lightly injured after locals threw stones and metal bars at them in Ras al-Amoud.

Israeli border police were in the Palestinian neighborhood to make arrests in connection with an incident that took place Sunday, Rosenfeld said.

Rosenfeld said none of those involved in Monday's clashes were detained.

Azzam Abu Soud, director of the Chamber of Commerce, told Ma'an that Israeli forces detained one Palestinian from Ras al-Amoud.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=525184>

- **Palestinians commemorate killing of 13 protesters in Israel**

TEL AVIV, Israel (Ma'an) -- Palestinians in Israel on Monday commemorated the killing of 13 civilians by Israeli forces in 2000, calling for justice for the victims, Israeli media reported.



Services were held in Umm el-Fahm, Nazareth, Kfar Kana and other Palestinian villages in the Galilee.

"Twelve years have passed and as far as we are concerned it is as if the incident happened yesterday," a spokesman for the families of the victims Ibrahim Siam said, the Israeli daily Haaretz reported.

"This is a wound that will not heal quickly, especially as the bottom line is that 13 young men were killed by Israeli police fire and no one has been found guilty," Said added.

Demonstrators chanted slogans and demanded that those responsible for the killings be indicted.

The Orr Commission, established following the deaths, found Israeli police incompetence and a history of discrimination against Palestinians in Israel.

Rights group Adalah represented the families of the victims before an official commission of inquiry, but in 2008 the attorney general issued a decision not to

indict any of the Israeli police officers responsible for the deaths.

The killings took place in October 2000 during a series of Palestinian protests in northern Israel at the onset of the second intifada.

Around twenty percent, or 1.3 million people, of Israel's population are Palestinian.

They are largely the descendants of Palestinians that managed to remain during the 1948 war, when an estimated 700,000 were expelled from or fled their homes during fighting that would see the establishment of the state of Israel.

Rights groups say that Palestinians living in Israel face discrimination in employment, education and public funding within Israel.

The Israeli government estimates that just over 50 percent of Palestinian families in Israel live under the poverty line.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=525138>

## 4. AFRICA and EGYPT

### • Nour Party to form reconciliation committee, continue elections

Nour Party spokesperson Nader Bakkar said 98 percent of party members have voted in favor of an initiative to reform the party and end internal disagreements.



At a press conference held on Monday, Bakkar said the initiative was launched at a meeting for party members, who agreed on the formation of a committee to manage the party's internal crisis and examine the complaints made by members after a dispute erupted recently over the party's leadership. He added that 98 percent of the members voted in favor of the initiative.

"114 out of 150 members who were former MPs, 17 of 19 members of the supreme authority and 22 of 29 secretary generals were present at the vote," he said.

Those present at the meeting agreed on the need to carry on with efforts to form a reconciliation committee composed of party figures who are widely trusted by all parties.

The participants also agreed on the need to emphasize institution-based action and welcomed the idea of having specialized courses and conducting tests as a basis for promotion.

Bakkar also said that Tarek al-Desouqy, head of the committee supervising the election, was tasked with examining pertinent complaints. He emphasized the need to continue elections, particularly after the second phase of the election was concluded on Friday.

Sayed Mostafa Khalifa, the party head appointed by its supreme authority, said the party will work to emphasize institution-based work and refrain from punishing party members in the meantime to solve internal disagreements.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/nour-party-form-reconciliation-committee-continue-elections>

- **Egypt says no free trade zone with Gaza**

President Mohamed Morsy's office on Monday confirmed that Egypt would not establish a free trade zone with the Gaza Strip in the border area of Rafah in North Sinai, after conflicting statements from both Egyptian and Palestinian officials.



"There is no such project," said presidential spokesperson Yasser Ali. "It was an idea suggested in the media but never formally discussed, and we will not accept any violation of our sovereignty over our territories."

On demonstrations by some Hamas members on the border between Egypt and Gaza against the demolition of tunnels, Ali said Egypt has the right to stop any violation of international laws and conventions, pointing out that the tunnels are open from the Egyptian side to allow passage for food and medicines in accordance with the law.

Sinai Development Authority chairman Major General Mohamed Shawky said on Friday that the Cabinet was considering the creation of three free trade zones along the Gaza border.

Namer Hammad, political advisor to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, had said that Egypt rejected requests from Hamas to create a free trade zone on border, but Hamas claimed that they were still waiting on a decision from the Morsy administration.

"We have not received any response from the Egyptian government so far in this regard," Taher al-Nunu, spokesperson for the former Hamas cabinet, told Al-Masry Al-Youm by telephone from Gaza last week.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egypt-says-no-free-trade-zone-gaza>

- **Troops 'in control of Somalia's Kismayo'**

Somali and African Union forces now holding strategic points in southern port city, formerly held by al-Shabab rebels.



African Union troops have entered the southern port city of Kismayo, a former rebel stronghold, and are now in control of strategic points in the city.

Al Jazeera's Mohamed Adow, reporting from the Kenyan capital Nairobi, said that troops from Somalia and Kenya, acting under the AU's peacekeeping force's banner, were in control of the whole city on Tuesday.

Residents said an explosion was heard after the troops entered the city, with al-Shabab rebels claiming responsibility for the blast, the Reuters news agency reported. AU forces, however, told Al Jazeera that the blast had been a "controlled explosion" of ordinance found by Kenyan troops.

The troops went in on foot, rather than in armoured personnel carriers or tanks, Adow reported.

"Nobody really anticipated that there would be no problem, no resistance from al-Shabab inside Kismayo. Al-Shabab has had a long time to prepare for this, likely they have bombs and other devices throughout the city [...] the question is how long Al-Shabab has the capacity to maintain it," reported Al Jazeera's Peter Greste from Nairobi.

The AU moved in after al-Shabab fighters withdrew on Friday, following an earlier Kenyan and Somali air, sea and ground assault.

Some Somali troops reportedly moved into Kismayo on Monday from the western edge of the city, residents said. The soldiers did not remain there overnight, however.

Witnesses said that the streets of Kismayo remained largely deserted, and businesses were closed.

"We pray their arrival will not bring chaos and robbery as happened in other towns. We have actually suffered a lot," Mohamed Hashi, a resident in the town, told the Associated Press news agency by telephone.

"Some people are happy to welcome them because they were fed up with the misrule of the al-Shabab fighters," another resident, Abdullahi Farey Hassan, told the AFP news agency.

"But I will have my reservations until I see them doing something good. I hope they will be better than al-Shabab."

'Tactical retreat'

Kenyan troops had been maintaining their positions outside the city until moving in on Tuesday. They had been occupying positions about five kilometres from the city since launching their assault on Friday.

The Kenyan Defence Forces said on its Twitter feed Monday afternoon that African Union, Kenyan and Somali troops were "consolidating the gains in Kismayo and expanding out to the rest of the city".

The Kenyan military said that civilian safety and security was a top priority.

Speaking to Al Jazeera, al-Shabab commanders termed the withdrawal on Saturday a "tactical retreat" in order to avoid conflict in the streets, but said that

their group had not abandoned the town, and would continue fighting for it.

The rebel group said its fighters were poised to engage the allied troops once they entered the city centre, threatening to turn the streets into a "battlefield".

Members of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which totals 17,000 soldiers across the country, have been cautious about pouring into the port city from its outskirts.

The Somali government had earlier said that it would not enter the city until peace negotiations with local clan leaders had been completed.

AMISOM lauded

On Monday, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the newly elected Somali president, praised AMISOM for forcing al-Shabab to vacate the city.

"We commend AMISOM and the Somali troops who have shown bravery by forcing the enemy out of the town," a statement from the president's office said.

The United States has also praised AMISOM on its operations to take the city.

"We applaud the work of AMISOM and what they have done in helping to degrade and defeat and push al-Shabab out of Somalia's main cities," said Johnnie Carson, the top US diplomat for Africa, on Monday.

"We believe that this will help to bring about a return to stability in Somalia, and reduce over time the terrorist threat to Somalia and neighbouring states."

Carson called Somalia "a good news story for the region", pointing to the nation's new constitution and newly elected parliament and president, after years of lawlessness.

Kismayo was al-Shabab's last stronghold in the country, and the taxes it levied on goods coming into the port helped to fund the rebellion against the Somali government.

The African Union force is made up of Ugandan and Burundian troops, who pushed al-Shabab out of Mogadishu in August 2011, and forces from Djibouti and

Kenya. Carson said troops from Sierra Leone would arrive in Somalia on Monday and Tuesday to bolster AMISOM.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/10/201210253950687422.html>

- **Amnesty urges Egypt to reform army and police**

Amnesty International urged Egypt's President Mohammed Mursi on Tuesday to implement reforms in the police and army, publishing two reports condemning human rights abuses by security forces.



Mursi “has a historic opportunity to tackle the bloody legacy of police and army and guarantee that no one is above the law in Egypt,” the watchdog said.

It called on him to introduce “sweeping reform” to the security forces, highlighting alleged human rights violations during the military-led transition that followed the uprising that toppled Hosni Mubarak last year.

In the reports presented to Cairo, Amnesty condemned “unlawful killings, excessive use of force, torture and other ill-treatment against protesters by both the military and the police” during the 16-month post-revolution period.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) led the country from Mubarak's ouster in February 2011 until Mursi took over as president in June 2012.

Amnesty's first report focused on several demonstrations violently suppressed by security forces.

“The military courts failed to provide any redress for the victims, while civilian investigators were unable or unwilling to indict a single officer for their crimes,” it said.

“Male and female protesters were subjected to severe beatings, given electric shocks, sexually threatened and abused by military troops. Thousands were tried or face unfair trial before military courts,” it added.

The second report highlighted the “total impunity enjoyed” by Egypt’s police forces.

“The report highlights the brutal response by the police to protests, as well as the longstanding pattern of torture of detainees and the brazen disregard of the rule of law,” Amnesty said.

“The riot police have routinely responded to peaceful protests with excessive and lethal force,” the statement said, adding that tear gas and shotgun ammunition were “among the U.S.-made weaponry supplied to Egypt’s police forces before and after the uprising.”

Mursi, who rose through the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood before running for office, is the first civilian and democratically elected president in Egypt’s history.

In August, he ordered the surprise retirement of his powerful defense minister and scrapped a constitutional document that gave sweeping powers to the military, in a move some said was aimed at ending the SCAF’s power.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/02/241414.html?PHPSESSID=8kgitd9b02kuiiukeg8h4c3q57>

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON

### • Mikati, Abadi discuss bilateral agreements

BEIRUT: Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon Ghazanfar Roknabadi agreed Tuesday on the need to remove obstacles hampering the implementation of Lebanese-Iranian trade agreements, a press release issued by Mikati’s office said.



Mikati and Roknabadi met at the Grand Serail to discuss the Lebanese-Iranian Trade and Industry Opportunity Forum to be held in Tehran on October 13 and 14, according to the statement.

“I discussed the bilateral Iranian-Lebanese agreements with the PM, some of which been implemented, and the obstacle facing the implementation of the

remaining accords,” said Roknabadi following the meeting.

The Iranian ambassador also said that a Lebanese delegation of experts and technicians of the Labor Ministry will head to Iran next week to activate a labor agreement signed by the two countries.

During Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s visit to Lebanon in October 2010, the two countries signed 17 trade agreements in the economic, oil and energy fields.

Five hundred Iranian companies from the private sector will take part in the forum, along with fifty Lebanese businessmen and prominent economic figure in the economic forum to be held in the Iranian capital mid-October.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Oct-02/189893-mikati-abadi-discuss-bilateral-agreements.ashx#ixzz2895Ce01Z>

- **Pattern of stolen cars prompts terrorism investigation in Lebanon**

SIDON, Lebanon: Car theft is not uncommon in Lebanon. But when someone tried to smuggle a stolen car into

the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain al-Hilweh, security services feared something was brewing – possibly a terror attack.



Their concerns came in the wake of a failed attempt early Tuesday to smuggle a stolen car into the Ain el-Hilweh refugee camp on the outskirts of the southern port city of Sidon.

Security sources told The Daily Star that a Lebanese Army checkpoint at the camp’s entrance seized the Honda CR-V at dawn Tuesday as Ahmad A., a Palestinian national, tried to smuggle it into the camp.

They said the car belonged to a member of judicial police. It was stolen outside his house in Rmaileh, near Ain al-Hilweh, late Monday evening. The car was returned to its owner.

On the same night, burglars stole the same type of car outside St. Charbel School in Rmaileh. The car belonged to a local teacher identified as Afifeh Shaaya.

The car thefts coincided with a similar attempted robbery in Abra, a town east of Sidon, at dawn Monday when residents reported waking up to the sound of alarms of their cars.

The sources said the cars that were intended to be stolen were all Honda CR-Vs.

Authorities have seized several stolen vehicles, particularly over the last three months – the peak of the Syria crisis – loaded with assault rifles, ammunition and other weaponry. Many of the stolen cars have been hidden in Ain al-Hilweh, Lebanon’s largest refugee camp.

“We fear that the stolen vehicles could be used in terror attacks or crime,” one security source in Sidon said.

“This is why the investigation is shrouded in secrecy,” added the source, who spoke to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

The source also raised the possibility that the cars were being stolen to be cut up

and sold in parts, given that the Honda CR-V parts are expensive.

Read <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Oct-02/189895-pattern-of-stolen-cars-prompts-terrorism-investigation-in-lebanon.ashx#ixzz2895PM3x2> more:

## 6. SYRIA

### • Syrian capital sees renewed violence

Activists say government shelling has hit several neighbourhoods around Damascus and elsewhere, as clashes continue.



Rebel fighters have stormed an army post in Douma, killing six soldiers, while intense shelling by government forces sent residents of the Damascus suburb fleeing in panic, a rights group and activists said.

Other rebel-held bastions in and around Damascus were also bombarded at dawn on Tuesday as the government said it was

close to crushing the last pockets of resistance in the capital.

The violence came hours after UN chief Ban Ki-moon urged Damascus to show compassion to its people and Walid al-Moualem, the Syrian foreign minister, said a political solution was still possible if the West and Gulf states halted support for the rebels.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based anti-government rights group, said that at least two civilians died when Douma, in the capital's northeast, was rocked by shelling following the deadly raid by the rebels during the night on a medical centre there that has now been taken over by the military.

"The army had transformed the centre into a barracks and snipers were positioned there," Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said.

Troops loyal to President Bashar al-Assad also targeted a string of rebel strongholds in towns and suburbs outside the capital at dawn, including in Babila, Hosh al-Arab, Saqba and Zabadani, the Observatory said.

The Local Co-ordination Committees, an anti-government activist network, reported that more than 100 shells fell on Zabadani, once a resort destination known for its mild weather and scenic views just northwest of the capital but now devastated by the civil war ravaging Syria.

Elsewhere in Damascus province, the town of Yabroud came under fierce artillery fire, the LCC said.

'End of security operations'

The official daily Al-Baath on Tuesday said that the "end of security operations throughout Damascus province" was approaching.

Government forces "have destroyed many weapons caches and seized large quantities of ammunition and equipment ... which indicates that the end of security operations throughout Damascus province is approaching," the newspaper said.

Rebels on July 18 carried out a massive bombing on a security complex in Damascus, killing Assad's brother-in-law, the defence minister and a general.

Since then regime forces have pushed the rebels to the outskirts of the capital but have lost control of several border crossings and are battling to retake Syria's second city of Aleppo, which has been the focal point of the conflict since mid-July.

The Observatory said that Aleppo's northeast district of Hanano City again came under bombardment on Tuesday, a day after 19 civilians were killed in shelling there and in other districts.

Fighting between troops and rebels also flared in the Arkoub, Sakhur, Sheikh Khodr and Sheikh Faris districts as well as along Suleiman al-Halabi street in the city centre, the watchdog said.

Rebels and loyalist troops on Monday clashed in the centuries-old UNESCO-listed Aleppo souk, days after it was ravaged by a fire sparked by earlier fighting.

#### Political moves

On the political front, Ban said after a meeting with Syria's Muallem at UN headquarters in New York that it was time

for Damascus to lower the scale of its offensive against the uprising.

"He stressed that it was the Syrian people who were being killed every day and appealed to the government of Syria to show compassion to its own people," a spokesperson for the UN secretary-general said.

Moualem, meanwhile, addressing the UN General Assembly, said France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United States "clearly induce and support terrorism in Syria with money, weapons and foreign fighters".

Assad was open to reforms if the violence stopped, the foreign minister said. "We still believe in a political solution as an essential way out of the crisis."

For this to happen, he said UN members should press for an end to the "arming, financing, harbouring and training of terrorist groups".

Ali Akbar Salehi, the Iranian foreign minister, also in New York for the UN General Assembly, said Tehran could not

support any country, including ally Syria, that used such weapons.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/201210295838248282.html>

- **Russia urges NATO not to intervene in Syria; Turkish troops kill Kurd on border fire**

A senior Russian official urged NATO on Tuesday not to seek any pretexts for military intervention in Syria, Interfax news agency said.



It quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov as saying Moscow, an ally of Damascus, opposed the creation of buffer zones or humanitarian corridors in Syria and called for calm between Turkey and Syria over tension on their border, according to Reuters.

As many as 30 people have been killed by Syrian forces on Tuesday, mostly in Damascus and Aleppo, activists said.

Meanwhile, Turkish troops fired across the Syrian border on Tuesday, killing a member of a Kurdish militia and wounding two others in the first such fatal shooting at the Turkish frontier, a watchdog reported.

“The three Kurds, members of a Kurdish militia hostile to the Damascus regime but also wary of the rebellion, were patrolling the border in (Syria’s) Hasaka province when they were hit by Turkish army fire from the other side,” Observatory director Rami Abdul Rahman told AFP.

“This was the first fatal shooting at the Turkish border,” he added.

The incident occurred in in the Derbassiyeh region of the northwest province of Hasaka, according to the Britain-based Observatory.

The monitoring group said that the Kurds were members of the YPG, or “units for the protection of the people,” a militia close to the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD).

Ankara has accused the group of being a front for the outlawed Kurdistan Worker’s

Party (PKK), which the United States has warned should be denied a safe haven in the region.

Members of Syria's more than two million Kurdish minority have largely stayed out of the conflict roiling the country but many participated in anti-regime protests that erupted in March last year.

They have also distanced themselves from the rebel Free Syrian Army, which is fighting President Bashar al-Assad's forces, fuelling suspicions among some of collusion with the regime.

Ankara has accused its former ally Damascus of granting swathes of territory in northern Syria, including on the border, to the PYD as a buffer zone.

Despite distrust between the traditional Kurdish parties in Syria, they signed an agreement in July to unify their ranks.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/02/241405.html>

- **Yemeni officers in Syria not involved in fighting: official**

Five Yemeni army officers being held by a shadowy Islamist group in Syria are

students at a military academy in Aleppo and are not involved in the fighting that has engulfed the country, a Yemeni official said.

In a statement released late Monday on the ministry of defense website, the unnamed official denied the officers had "any link at all, and they did not participate in the events in Syria."

He said the five officers "were on their way back home after they completed their studies," at the academy in Aleppo, northern Syria's largest city where fierce battles have been raging between regime troops and rebels.

He added that the five men were "kidnapped while on their way to Damascus," from where they were planning to fly home to Sana'a.

According to the officials, the defense ministry has asked the International Committee of the Red Cross to "intervene and help secure the release of the five officers."

On Sept. 30, the al-Nusra Front posted a four-minute video on jihadist forums

showing the Yemeni captors, saying they were helping President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

The video shows the Yemeni army ID cards of the five officers who condemn the "crimes" committed by Assad's regime against Syrians and the Sana'a government's support for Damascus.

The men -- named as Ali al-Salama, Mohammed Abdo al-Mlaiki, Hani Nizar, Hassan al-Wahib and Ahmed Radman -- say they were serving in Aleppo.

"I came after coordination between the Yemeni and Syrian governments to crush the Syrian revolt," says Mlaiki, who like the four other officers is seen sitting below a black flag on which "Al-Nusra Front" is written in Arabic.

"I call on the Yemeni government to cut off all military and logistical relations (with Syria) because President Assad's regime kills its people, and this is what we saw with our own eyes in many Syrian regions."

It was unclear when the men were detained or when the video was taped.

Al-Nusra has claimed the majority of suicide attacks during the anti-regime revolt in Syria, including a twin suicide bombing in Damascus in May that killed 55 people.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/02/241389.html>

## 7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

### • Bahrain medics jailed after losing appeal

Police in Bahrain have arrested five medics in a series of dawn raids on Tuesday morning, just one day after the country's highest court dismissed their appeals in a case international human rights groups have rejected as a farce.



The first doctor, Ali al-Ekry, was arrested at his home at around 5:30am local time (02:30 GMT), according to his family. Al-Ekry is facing the harshest jail term: He was sentenced to five years in prison for

"possession and concealment" of weapons and "illegal assembly".

The other medics were arrested one-by-one in subsequent raids, according to sources in Bahrain.

The doctors are part of a group of 20 arrested last year and convicted by a military court; those convictions were upheld by a civilian tribunal in June, despite widespread criticism of the trial from international human rights groups.

On Monday, the court of cassation rejected their appeals and confirmed the prison sentences, according to the state-run Bahrain News Agency.

Dr Al-Ekry spoke to Al Jazeera about the court's decision on Monday. The arrests came as a surprise to the doctors and their families.

All nine medics had been free on bail since last September, though they faced a travel ban. Lawyers were not sure whether the government would actually enforce the sentences, because of the international pressure surrounding the case.

"It is natural to assume that once the highest court in the land issues a verdict, that verdict is enforceable," said Fahad Al Binali, a government spokesman.

Even al-Ekry was not sure if he would be jailed. "It's always been vague in dealing with the medics issue," al-Ekry said in an interview with Al Jazeera on Monday, the day before his arrest. "[This case] has received wide international attention, and that's what is making my government reluctant to implement the verdict," he said.

Amnesty International issued a statement condemning the arrests. "Today's imprisonment once again marks the lack of any real commitment from Bahrain's government to be held accountable and deliver true justice for victims of human rights violations," said Ann Harrison, the group's Middle East and North Africa deputy programme director.

'Ridiculous charges'

Nine other doctors and nurses had their verdicts dismissed in June by the appeals court, including Rula al-Saffar, the head of Bahrain's nursing society. She had

originally been sentenced to 15 years in prison.

The court also dismissed some of the most serious charges against the doctors, including allegations that they "occupied" the hospital and possessed weapons.

"I think the regime needs to justify the military takeover of the hospital, and needs to scapegoat doctors, hence the ridiculous charges that they persist in accusing them of," said Dr. Ala'a Shehabi, a Bahraini academic and activist.

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, the official panel which studied last year's unrest, rejected many of the government's claims, like the charge that the medics gave weapons to protesters. The commission also found that the medics were tortured while in custody.

"At the court there was no evidence brought," said Fareeda al-Dallal, al-Ekry's wife, in an interview with Al Jazeera. "Not a single video or leaflet saying the doctors were trying to throw out the regime... this case was purely political."

Rights groups have argued that all of the convictions should be dismissed. The United Nations criticised the prison sentences as "harsh".

Separately, Mohamed al-Mushaimaa, 22, died in a Bahraini prison overnight, his lawyer said on Tuesday. Mushaimaa was jailed last year for taking part in protests at the Financial Harbour in Manama, though he denies ever attending.

Mushaimaa suffered from sickle cell anemia, and complained repeatedly that he was not receiving proper medical treatment in prison, his lawyer, Mohsen al-Alawi, said.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/201210254756409870.html>

- **Assad behind deadly mall blaze in Qatar: leaked documents**

In May, a shopping mall blaze in Qatar killed 19 people, most of them children at an unlicensed Doha nursery.

The fire which began in a sporting goods store in Doha's Villagio Mall had started, according to official statements, "due to faulty electrical wiring in a fluorescent light."

All 19 people killed in the inferno on May 28 were foreigners, including two fire fighters, 13 children and four teachers.

Officially, the fire was not premeditated.

However, leaked files reveal that the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad might have planned the Villagio blaze.

The leaked documents are highly-classified Syrian security files obtained by Al Arabiya from opposition sources.

The channel said that it has verified and authenticated hundreds of these documents and that it has decided to disclose ones with substantial news value and political relevance.

A telegram sent in February from the presidential palace in Damascus to the Syrian Embassy in Qatar unveils important information on the Syrian strategy to “embarrass” the Qatari state.

Syrian Major General Dhu al-Himma Shaleesh, head of the president’s Special Security force, wrote to the Syrian ambassador in Qatar, Hajem Ibraheem,

requesting from him to serve “the supreme interests of the (Syrian) state.” Shaleesh informed the ambassador of the need to humiliate Qatar after its supposed role in supporting the Free Syrian Army, the country’s main armed opposition group.

Shaleesh had requested from the Syrian ambassador in Qatar to provide him with suggestions on how Syria would proceed to implement its strategy and put the Gulf state in a critical situation to weaken its image and alter public opinion of the state.

A second highly secretive document dated June 2, also sent from Shaleesh but this time addressed personally to President Assad, acknowledges the “success” of the first operation aimed to destabilize Qatar and embarrass it in front of the world.

Shaleesh named the operation “Villagio blaze.”

Al Arabiya's exclusive series on the newly-leaked security documents continues tomorrow.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/01/241205.html>

## 8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Deadly bombing in eastern Afghanistan**

Suicide bomber wearing police uniform kills 14 in Khost, including at least four police and three foreign soldiers.



A suicide bomber wearing a police uniform has killed at least 14 people, including four police officers and three NATO soldiers, in the eastern Afghan city of Khost, ISAF and local officials say.

More than 60 other people were injured in the powerful explosion, which took place in a crowded market place, hospital officials said.

Witnesses said the target was a joint foot patrol of NATO and Afghan security forces travelling near the police headquarters on Monday. The bomber struck after the soldiers and police got out of their

vehicles to walk through the market area in Khost.

"Today at around 8:30am (local time; 04:00 GMT) a suicide bomber on a motorcycle targeted a joint patrol in Khost city in a crowded area," the provincial governor's office said in a statement.

An ISAF spokesperson confirmed that three NATO service members had been killed, but that details of the incident were still unclear. The deaths take coalition fatalities to at least 347 this year.

The Taliban have claimed responsibility for the attack.

The dead included a NATO-contracted interpreter and six civilians, Al Jazeera's Bernard Smith reported from Kabul.

The provincial governor's office said that the commander of the local rapid reaction police force was among the dead.

Coalition spokesperson Major Adam Wojack would only confirm that three NATO service members and their translator were killed in a bombing in the

east, without giving an exact location or the nationalities of the dead.

The international military alliance usually waits for individual nations to announce details on deaths. It was not immediately clear if the translator was an Afghan citizen or a foreigner, Wojack said.

The explosion came a day after NATO announced that a firefight between coalition troops and their Afghan allies killed an ISAF soldier, a civilian contractor and three Afghan army troops in circumstances that remained unclear.

That incident was initially described as a suspected "insider attack", but it was later suggested that either insurgent fire or a verbal argument between the troops led to the shooting.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/10/20121015546731376.html>

- **Moscow beckons Pakistan's Kiani**

By M K Bhadrakumar

The phrase coined by the 17th-century English philosopher Francis Bacon is: "If the mountain won't come to Mohammed, then Mohammed must go to the

mountain." So, if Russian President Vladimir Putin won't come to Islamabad on Tuesday, then Pakistani army chief Ashfaq Parvez Kiani will still go to Moscow.

The Pakistani military spokesman has confirmed the "historic" visit will take place on Wednesday. The spokesman said Kiani is expected to meet top Russian military and civilian leaders to discuss possibilities of military-to-military cooperation between the two countries.

Russian sources explain that when Putin never really scheduled an Islamabad visit and none was announced, and the excitement was all on the Pakistani side, so how could it be deemed that the Kremlin cancelled the visit? It's a fair contention.

According to Moscow sources quoted by the media, there simply wasn't enough meat for a Putin visit at this point of time in the Russian-Pakistan normalization, since economic ties are languishing and there was nothing much in the pipeline except a couple of memorandums of understanding that could have been initialed.

But having said that, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is arriving in Islamabad on Wednesday on an unscheduled visit, presumably to assuage any sense of hurt in the Pakistani civilian leadership over the abrupt cancellation of Putin's visit.

The enemy's enemy...

Meanwhile, even as Lavrov heads for Islamabad, Kiani will have set out for Moscow. To be sure, Moscow's priority will be to sit across the table with Kiani, as he is the fountainhead of authority in Pakistan on major foreign and security policy issues. Also, he is an unusual Pakistani general, having run into difficulties with the United States, while pushing for Pakistan's "strategic autonomy" on the geopolitical chessboard.

Indeed, the present moment is pregnant with possibilities. Russia and Pakistan in varying measure - for different reasons though - have come under US pressure. Both appreciate that the US has "lost" the war in Afghanistan, is pulling out of it and would have little choice but to negotiate with the Taliban; both sense a power

vacuum could develop in Afghanistan but also feel uneasy that the US is yet keeping strategic ambiguity about its future military presence in the region.

Meanwhile, Russia-Pakistan normalization through the recent years has reached a point where it is possible for the two countries to cooperate on a practical plane. In short, adversities and opportunities are compelling Russia and Pakistan to explore if they can swim together.

A core area of cooperation relates to the transit routes that supply the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in Afghanistan, which both Russia and Pakistan are providing for the Western alliance. The Northern Distribution Network via Russia becomes vital, in principle, for the US because of the imponderables over the Pakistani routes. But Washington is also chary of overtly depending on Russian goodwill. Again, Russia has supplied helicopters for the Afghan army and is maintaining them - they are paid for by the US, apart from training Afghan security personnel.

Evidently, Moscow has tenaciously finessed an Afghan "trump card" to play in the bigger game of the US-Russia reset. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko was quoted as saying last week that Moscow is ready to expand its joint projects with NATO concerning Afghanistan and "bring other players into them, too", but strictly within the framework of a mandate from the UN Security Council.

However, the US is easing itself out of the straitjacket of the UN Security Council mandate to conduct its activities without the Russians holding a veto over them. In reality, the US has all along been cherry picking, taking help from Moscow on a case-by-case basis but consistently keeping Russia at arm's length from the Hindu Kush. The US has repeatedly rebuffed the Russian attempts to insert the Collective Security Treaty Organization [CSTO] even remotely as a provider of security for Afghanistan.

Washington's obduracy has only helped deepen the Russian suspicions regarding the US' long-term intentions, especially the establishment of permanent American

military presence in Afghanistan. Grushko articulated the Russian angst:

One may suppose NATO will be turning to the Security Council for permission to train the Afghan cadres for the interior agencies and the armed forces. There should be no other military functions and everything that spreads beyond the task of facilitating the Afghan stabilization will undermine regional security and generate an even greater uncertainty.

The plain truth is that among the regional powers, it is only Pakistan - aside of course Iran - which would feel genuine empathy for the Russian angst. Beijing may have reservations over a long-term US military presence but then it also has its well-honed methods (with Chinese characteristics) of harmonizing with the US (and NATO). To speak of the Central Asian elites, they have been beneficiaries of the lucrative war contracts and could be loathe to see the US forces depart.

As for India, it positively views a long-term US military presence as a factor of regional security and stability. It is Pakistan that feels threatened, like Russia, given the tense state of its relations with the US (and India). Both Russia and Pakistan have reason to worry about the

deployment of a US missile defense system in Afghanistan.

A slap on the face

Clearly, the backdrop cannot be overlooked - the US-Russia relationship has run into headwinds. Writing for the official Novosti agency, its weekly columnist Konstantin von Eggert assessed Moscow's recent decision to shut down USAID activities in Russia:

This week, Vladimir Putin laid to rest the reset policy ... The reasons given by the [Russian foreign] ministry's spokesman were couched in language reminiscent of the Brezhnev era. In a nutshell, USAID was kicked out because, in the Kremlin's view, it tried to influence Russian politics ... The Russian president seems to have decided that it is time for the era of niceties in US-Russian relations to end. This is surely the first time since Gorbachev came to power that official Russia has slapped official America on the face so hard.

He [Putin] is irritated by President Barack Obama's stance on ballistic missile defense deployment in Europe ... What this show of force testifies to is the utter shallowness of US-Russian political

relations. In the last ten years it has whittled down to just a few perennial topics ... Russia became an irrelevant second-tier policy issue for the Americans quite some time ago. Until fairly recently, the Russian leadership had responded by using the so-called nuisance factor - ie making life difficult for the US without crossing any red lines that might prompt an unpredictable US reaction. No more.

The point is, Washington is hitting hard at Russia's first circle of strategic interests in the so-called post-Soviet space. A telltale sign of the enormous loss of Russian influence in the Central Asian region surfaced over the weekend when Moscow admitted the failure of its protracted diplomacy in wrapping up an agreement with Tajikistan for the extension of the lease of the Russian military base in time for Putin's visit to Dushanbe slated for Friday.

Only 10 days back, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, who was deputed to Dushanbe to prepare for Putin's visit, had exuded optimism that the two countries were "very close" to signing an agreement. However, the commander of the Russian Ground Forces, General Vladimir Chirkin, retracted on Saturday

that the negotiations may continue for months.

"I believe the countries' leaders will sign the deal on the base's continuing stay [in Tajikistan] in the first half of next year," Chirkin said.

He admitted that Moscow is having problem persuading Dushanbe to agree to a 49-year lease and that the Tajiks are demanding US\$100 million in an annual fee for the base (which used to be provided without fee). The Kommersant newspaper reported that Dushanbe is demanding \$250 million as the annual fee.

Without a presence on the Tajik-Afghan border, Russia's Afghan strategy will be thrown into disarray in the post-2014 period. To be sure, Dushanbe feels encouraged that the US is interested in having a base of its own in Tajikistan. Indeed, there is a perceptible stepping up of the US diplomatic activities in Dushanbe, Tashkent and Ashgabat - key regional capitals across the Afghan border - in the past year. These capitals have a major role to play in any post-2014 scenario.

Water, water everywhere ...

The US has toyed with the idea of opening a transit route to Afghanistan via the Caspian, altogether bypassing Russian territory. The Western calculus is as follows: if NATO establishes a viable route from Turkey across the Caucasus and the Caspian region leading to the northern Afghanistan regions (via Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), Russia's capacity to dictate terms to the Western alliance would sharply diminish and the viability of long-term US military bases in Afghanistan will also be firmly ensured.

Things seem to be moving in this direction - although neither side talks about it openly. This is one reason why the parliamentary election in Georgia on Monday has become a high-stakes game: if President Mikhail Saakashvilli loses to the opposition led by Bidzina Ivanishvilli, Tbilisi may opt for a course correction in its close relationship with the US.

Meanwhile, in Central Asia itself, Uzbekistan has edged close to the Turkmen ideology of "positive neutrality" after suspending its membership of the Moscow-led Collective Treaty

Organization (CSTO) in June. Tashkent is making a determined effort to build up its ties with Turkmenistan. The Western countries are actively encouraging a Uzbek-Turkmen axis to develop (which would also have ramifications for energy security).

The Uzbek national news agency disclosed last week that Uzbek President Islam Karimov would pay a two-day visit to Ashgabat early this week. The report said, "The agenda of the summit includes the talks [with Turkmen president Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow] and exchanging views on the development of multifaceted Uzbek-Turkmen cooperation and important regional and international issues."

The report noted that Tashkent and Ashgabat have similar views on strengthening regional security and stability, creating "new effective mechanisms to intensify the negotiation process to resolve the Afghan crisis" with the participation of international organizations, joint fight against threats such as international terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime.

Above all, what may cement a Turkmen-Uzbek understanding is that the two countries share a common position on water and energy issues in Central Asia. Specifically, they are opposed to the present Russian plans to assist the construction of the Kambarata and Rogun dams in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The European Union, the World Bank and the US back the Uzbek-Turkmen stance on this issue. Thus, amidst the tense Uzbek-Tajik standoff in recent months, the results of "expert studies" in the US have just added fuel to the fire by counseling Tashkent that if Dushanbe goes ahead with the Rogun hydropower project, Uzbekistan's annual "loss" would be \$600 million in terms of shortage of water for irrigation, unemployment in the agriculture sector and so forth.

Waiting for the Taliban

Clearly, the Russians are on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, Moscow is keen to ensure a long-term military presence in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. But Bishkek and Dushanbe are demanding in return financial concessions and Russian assistance in building and managing their

hydroelectric projects, which are central to their economic development.

On the other hand, if Russia gets involved in the construction of these projects, it will annoy Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and push these key regional states into the Western embrace.

As things stand, the US is systematically elbowing Russia out of the entire southern tier of the Central Asian region bordering Afghanistan - Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Nor is the US showing any sense of hurry to vacate its air base in Manas, Kyrgyzstan.

Of course, Washington will not seek a UN Security Council mandate for its future plans in Afghanistan and will prefer to enter into bilateral agreements with Kabul. This is where the post-2014 political alignments within Afghanistan and the calculus of power in Kabul become a matter of great concern to Moscow.

But Russia's capacity to influence the ebb and flow of Afghan politics in its favor is virtually nil. The specter that is haunting Moscow (and Pakistan) is that the US

might at some point decide to come to terms with a Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. The mainstream opinion within the US strategic community is veering round to the view that the Taliban as such do not pose any threats to America's national security interests and therefore Washington must differentiate the al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

A Carnegie study last month titled "Waiting for the Taliban in Afghanistan", in fact, recommended a bold policy option for Washington:

After 2014, the level of US support for the Afghan regime will be limited and, after a new phase in the civil war, a Taliban victory will likely follow ... Even a (relatively) hostile new Taliban force in Kabul will be easier to deal with because, since they will have established their control on the Afghan side of the border, they will be directly responsible for key security issues.

The desirable endgame should be a stabilization of Afghanistan, probably with the Taliban in Kabul. There would have to be a measure of political or economic support from the United States because a difficult relationship between Afghanistan

and Pakistan is very likely whatever the regime in Kabul. That is essentially the best situation from a US point of view. A difficult relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan will give the United States more leverage on both.

At the present juncture, therefore, from the Russian viewpoint, Kayani becomes an extremely valuable interlocutor. As Moscow would see it, the Pakistani military leadership's interest also lies in forestalling the US efforts to perpetuate a regime in Afghanistan in the post-2014 period that attaches primacy to American interests. Moscow apprehends - and, rightly so - that an Islamist regime in Kabul that comes under American influence could herald an Arab Spring in the region and pose existential threats to the political order in Central Asia and North Caucasus.

In short, Moscow is betting that the Pakistani military will play a crucial role in the shaping up of the future Afghan polity and given the commonality of interests between Pakistan and Russia, the two countries need to cooperate and coordinate their approaches to the evolving Afghan situation.

Suffice to say, the reining in of the US influence in Kabul in the post-2014 period has become a shared Russian-Pakistani strategic objective. Kayani's visit to Moscow is timely. It is taking place even as the US-Afghan negotiations for the conclusion of agreements relating to long-term NATO/US military presence are due to begin within the coming three weeks. Also, both Russia and Pakistan anticipate that President Barack Obama will revisit the Afghan strategy no sooner than the November election in the US is over.

Of course, it is possible to argue that Moscow could be skating on thin ice. Its dalliance with the Pakistani military leadership will complicate Washington's sustained attempts to get Rawalpindi to cooperate in the Afghan endgame. The negative fallouts on the US-Russia reset could be serious, since Moscow is audaciously challenging the first circle of the US' regional strategy. This is an area where even China has treaded softly, notwithstanding its "all-weather friendship" with Pakistan.

Far more consequential would be the reliability of the Pakistani military leadership as Moscow's newfound ally in

Afghanistan. The former US ambassador, Cameron Munter, who concluded his tour in Islamabad recently, said last week in a speech that Pakistan is a country with a strong society but a weak state. Russian policy is in sync with the spirit of our times insofar as Pakistani society is virulently "anti-American".

However, the heart of the matter is that the Pakistani state is also simultaneously cooking many broths in its Rawalpindi kitchen and Grandma's Russian Borsch cannot be the main course there.  
[http://atimes.com/atimes/Central\\_Asia/NJ03Ag01.html](http://atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/NJ03Ag01.html)

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*\*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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