



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

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1. IRAQ

- **Janabi urges to activate project of National Reconciliation (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Oct 30 (AIN) –The head of the Iraqi Republican Gathering, Saad Asim al-Janabi, urged "The Government and the Parliament to activate the project of the National Reconciliation in a comprehensive way and to end the debaathfication issue."

He stated in a press statement received by AIN "Creating doubts over the loyalty of the citizen for his homeland is rejected," noting that "We have national figures in the former army and security forces who were not involved in killing Iraqis and that is why we can depend on them to make use of their experiences."

He called "The government to make use of these national experiments to build the new Iraq."
http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=21627

- **National reconciliation commission reveals the inclusion of most of the security leaders in accountability and justice (Shafaq News)**

Shafaq News, Oct 30 / The National Reconciliation Commission in the parliament revealed on Tuesday, that most of the security leaders who are existed currently are included in the procedures of accountability and justice, demanding to replace most of the security officials because of the bad leadership.

The member of the National Reconciliation Commission, Jabbar al-Kanani told "Shafaq News" that "most security leaders are currently included by the procedures of the accountability and justice commission," noting that "a part of them has obtained an exemption from the Prime Minister and the other part is waiting for receiving the exception from the parliament".

Kanani demanded to "replace most of the officials on the security file because of the negligence of these leaderships and not having the security and military awareness."

The member of the National Reconciliation Commission said that "terrorist groups always renew their faces depending on the young people, but what is happening in the security leaders is staying with the old faces."

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3926-national-reconciliation-commission-reveals-the-inclusion-of-most-of-the-security-leaders-in-accountability-and-justice-.html>

- **Maliki, Iranian official discuss eliminating sectarianism in Iraq (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Oct 30 (AIN) –The Premier, Nouri al-Maliki, expressed his hope to reduce sectarian and the tribal disputes in Iraq.

Iranian Mehr News Agency reported that "The Secretary General of the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought in Iran, Mohsen Araki, confirmed during his meeting with Maliki that the aim of the forum is to create harmony among the various Islamic sects on the basis of a common ground."

"Araki assured that the forum aims at eliminating hatred among the Islamic societies by asserting the Islamic identity," the statement added.

"He also called to consolidate the contacts between the forum and the Islamic scholars, the university students, youth as well as the tribal communities in Iraq," the statement continued.

"For his part, Maliki welcomed the issue of bringing about Proximity among the Islamic sects in Iraq and assured its cooperation to spread the culture of proximity in the Islamic world," the statement indicated.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=21615

- **Iran President office condemns deadly attack on Iranian pilgrims (press tv)**

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has condemned the killing of Iranian pilgrims in a recent terrorist attack in Iraq, extending his condolences to families of the victims.

"This painful incident once more laid bare the empty claim of the advocates of the so-called world peace, and unveiled the hypocritical countenance of supporters of inhuman and heinous terrorist acts," Iranian president said in a message on Tuesday.

On October 27, a bomb attack targeted a bus carrying Iranian pilgrims to a holy shrine in Baghdad to mark the major Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha.

The terrorists had reportedly attached a sticky bomb to the vehicle in the Taji area, north of the capital.

The explosive device reportedly detonated around 300 meters from a police checkpoint. The blast left five Iranian nationals dead and 12 more injured.

Ahmadinejad's office called on the officials in charge to take advantage of all capacities to identify the perpetrators behind the killing.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/30/269605/iran-condemns-pilgrims-murder-in-iraq/>

- **Iraqi MP accuses Saudi Arabia of supporting terrorism (Press TV)**

An Iraqi lawmaker has accused Saudi Arabia of supporting terrorism by giving a warm welcome to fugitive Iraqi vice-president Tariq al-Hashemi for the Hajj pilgrimage.

Ali Shalah also said that Riyadh's move shows the Kingdom's disrespect for the international law and the principles of sovereignty of a neighboring country.

Shalah warned that the move might hurt Baghdad-Riyadh relations.

The Iraqi lawmaker said Hashemi, who is sentenced to death for running a death squad in post-war Iraq, entered Saudi Arabia with a Turkish passport and was greeted by General Secretary of the Muslim World League Abdallah Ben Abdel Mohsen al-Turkion on October 27 at the league's guest house.

Iraqi prosecutors said Hashemi was involved in 150 killings. His secretary and son-in-law, Ahmed Qahtan, was also sentenced to death in absentia.

The Iraqi government issued the warrant for Hashemi's arrest on 19 December 2011 after three of his bodyguards confessed to taking orders from him to carry out the terrorist attacks.

He fled first to Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region and from there to Qatar and on to Turkey. He is currently in Turkey and Ankara has issued a residence permit for him.

<http://www.presstv.com/detail/2012/10/30/269580/saudi-arabia-supports-terrorism-iraq-mp/>

- **Iraq pledges USD 15 mln to Sudan, Yemen (KUNA)**

BAGHDAD, Oct 30 (KUNA) -- The Iraqi government decided Wednesday to grant both Sudan and Yemen a total of USD 15 million.

The Republic of Sudan will be receiving USD ten million in the form of direct funding to Sudan's federal budget for FY 2013, Iraqi Government Spokesman Ali Al-Dabbagh told reporters after a regular cabinet meeting.

"The funds will be channeled to the post-conflict rehabilitation in Darfur region, west Sudan," he revealed.

"The cabinet pledged to donate USD five million for Yemen to relieve the economic difficulties of the brotherly people of Yemen," the spokesman said.

The cabinet also decided to meet the pledges to the humanitarian relief fund for Syria and other neighboring countries amounting in value to USD ten million.

"The funds will be covered by the emergency appropriations set aside in Iraq's budget for the FY 2012," Al-Dabbagh pointed out.

<http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2271151&language=en>

- **US: Iraqi audit points to huge money laundering (AP)**

By ADAM SCHRECK Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Oct 30 (AP) -- Iraqi auditors believe as much as \$800 million in U.S. dollars is being sent out of the country illegally each week, draining it of hard currency, according to a report by American inspectors released Tuesday.

The findings point to widespread money laundering and could focus further attention on oversight at Iraq's central bank, which is at the heart of a probe into alleged financial wrongdoing involving its former governor and other top officials.

The U.S. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction said in a report that auditors in Baghdad fear up to 80 percent of an estimated \$1 billion leaving the country weekly lacks proper documentation.

The American watchdog said that Iraq's top auditor, Abdul-Basit Turki, disclosed the findings about the extent of the alleged money laundering to American officials last month.

Turki also raised concerns about "what he called a triangle of sectarianism, corruption and violence, in which each element feeds off the others in a dynamic that threatens the well-being of the state," according to the SIGIR report.

Turki's office, the Board of Supreme Audit, recently carried out a probe into Iraq's central bank and daily auctions it holds to exchange Iraqi dinars for dollars.

Commercial banks sell their dinars to the central bank and then pass on the dollars they receive to customers for a fee. Those customers are supposed to provide documentation to the banks before transferring the dollars abroad, but Iraqi auditors have found that most of the transactions are based on fraudulent paperwork, according to the SIGIR report.

A spokesman for the Iraqi audit board, Imad Ismail, acknowledged that a meeting was held with American officials in recent weeks, but said he didn't immediately have details about the audit. Turki was not available for comment.

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

- **Report: Corruption in Iraq At All-Time High (Antiwar)**

US-backed Prime Minister Maliki is not only wrenching the country into dictatorship, but his regime is increasingly corrupt

by John Glaser, October 30, 2012

Corruption in Iraq is at an all-time high, according to a recent US government report, and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is demonstrating increasingly authoritarian behavior, even as US support continues to flow to Baghdad.

The report, released Tuesday by the Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, in part investigated a recent decision by Maliki to fire the head of the Central Bank of Iraq, Sinan al-Shabibi.

“This peremptory and constitutionally questionable move occurred as an audit of the CBI’s foreign currency auctions surfaced. The audit purportedly found that perhaps 80% of the \$1 billion purchased at weekly CBI-managed auctions was tied to illegal transactions, with the funds subject to those transactions potentially lost abroad to money laundering,” the report says.

“This development is symptomatic of a troubled year in Iraq,” it adds, “evidenced by increasing corruption, resurgent violence, deepening ethno-sectarian strains, growing apprehensions about the conflict in Syria, and widening divides within the coalition government.”

Special Inspector Stuart Bowen told The Cable that the firing may have been an attempt by the Maliki regime to consolidate more power in his government and to gain access to the vast money the bank held in reserves.

“The facts are that Governor Shabibi was widely respected around the globe amongst financial ministers for building up Iraq’s reserves to about \$65 billion. And I did know from my discussions in Iraq there was some desire in Iraq to access some of that money for capital expenditure purposes and Shabibi had exerted a firm hand in preventing its use,” Bowen said. “The government of Iraq wanted to access some of those reserves.”

According to Ayad Allawi, the secular Shi'ite leader of the opposition Iraqiya bloc in parliament, Maliki's US-trained and backed security forces have detained and brutally tortured more than 1,000 political opponents in secret prisons and denied them access to legal counsel.

US support for dictatorship and human rights abuses in Iraq is expected to continue, aimed at increasing Washington's influence in the Middle East, following a fiasco war that inadvertently provided Iran with a new Shiite ally in neighboring Iraq.

<http://news.antiwar.com/2012/10/30/report-corruption-in-iraq-at-all-time-high/>

- **Al-Qaeda claims responsibility for deadly Eid attacks in Iraq**

An al-Qaeda affiliated group in Iraq has claimed responsibility for a series of shootings and bombings that have killed dozens of people during the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha (the Feast of Sacrifice).



In a statement posted on a militant website, the Islamic State of Iraq network warned the Iraqi government about not "having peace during Eid or at any other time," the Aswat al-Iraq news agency reported on Tuesday.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq is a shadowy group that was once allegedly led by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was reportedly killed in June 2006.

According to US government and military officials, the group was then led by Ayyub al-Masri, who was killed along with Abu Omar al-Baghdadi -- another leader of the group -- in a joint Iraqi-US operation in Salahuddin province in April 2010.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq has been blamed for some of the deadliest terrorist attacks in the country since the US-led invasion in March 2003.

Bombings and shootings have recently increased across Iraq, and many believe that the attacks are being carried out to undermine the central government.

Official figures show that September was the bloodiest month in Iraq in almost two years, with attacks killing 365 people, the highest monthly death toll since August 2010.

The statistics, which were compiled by the health, interior, and defense ministries, show that 182 civilians, 88 police officers, and 95 soldiers were killed in attacks in September.

The violence reached a crescendo on September 8 and 9, when more than 30 attacks killed at least 88 people and injured more than 400.

September 30 was the second deadliest day of the month, with a death toll of 33 and 106 injured.

Violence has increased in Iraq since December 2011, when an arrest warrant was issued for fugitive Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, who has been charged with running a death squad targeting Iraqi officials and Shia Muslims.

In response, the government has stepped up efforts to increase security across the country over the past few months.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/31/269633/alqaeda-takes-blame-for-iraq-eid-attacks/>

2. IRAN

- **Iran's hospitals feel pain of sanctions**

Difficulties in importing medicine and equipment having adverse affect on health of up to six million patients.

A leading medical charity in Iran has said Western sanctions are having an adverse affect on the health of up to six million patients.

Though the Western-backed sanctions are not meant to target the nation's healthcare industry, the Foundation for Special Diseases says the restrictions have made it more difficult to import medicine and equipment into the country.

The difficulties are due to the targets of the sanctions, Foad Izadi, a professor at Tehran University, told Al Jazeera.

The banking system and oil industries have both been targeted, meaning "there is less foreign currency coming in" with which to import goods, Izadi said.

Though Iran's imports and exports of medicine are said to be equal at roughly \$400mn each, Izadi said the country is now "trying to produce as much medicine internally as possible".

The sanctions are in reaction to Western accusations that the nuclear technology being harnessed in Tehran is for weapons, not medicinal, use.

Al Jazeera's Soraya Lennie reports from Tehran.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/video/middleeast/2012/10/2012103182749176664.html>

- **Iran temporarily put nuclear bomb ambitions on hold: Israel's defense minister**

Iran averted a showdown over its nuclear program by putting a third of its medium-enriched uranium to civilian use, but the respite may be short-lived, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said Tuesday.



Speaking to the Daily Telegraph while on a visit to London, Barak said it was “probable” that a tipping point in Israel’s standoff with Iran over its nuclear program would have been reached before the U.S. presidential election next month had Iran not diverted the fuel in August.

The decision put back any immediate plans Iran had for acquiring a nuclear bomb, but Barak told the British newspaper the “moment of truth” had only been delayed by “eight to 10 months.”

Israel has engaged in much sabre-rattling over Iran’s nuclear program in recent months, with several politicians proposing a preemptive military strike to avoid any possibility of Tehran acquiring an atomic weapon.

Barak explained that Tehran had amassed 189 kilograms (417 pounds) of 20-percent pure uranium -- a key step in the development of weapons-grade material -- but that 38 percent of this was converted into fuel rods for a civilian research reactor.

In comments published on the Telegraph’s website, Barak argued there were three possible reasons for this.

“One is the public discourse about a possible Israeli or American operation deterred them from trying to come closer,” he reasoned.

“It could probably be a diplomatic gambit that they have launched in order to avoid this issue culminating before the American election, just to gain some time.”

“It could be a way of telling the International Atomic Energy Agency ‘oh we comply with our commitments’,” he added, according to AFP.

Several rounds of negotiations between world powers and Tehran have failed to produce much progress on increasing the transparency of Tehran’s nuclear program, which the West suspects is a front for developing nuclear weapons.

Tehran denies the charge and insists it has a right to enrich uranium -- despite four rounds of U.N. sanctions over its refusal to cooperate with nuclear agency inspectors.

Analysts say Iran already has enough low-enriched uranium for several nuclear bombs if it were refined to a high degree, but may still be a few years away from being able to assemble a missile if it decided to go down that path.

Western diplomats say Iran appears to have nearly finished installing centrifuges at an underground nuclear plant, potentially boosting its capacity to make weapons-grade uranium if it chose to do so.

Iran and the United States have recently both denied reaching a deal for one-on-one nuclear talks, as The New York Times had reported -- even though the White House said it was open to such dialogue.

Barak said he doubted that sanctions and diplomacy would resolve the crisis and predicted Israel would probably face a decision over whether to launch strikes in 2013.

He insisted that Israel had the right to act alone and that a preemptive strike would be less risky than waiting until Iran had acquired a nuclear weapon.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/31/246796.html?PHPSESSID=e9hgjbdprq3t7v8ijnp q9he242>

- **Iran FM to fly to India Thursday to attend int'l event**

Tehran, Oct 31, IRNA – Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi will leave Tehran for India on Thursday to attend the closing ceremony of the 12th Council Ministers' meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC).

During his two-day stay in India, Salehi will address the



IOR-ARC council of ministers' meeting underway in Gurgaon, India.

Iran's foreign minister is planned to hold talks with a number of his counterparts from the member states.

He will also meet top Indian officials on issues of mutual interest.

Established in Mauritius in 1995, the IOR-ARC has now 19 members.

It is aimed at strengthening technological and educational cooperation, making economic investments and promoting free trade among the member states.

The IOR-ARC member countries include Iran, Austria, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE, Yemen and the Seychelles.

http://old.irna.ir/News/Politic/Iran-FM-to-fly-to-India-Thursday-to-attend-int_l-event/80395189

3. SYRIA

- **Brahimi hopes China can play 'active role' to solve Syrian crisis**

UN-Arab League Special Representative for Syria Lakhdar Brahimi has expressed hope that China will play an active role in resolving the turmoil in Syria.

Brahimi said during a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi in Beijing on Wednesday that he hoped China "can play an active role in solving the events in Syria."



Meanwhile, Yang expressed gratitude to the UN-Arab League envoy's efforts and hoped the talks in Beijing will contribute to resolving the crisis in Syria and the "appropriate handling of the Syrian issue."

China and Russia have been advocating peaceful solutions to the issue of Syria and oppose any Western-backed military intervention in the country.

Beijing and Moscow vetoed a Western-backed draft resolution in July, which called for new sanctions against the Syrian government.

On October 29, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called for negotiations with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, a proposal that was criticized by his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu.

“Hardly anything will be accomplished without dialogue with the government, and that is the only problem that remains in the path towards a political process,” Lavrov said after a meeting with Brahimi in Moscow on the same day.

Syria has been the scene of unrest since March 2011 and many people, including large numbers of army and security personnel, have been killed in the turmoil.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/31/269670/china-can-play-active-role-over-syria/>

- **Syria rebels commute in Turkish ambulances, report says**

A report says the Syrian army has detected Turkish ambulances being used as transportation vehicles for the insurgents in Syria.

The Syrian army forces targeted and destroyed three of such vehicles while they were transporting insurgents from Turkey into the northwestern city of Idlib near the border, Al-Alam TV channel reported on Wednesday.



The Turkish government has been repeatedly criticized by various political parties for its interfering policies in Syria’s internal affairs, and the destruction of the ambulances could intensify the criticism of Ankara.

Tensions have been running high between Damascus and Ankara, with Syria accusing Turkey -- along with Saudi Arabia and Qatar -- of supporting the insurgency that has claimed the lives of many Syrians, including security and army personnel.

Turkey has beefed up its military defenses on its border with Syria over the past weeks, and stationed tanks, anti-aircraft missiles, and additional troops in the region.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/31/269690/syria-army-destroys-turkish-ambulances/>

- **Syrian air force general shot dead, state TV blames ‘terrorists’**

A top Syrian air force general was shot dead on Monday evening as he left a friend’s home, the state Television reported on Tuesday, blaming “terrorist groups” for the targeted assassination.



The opposition Free Syrian Army (FSA) claimed responsibility for the killing of General Abdullah Mahmud al-Khalidi.

“In the context of operations against the criminal regime, the Rukn al-Din Martyrs Battalion assassinated on Monday air force General Abdullah Mahmud al-Khalidi. He was in charge of training in the air force,” the FSA said on its Facebook page.

“We also killed air force intelligence official Sergeant Ahmed Abdul Haq,” the statement said, adding a threat against “all those who collaborate with the regime.”

State television blamed “terrorist groups” for Khalidi's assassination in the north Damascus district.

“As part of their campaign to target national personalities and scientists, armed terrorist groups assassinated... Khalidi in the Damascus district of Rukn al-Din,” the broadcaster said.

“He was one of Syria's foremost experts in aviation,” it said, adding that he was a father of four children.

The general was a member of the Syrian Air Force command, a security source in Damascus told AFP on condition of anonymity.

He was shot dead on Monday evening as he left a friend's home, the source added.

Assad's regime routinely refers to rebels fighting to overthrow it as terrorists.

Since late July, air force fighter jets and helicopters have played a key role in the war against rebels.

A Syrian fighter jet on Tuesday carried out the first warplane air strike on the city of Damascus since the start of the country's conflict 19 months ago, a monitoring group said.

“The jet dropped four bombs on the east Damascus neighborhood of Jobar,” said the director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP.

Jobar is located near the rebel-held town of Zamalka, said Abdel Rahman, who added that fierce combat raged there between rebels and the army on Tuesday.

To date, the army had used only helicopter gunships to strafe areas inside Damascus.

In recent days, the air force has intensified its warplane air strikes on rebel-held areas across the country.

In another air strike, fighter jets bombarded the rebel-held town of Douma in the province of Damascus, killing and wounding a large number of people, the Observatory said.

“Fighter jets bombarded the Douma district of Hajariyeh, causing enormous destruction in the area and the death and injury of dozens of people,” the watchdog said, without providing an exact toll.

On the ground, conditions in Damascus have been escalating as fierce clashes broke out Tuesday in a major Palestinian refugee camp south of Syria’s capital, pitting rebels against troops backed by pro-regime Palestinian fighters, activists and a watchdog said.

The fresh violence came after the feast of Eid al-Adha came to a close on Monday, with 560 people, including 235 civilians, reported killed during a failed ceasefire attempt over the four-day Muslim holiday.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/30/246714.html?PHPSESSID=e9hgjbdrpq3t7v8ijnp q9he242>

- **Turkey says ‘no point’ in dialogue with Syria**

Turkey is ruling out any dialogue with the Syrian regime, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said on Tuesday, a day after Moscow called for negotiations with Damascus as the only way to end the escalating conflict.

“There is no point in engaging in dialogue with a regime that continues to carry out such a massacre against its own people, even during (the Muslim festival of) Eid al-Adha,” Davutoglu



said at a news conference.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called on the West and regional players including Turkey to start negotiating with President Bashar al-Assad as well as the opposition to pave the way for a political solution in Syria, wracked by almost 20 months of conflict.

“Hardly anything will be accomplished without dialogue with the government, and that is the only problem that remains in the path towards a political process,” Lavrov said after a meeting with Lakhdar Brahimi, the international peace envoy for Syria.

Davutoglu said that dialogue with Damascus, its one-time ally, would be a step that could “be legitimizing the existing regime as the violence continues.”

More than 500 people were reported dead during the four-day Muslim Eid holiday despite the truce brokered by Brahimi, who said the civil war in Syria was going from bad to worse.

Brahimi, who became Syria envoy after his predecessor Kofi Annan quit when his five-point peace plan fell through, will go to the U.N. Security Council in November with new proposals to push for talks between Assad and the opposition.

“What matters now is to encourage peace through the strongest messages. We had maintained our relationship with the Syrian regime for months and delivered messages of dialogue,” said Davutoglu.

“We still do, but first of all the Syrian regime must demonstrate the will to make peace with its own people,” he added, arguing that negotiations while a civil war was raging could not yield any results.

Davutoglu also called for a transition process in Syria in which “people who were not involved in the bloodshed against Syrian people will play a role.”

Turkey, who joined in Arab and Western calls for the ouster of Assad, has recently been engaged in dialogue also with Iran and Russia, backers of the Assad regime.

Davutoglu said consultations with Iran and Russia, as well as Egypt and Saudi Arabia -- which demanded that Assad step down -- would continue, adding that all parties should clearly tell the Syrian regime that it must stop committing massacres.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/30/246690.html?PHPSESSID=e9hgjbdrpq3t7v8ijnp q9he242>

- **Syria rebels clash with army and Palestinian fighters**

Fierce clashes broke out before dawn Tuesday in a major Palestinian refugee camp south of Syria's capital, pitting rebels against troops backed by pro-regime Palestinian fighters, activists and a watchdog said.

The fresh violence came after the feast of Eid al-Adha came to a close on Monday, with 560 people, including 235 civilians, reported killed during a failed ceasefire attempt over the four-day Muslim holiday.



“Clashes broke out overnight in al-Hajar al-Aswad district between rebels and the army, spreading into the adjacent Yarmuk Palestinian camp. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command joined on the side of the army,” the director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights watchdog, Rami Abdul Rahman, told AFP.

“Every time the fighting spills into Yarmuk, the General Command gets involved,” said Abdul Rahman.

The Syrian Revolution General Council, a network of activists on the ground, also reported that heavy fighting erupted between the Free Syrian Army and members of the PFLP-General Command in Yarmuk.

The Yarmuk district is home to more than 112,000 Palestinians, who are divided over the 19-month revolt that has left 35,000 dead in the country.

In early August, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas condemned shelling on the camp, which killed 21 civilians, and also chided the PFLP-General Command for its role in dragging Palestinians into the bloody conflict.

Elsewhere in Syria on Monday, the military renewed shelling attacks on the northern city and province of Aleppo, the central city of Homs, the southern province of Deraa and the northwest province of Idlib, the Observatory said.

Regime warplanes made two air strikes on the Idlib town of Maaret al-Numan, where fighting has raged since the rebels overran the town on Oct. 9 cutting off a key army supply route along the Aleppo-Damascus highway.

Fierce clashes south of the town on Monday left two soldiers killed, while battles erupted around the nearby Wadi Daif army camp between troops and rebels, including fighters from the jihadist al-Nusra Front, the Observatory said.

Regime helicopters meanwhile dropped three barrel bombs on the nearby village of Maarshmareen, which also came under artillery fire from troops stationed nearby.

The Britain-based Observatory relies on a countrywide network of activists, lawyers and medics in civilian and military hospitals, and says its tolls take into account civilian, military and rebel casualties.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/30/246677.html?PHPSESSID=e9hgjbdprq3t7v8iinpq9he242>

4. ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- **Kahlon commissions poll, could win 20 seats**

Former popular Likud minister Moshe Kahlon commissioned a survey of potential voters, which showed that a party at his lead would win 20 seats in the next Knesset, The Jerusalem Post learned Wednesday.



The fact that Kahlon commissioned the poll indicates that he could be considering rejoining the political arena, despite stating earlier that he wanted to retire from politics. That said, polls that spotlight one person are often disproportionately favorable to that person.

Conducted by the Rafi Smith group, the poll also found that were he to lead the party together with popular former Kadima head Tzipi Livni, the party would win 26 seats, according to Army Radio.

Kahlon, who was the communications minister in the last Knesset, announced that he was quitting politics earlier this month, but said he would stay on with his Likud in the transition to the next election "so it can continue to lead."

"I grew up with Likud values," Kahlon said earlier this month, lauding Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and emphasizing that without him, he would not have been able to about the reforms that he did. Kahlon led reforms that drastically cut prices for cellular phone services.

In another Rafi Smith survey, Kahlon ranked as one of Likud's most popular ministers. He received the highest score of all Likud ministers in a Smith Research poll asking 500 people to rank the performance of the party's ministers on a scale of one to ten.
<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=289926>

- **PLO lobbies for convincing win in UN vote**

By Noah Browning and Ali Sawafta
RAMALLAH (Reuters) -- Palestinians have launched a diplomatic blitz aimed at garnering a strong majority for a vote granting them non-member statehood at the United Nations slated for next month, officials said Tuesday.



Despite heading for a sure victory in the UN General Assembly, mostly consisting of post-colonial states historically sympathetic to the Palestinians, West Bank diplomats are courting European countries to further burnish their campaign.

"From the EU we will have a minimum of 12 votes and maybe up to 15, as some are not yet decided," Wasel Abu Yousef, a member of the PLO, told Reuters. There are 27 nations within the European Union.

Palestinian officials say that they can count on around 115 'yes' votes, mostly from Arab, African, Latin American, and Asian states, and expect around 22 no-votes, led by the United States, and 56 abstentions in the 193-member organization.

Frustrated in their request for full statehood last year amid US opposition at the United Nations Security Council, Palestinians have launched a watered-down bid for recognition as an "observer state" -- the same status given to the Vatican.

Senior Palestinian officials have fanned out around the globe to press their case, including a meeting in Paris with French President Francois Hollande at the weekend.

Speaking on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the talks, a Palestinian official said they hoped to flip a possible French abstention into a yes-vote, while other waverers might also switch position nearer the date.

Israel and the United States have sharply criticized the Palestinian initiative, arguing that such unilateral moves are in violation of the 1993 Oslo accords, which were intended to pave the way to a "final status agreement" within five years.

While Israel expects to lose the forthcoming vote, it is anxious to see leading Western democracies vote against, or at worst abstain. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also met Hollande on Tuesday and was expected to raise the issue.

In Europe, the Netherlands, Czech Republic and Georgia were among 5 nations that looked set to vote 'no', the Palestinian official said.

Likely punishment

Palestinians see the upgrade as international recognition of the lines predating the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. They say this will then be the reference point in future peace talks.

President Mahmoud Abbas has pledged to restart the talks, stalled since 2010 over settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, "straightaway", inferring he would drop a Palestinian precondition for a halt to the building work.

The top Palestinian peace negotiator told local newspapers on Tuesday of likely American and Israeli economic punishment should Palestinians win the upgrade.

Saeb Erekat wrote of contingencies including US divestment from UN agencies and withdrawal of financial aid as well as the withholding by Israel of \$100 million in monthly customs payments that the Palestinian Authority needs to remain afloat.

The US could "freeze all or some of the funding for the Palestinian National Authority ... put pressure on other governments to discourage them from providing support and/or reduce their aid to Palestine," he warned.

Since last year's campaign, the US has withheld \$192 million in economic assistance to the broke, aid-dependent Palestinian Authority and stopped funding the UN cultural body UNESCO after it admitted Palestine as a member.

Economic anxiety is on the rise in the West Bank following US sanctions and an aid shortfall from rich Gulf states last year, leading to delayed public sector salaries and fuel price hikes which provoked violent street demonstrations last month.

The vote is set to be called on Nov. 15 or 29. Palestinian sources said the first date was more likely because it was closer to US presidential elections on Nov. 6, giving Washington less time to organize a lobbying campaign.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=532526>

5. AFRICA and EGYPT

• New Libya PM presents 30-member cabinet

Libya's new prime minister Ali Zeidan on Tuesday presented his 30-member cabinet to the national assembly for approval in the hope of forming a coalition government after his predecessor failed.



Zeidan told the General National Congress, in a televised address, that he had included the main political parties in his line-up, among them the liberal National Forces Alliance and the Islamist Justice and Construction Party, while some top posts were given to independents.

"I decided to put independents in charge of the ministries of foreign affairs, international cooperation, finance, justice, interior and defense," Zeidan said.

The cabinet includes 27 ministers and three deputy prime ministers, he said.

The assembly must approve the government team before Zeidan, a former diplomat and long-time opponent of ousted dictator Muammar Qaddafi, can assume office.

Zeidan was elected prime minister on Oct. 14 after his predecessor, Mustafa Abu Shagur, was dismissed in a vote of no confidence when his cabinet line-up was rejected by the assembly for not being fully representative of Libya's numerous factions.

Among Zeidan's nominations are Ali Aujali, Libya's ambassador to the United States, as foreign minister, Mohammed al-Barghathi as defence minister and Ashur Shwayel as interior minister.

Barghathi, a fighter jet pilot who retired in 1994, played a key role in the 2011 revolt that saw strongman Muammar Qaddafi toppled and killed. Shwayel, from the eastern city of Benghazi which was the cradle of the revolution, has a doctorate in law.

The assembly was expected to debate the cabinet proposal later on Tuesday.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/30/246704.html?PHPSESSID=e9hgjbdrrp3t7v8ijnp q9he242>

- **Court rules no jurisdiction to cancel or modify Israel treaty**

The Court of Administrative Justice on Tuesday said it has no jurisdiction to consider a lawsuit demanding the repeal or amendment of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

The court said it does not have jurisdiction over questions related to sovereignty.

The lawsuit requested that Egypt and Israel renegotiate the appendices relating to the security of the Sinai Peninsula, as the agreement allows only 750 unequipped border guards and police to be present there. The claim suggested that this allows militant groups to carry out terrorist acts and compromises the security of the country, such as the attack on a checkpoint in Rafah that killed 16 Egyptian soldiers.

Israel has attacked Egyptian soldiers more than once, the lawsuit noted, and most recently killed seven soldiers in August 2011, in breach of Article 3 of the agreement.

It further requested that all international agreements should be reviewed, especially as the 25 January revolution overthrew the regime that signed them. Many in Egypt began calling for repealing the peace treaty signed with Israel after the toppling of President Hosni Mubarak.

Israel has frequently voiced fears of possible changes in Egypt's foreign policy after Islamist parties won a majority of seats in Parliament and the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsy won the presidency.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/court-rules-no-jurisdiction-cancel-or-modify-israel-treaty>

6. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Enemies seek to undermine Lebanon's security: Ahmadinejad**

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has once again condemned the recent terrorist bombing in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, saying the main aim of such terrorist attacks is to undermine Lebanon's security and integrity.



“The enemies of Lebanon have targeted the security and integrity of the country and the Iranian government and nation condemn this approach and [such] inhumane measures and express solidarity with the Lebanese nation and government,” President Ahmadinejad said in a telephone conversation with his Lebanese counterpart Michel Sleiman on Tuesday.

He went on to say that the vigilance of the Lebanese government and political leaders will undoubtedly prevent enemies from achieving their objectives.

Sleiman, for his part, expressed gratitude for Iran's sympathy and said the incident has caused some problems in Lebanon, adding however that the government is trying to defuse its consequences and restore peace in the country through the collaboration and cooperation of all Lebanese groups.

He also expressed hope that peace and stability would be fully restored in the region.

On October 19, a car bomb blast in the Ashrafiya district in eastern Beirut killed at least eight people and injured scores of others.

General Wissam al-Hassan, the chief of Information Branch of Lebanon's Internal Security Forces, was among those killed in the blast.

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati said the government was trying to identify the perpetrators and that they would be punished.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/31/269667/enemies-seek-to-dent-lebanon-security/>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Human Rights Watch slams Qatar's media censorship law**

Human Rights Watch has censured Qatar for a controversial draft media law that restricts the freedom of media and includes harsh penalties for those who criticize Qatar or its allies.

The rights organization called on Qatari ruler Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani not to pass the draft legislation, arguing that the proposed law is in contradiction with Qatar's claims to be a center for free expression in the region.



The draft law was approved by the Shura Council (Qatar's legislative assembly) in June 2012 and still needs to be ratified by Sheikh Hamad. The draft, however, is the first change to the state's media laws since Al Thani established the Doha Center for Media Freedom in 2008.

According to the draft, violators of the law will be subjected to penalties of up to one million Qatari Riyals (275,000 US dollars).

Article 53 of the draft law prohibits publishing or broadcasting information that would "throw relations between the state and the Arab and friendly states into confusion" or "abuse the regime or offend the ruling family or cause serious harm to the national or higher interests of the state."

"Qatar's commitment to freedom of expression is only as good as its laws, which in this case do not meet the international standards it professes to support," said Joe Stork, the deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch.

"Instead of supporting press freedom, this draft media law is a commitment to censorship."

The New York-based rights organization highlighted the case of an imprisoned Qatari poet, Mohammed al-Ajami -- also known as Mohammed Ibn al-Dheeb, who was arrested in Doha on November 16, 2011 after reciting a poem in admiration of revolutions across the region.

Amnesty International said he was charged with "inciting to overthrow the ruling system" and "insulting the emir."

Stork also stated, "If Qatar is serious about providing regional leadership on media freedom it should remove the problematic provisions from its draft media law and drop all charges against Muhammad Ibn al-Dheeb al-Ajami that solely relate to his exercise of free speech."
<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/31/269664/hrw-raps-qatari-censorship-law/>

- **Bahrain bans protests and gatherings**

Gulf state's decision expected to raise pressure on Shia Muslim organisations engaged in organising opposition marches.

Bahrain has imposed a ban on all protest gatherings and is threatening legal action against groups considered backing escalating demonstrations and clashes.



The order, announced by the interior ministry on Tuesday, is the most sweeping attempt to crush the kingdom's anti-government uprising since martial law rules went into effect during the early months of unrest last year.

Sheikh Rashid Al Khalifa, the interior minister, said "repeated abuse" of the rights to freedom of speech and expression could no longer be accepted.

Now any protest would only be permitted only once security and stability were sufficient to maintain national unity.

The interior ministry said that any any "illegal rally or gathering would be tackled through legal actions against those calling for and participating in it".

The decision will sharply increase pressure on political groups from Bahrain's Shia Muslim majority, which has led the protests seeking a greater political voice in the Sunni Muslim-ruled Gulf state.

Fahad al Binali, a government spokesman, told Al Jazeera that there has been an escalation of violence during rallies and gatherings, resulting in the deaths of two police men.

"This is not an outright ban with no end in sight," he said.

"But the line must be drawn at violence."

This warning appeared aimed particularly at the largest Shia political bloc, Al-Wefaq, which has organised many opposition marches. Another rally is planned for Friday.

Hadi al-Musawi, an Al-Wefaq official, struck a defiant tone, calling the interior ministry order "against international human rights".

Tougher steps against opposition groups could increase complications for the US and other Western allies that have stood by Bahrain's monarchy during more than 20 months of unrest.

The US has important military bonds with Bahrain, which hosts the US Navy's 5th Fleet, but it also has called for increased efforts at dialogue to ease the tensions.

Shia Muslims comprise about 70 per cent of Bahrain's 525,000 citizens, but claim they face systematic discrimination such as being denied top political and security posts.

The Sunni monarchy has made a series of concessions, including giving more powers to the elected parliament, but opposition groups say the reforms do little to loosen the ruling family's hold on power.

More than 50 people have been killed in Bahrain's unrest since February 2011.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/2012103093735935103.html>

- **Yemen gas pipeline blown up again**

A gas pipeline feeding Yemen's only liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminal was blown up again on Tuesday night, the operating company said on Wednesday.

"Yemen LNG confirms the sabotage of the 38 inch gas pipeline that links the block 18 to the Balhaf terminal on the Gulf of Aden," said the company, run by France's Total. "The explosion occurred at 2200 on 30 October 2012 at 295 km north of Balhaf Liquefaction Plant."



Yemen's oil and gas pipelines have been sabotaged repeatedly since anti-government protests last year created a power vacuum, which armed groups have exploited to cause fuel shortages and slash export earnings in the impoverished country.

The 320-km pipeline supplying the \$4.5-billion plant has been attacked several times by suspected Al-Qaeda-linked gunmen after military strikes on Islamist militants.

The Balhaf facility, which opened in 2009, has the capacity to supply up to 6.7 million tons and delivers LNG, gas-cooled to liquid for export by ship, under long-term contracts to GDF Suez, Total and Korea Gas Corp.

The operator did not say when the pipeline might be reopened.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/yemen-gas-pipeline-blown-again>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Women among victims of Afghanistan attacks**

Seven women said to be among eight civilians killed in Helmand bombing while seven policemen die at Zabul checkpoint.

A roadside bomb has killed at least eight civilians in southern Afghanistan, government officials say.



Among the dead in Wednesday's blast were seven women, the interior ministry said.

"Eight of our civilian compatriots, seven women and a man, were killed today when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb planted by the Taliban terrorists," a statement issued by the ministry read.

Another woman and a man were wounded in the attack, which occurred in the Musa Qala district of Helmand province.

The Kabul government has blamed the Taliban for the improvised explosive device, IED, but no group has claimed responsibility yet.

The crude devices, often built on old ammunition, are planted by the side of roads to target NATO and Afghan troops.

The UN says 1,145 civilians were killed in the Afghan war in the first six months of this year, blaming 80 per cent of the deaths on fighters, more than half of those were caused by roadside bombs.

Also on Wednesday, seven policemen were killed in an attack on a checkpoint in Zabul province.

Police officials, who called the attacker a "Taliban infiltrator", said he fled the Shah Joy district scene with weapons he seized from the slain policemen.

Both developments come as the independent election commission officially announced April 05, 2014, as the date of the next presidential election in the Central Asian nation.

Fazel Ahmad Manawi, chief of the Independent Election Commission, said on Wednesday that the Central Asian nation's provincial elections would also take place on April 5.

The result of the presidential poll will be announced on May 14, 2014.

The provincial council election victors will be announced on June 07, 2014.

In the case of no presidential candidate securing more than 50 per cent of the vote, a May 22, 2014, runoff will be implemented.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/10/2012103184242459887.html>

- **Pakistan tells UN it protects rights, West disagrees**

Pakistan, plagued by Islamists militancy, sectarian violence and frequent disasters that push its people deeper into poverty, told the United Nations on Tuesday it is a democratic and progressive state working to protect human rights.

But Western countries and the normally anti-Western Belarus countered that in Pakistan religious minorities were persecuted, that dissent was often brutally suppressed by the army, and that little was done to tackle human trafficking.



Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar told the UN's Human Rights Council that Pakistan "is a democratic, pluralistic and progressive state" aiming to create a fair society based on equality, respect for diversity and justice.

"Today Pakistan is a functional democracy with an elected and sovereign parliament, an independent judiciary, a free media and a vibrant and robust civil society," she declared.

Rabbani Khar was presenting a report to the council on her overwhelmingly Muslim country's human rights record in a process known as the Universal Periodic Review to which all members of the world body are expected to submit every four years.

But the Pakistan review, its second since the council was set up in 2006, comes at a time when it has been under global scrutiny following the shooting by Islamic radicals of a girl educational activist and riots against Christians.

It also comes just two weeks before it hopes to be appointed as a candidate of Asian countries to full membership of the council, where it is already active as the official voice of the 56-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Some Western countries have already indicated they do not see Pakistan as a suitable candidate — although they accept there is little they can do to head off a clear majority vote for it in the UN General Assembly on 12 November.

Serious concerns

"We have serious concerns about the human rights situation in Pakistan," US ambassador Eileen Donahoe told the council on Tuesday, referring to army operations "aimed at silencing dissent" in the rebellious province of Baluchistan.

She said Pakistan should ensure that those guilty of torture, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings there must be prosecuted, while laws often used to justify discrimination against religious minorities should be reformed.

These remarks were directed at the country's "blasphemy" law, which provides for a range of harsh penalties up to execution for any act deemed to offend against Islam, and especially its Prophet Mohamed.

A British delegate told the council that the recent case of a young Christian girl accused by an imam of burning pages of the Quran showed the danger of the law for ordinary Pakistanis, including Muslims outside the Sunni majority.

"Credible elections in Pakistan will require that the rights of women are protected and political participation is ensured," said the delegate, Phil Tissot. Minorities should also be allowed to vote freely, he added.

The US and British strictures were echoed by Sweden, Switzerland and a range of other European countries. And Belarus, which normally lines up with developing countries in UN bodies, took an even tougher line.

Forced labor was widespread in Pakistan, and punishment beatings of children were legal, said the delegate from the former Soviet state — which is itself widely accused by its European neighbors of serious human rights abuses.

Pakistan should also intensify efforts to fight trafficking of women and children, and to stop sexual exploitation and cruel treatment of children, the Belarus delegate declared.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/pakistan-tells-un-it-protects-rights-west-disagrees>

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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