



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

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1. IRAQ

- **Iraqi premier in Moscow to strengthen relations with Russia**

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is in Moscow to consolidate political, economic and defense ties with Russia and discuss the recent developments in Syria.



Iraq needs Russia's help in defense and military areas and needs arms to "defend itself and fight terrorism" in the country," Maliki said in the Russian Foreign Ministry mansion on Monday.

The Iraqi delegation is said to be seeking to purchase arms and further discussions for Iraq's eventual acquisition of MiG-29 jets and heavy armored vehicles along with other weaponry are reportedly underway.

Maliki also reiterated his country's willingness to boost cooperation with Russia in exploring natural resources in Iraq, which would improve its infrastructure.

The senior Iraqi official invited Russian companies to help Iraq in constructing electric energy industry and other branches of the energy sector as well.

Commenting on the ongoing crisis in Syria, the Iraqi official expressed opposition to any foreign military intervention in the Arab state.

Earlier in a TV interview, Maliki called for "finding a political solution "to the ongoing crisis in Syria and opposed "violence" in ending the turmoil.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, the Iraqi prime minister is visiting Moscow for the first time in three years and a half at the invitation of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/09/265680/iraqs-almaliki-in-moscow-to-boost-ties/>

2. IRAN

- **Cyber attackers target Iranian oil platforms: official**

DUBAI (Reuters) - Cyber attackers have targeted communication networks on

Iranian offshore oil and gas platforms in the past few weeks, but their attacks have been repelled, a state official was quoted as saying on Monday.

Iran, the world's No. 5 oil exporter, has tightened cyber security since its uranium enrichment centrifuges were hit in 2010 by the Stuxnet computer worm, which Tehran believes was planted by Israel or the United States.

Mohammad Reza Golshani, head of information technology for the Iranian Offshore Oil Company, told Iran's Mehr news agency that a cyber attack had targeted the offshore platforms' information networks.

"This attack was planned by the regime occupying Jerusalem (Israel) and a few other countries," Golshani said, adding that Iranian experts were able to repel the attacks.

"Currently telephone operations on the platforms and in the areas of Iran's oil and gas operations in the Persian Gulf are normal and have no problems," he said.

Israeli officials regularly decline to comment on allegations of any clandestine activity. Israel has threatened military action against the Islamic Republic's nuclear installations if Western sanctions on Tehran's banking and oil sectors do not persuade it to shelve its disputed atomic programme.

Western powers suspect Iran is trying to develop the means to produce nuclear weapons. Tehran says it is enriching uranium only for civilian energy.

Last week an Iranian official said cyber attackers had targeted Iranian infrastructure and communications companies, disrupting the Internet across the country.

And last month a commander in Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards said Iran was prepared to defend itself in case of a "cyber war" and deemed it more dangerous than a physical confrontation.

In April Iranian authorities said in April that a computer virus was detected inside the control systems of Kharg Island, which handles the vast majority of Iran's crude

oil exports, but the terminal remained operational.

Tehran is working towards developing a national Internet system, which it says would improve cyber security. But many Iranians say the plan is the latest way to control their access to the Web, which is already highly censored.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=31357>

- **Iran has full knowledge of US support for MKO: Iran minister**

Iran's Intelligence Minister Heidar Moslehi says the Islamic Republic has detailed knowledge of the United States' support for the terrorist Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO).



"We have currently accurate information that the United States and even some European countries provide the MKO with lots of equipment and facilities," Moslehi said on Monday adding that the global

arrogance supports the MKO only to keep it alive.

Referring to the US decision to remove the MKO from the State Department's blacklist of terrorist organizations, Moslehi added that the Islamic Republic has always considered the terrorist cell an agent of the global arrogance.

" We predicted that the global arrogance will one day reveal its support for them [MKO] due to advantages it has taken of this group during the [Islamic] Revolution era," he said.

Members of the MKO, who have murdered over 17,000 Iranians since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, fled to Iraq in the 1980s, where they had the support of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and set up Camp Ashraf in the eastern province of Diyala near the Iranian border.

The group, which is listed as a terrorist organization by much of the international community, has also carried out countless terrorist acts against Iraqi civilians.

Iran has repeatedly called on the Iraqi government to expel the MKO, but the US has been putting pressure on Baghdad to resist the calls.

Moslehi also referred to Tehran's successful hosting of the 16th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit saying that enemies tried to "create a special atmosphere to say that the Islamic Republic is not in a position to hold this summit."

He said that despite threats posed by the global arrogance, Iran managed to hold the summit with very high security which cannot be compared to similar events held elsewhere in the world whose behind-the-scenes are kept secret.

"We know about what happened behind the scenes of the [2012] Olympic Games in Britain...but they keep them secret in order not to lose face," Moslehi noted.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/08/265615/iran-fully-aware-of-us-support-for-mko/>

- **Iran ready to 'offer an exchange' if enrichment right recognized: FM**

TEHRAN, Oct. 8 (MNA) – Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi says he is optimistic about the resolution of nuclear dispute between Iran and the West.



In an interview with the German magazine Der Spiegel, Salehi said that if Iran's right to nuclear enrichment is recognized Tehran is ready to "offer an exchange".

"If our right to enrichment is recognized, we are prepared to offer an exchange. We would voluntarily limit the extent of our enrichment program, but in return we would need a guaranteed supply of the relevant fuels from abroad," Salehi explained.

Following is the text of the interview:

Q: Mr. Foreign Minister, it is beginning to look as though a war could break out on NATO's border with Syria. How dangerous is the situation in the region?

A: In the name of God, the compassionate and the merciful, we have to prevent catastrophes. I call on both sides to exercise restraint. In Syria, thousands are fighting against the government of Bashar al-Assad, and they are armed with state-of-the-art weaponry. If Turkey were to massively retaliate sometime in the coming weeks or months, they would have no objections. They want to render peace initiatives impossible. They are seeking an escalation.

Q: Are you referring to the armed Syrian opposition? Or to terrorists from the international al-Qaida network?

A: I don't intend to associate the perpetrators of violence with a specific country or a specific organization. But one thing is certain: Military forces infiltrating Syria are seeking to internationalize the conflict. If the region goes up in flames, then they have achieved their objective.

Q: Yet it appears to have been the Syrian military that fired across the border, not the rebels or the perpetrators of violence that you are referring to. Do you condemn Turkey's retaliatory attacks?

A: Every country has the right to protect itself if it is attacked. When the Syrians shot down a Turkish fighter jet in June, though, Ankara refrained from launching a counterattack. At the time, I expressed my recognition of this to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan -- it was statesmanlike and wise. Now, a sense of proportionality must be retained, or we will fall into the trap of the extremists.

Q: Since Turkey is a member of NATO, the organization is standing by its side and condemning the incident as an "aggressive act."

A: It would not be appropriate for me to give advice to the Western military alliance. But NATO cannot afford to make a mistake and worsen the situation.

Q: Such as the establishment of a buffer zone in northern Syria and a no-fly zone for Assad's air force?

A: By doing so, the West would react just as wrongly as it did in 2011 in Libya. This was an improper interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state ...

Q: ... but it probably prevented a massacre in Benghazi and helped an entire people free itself from a dictator.

A: We should proceed according to the rules of international law. Syria is in the midst of a crisis; four or five of its 14 provinces are facing difficulties. Bashar al-Assad's government largely has the situation under control.

Q: You are downplaying the actions of a regime that is shelling its own people -- the civil war has already claimed the lives of 30,000 people.

A: What is happening in Syria is tragic, and its not just government troops that are responsible. Assad poses no threat to the region, or to world peace, for that matter. We are not uncritical of him; the government has made mistakes. Originally there were only calls for more democracy and changes. But then the movement began to be increasingly controlled from abroad.

Q: Are you thinking of the U.S. and Israel? Or Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which are arming the resistance and are now calling for an Arab intervention force?

A: Whatever the case, we are dealing with an external push for regime change. Our experiences in Iraq show that some powers are willing to resort to any means and any manipulation. In order to legitimize their war against Baghdad, the U.S. accused Saddam Hussein of producing weapons of mass destruction. Something similar cannot be allowed to happen with Assad.

Q: There are hardly any high-ranking international politicians who can still reach Assad. You spoke with the Syrian president over two weeks ago in Damascus, and it was a long and intensive discussion.

A: I had just come from a meeting of our Syria group in Cairo, and I presented to the president what the four of us expect of him: reforms, concessions and sincere changes. He agreed with me and pointed out that he has already begun to introduce these changes. He said that he wanted to work together with a constructive opposition and cooperate with the United Nations.

Q: And you actually believe him?

A: In Damascus I met a president who is perfectly aware of the critical situation. He didn't seem to be out of touch, but rather self-confident and combative. The president appeared confident that he could win the conflict in Syria militarily.

Q: Every day, there are new attacks. The opposition can now attack even key institutions such as the state television and the headquarters of the intelligence agency. The city of Aleppo, a major financial and commercial center, is in flames.

A: The president is realistic. He does not believe that Syria can be pacified from one day to the next. He assumes that, like in Iraq, there will continue to be additional trouble spots and pockets of opposition.

Q: With the exception of Iran, and perhaps Russia and China, practically every government in the world is urging Assad to resign.

A: The president appeared to be open to any inner-Syrian solution, but he categorically rejected a resignation forced

from the outside, which is why he rejects the idea of seeking asylum elsewhere.

Q: Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi is demanding that Tehran rethink its position. According to information from Western intelligence agencies, however, your government is continuing to send arms to Damascus and is supporting the regime with military advisers and even elite Revolutionary Guard forces.

A: That is absurd. Syria has an army of 500,000 men; they don't need any forces from us. But of course we sold weapons to Damascus -- before the crisis. It is perfectly normal for us to send military advisers in this context: Every state sends such experts to allied governments. The international sanctions against Iran have forced us to build our own defense industry, which has been highly successful in selling its products. These are perfectly legal deals. We are not doing this any differently than the Germans.

Q: Where, in your opinion, is the red line that Assad cannot be allowed to cross? Would it be the use of chemical weapons against the opposition?

A: Any government that uses weapons of mass destruction against its own people has lost its legitimacy. This applies to Syria, and it also applies to us.

Q: Another foreign power has just drawn a red line for your government. Speaking before the UN General Assembly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held up a chart intended to illustrate when Iran will have enough enriched uranium to build a nuclear bomb -- and used this to argue that your country should be attacked.

A: The presentation was bizarre; I found it childish to hold up a caricature of a bomb. If the Israelis had wanted to attack us, and if they could have done so, they would have done so long ago. In 1981, they destroyed an Iraqi reactor without warning. But they have been threatening us for years, on every occasion and publicly. They know what would happen if they attacked. We don't want war, but we will defend ourselves. Aggressors will pay a high price.

Q: The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna has pages of evidence pointing toward the "possible

military dimension" of your nuclear program.

A: We insist on our right to enrich uranium for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. There is no proof that we are pursuing nuclear research for military purposes.

Q: For months now, you have refused to give the IAEA access to the military complex at Parchin.

A: We have to differentiate between two things here: First, we have our obligations under the non-proliferation treaty, which we are fulfilling ...

Q: ... so you say ...

A: ... second, there are demands that go beyond this, and that we are not obliged to meet, such as those relating to a military complex like Parchin.

Q: The inspectors suspect that scientists there have secretly tested nuclear warheads, and Iran is now attempting to erase all traces of them.

A: That is ridiculous. Nuclear research leaves fingerprints that can never be

totally eliminated. I do not want to rule out that we may find a way to open Parchin -- on a voluntary basis, as we have done on other occasions in the past.

Q: Concessions in the nuclear talks are urgently expected of you. Among diplomats, there is little optimism that the conflict over your disputed nuclear program can still be resolved peacefully.

A: I am more optimistic here. If our right to enrichment is recognized, we are prepared to offer an exchange. We would voluntarily limit the extent of our enrichment program, but in return we would need a guaranteed supply of the relevant fuels from abroad.

Q: Many Western politicians believe that you are just playing for time. After four rounds of UN sanctions, the European Union now intends to toughen its sanctions against Iran on Oct. 15.

A: Not a big deal. The sanctions create inconveniences. For over 30 years now, we have been living with boycott measures that ultimately make us independent and strong.

Q: Really? Last year alone, your currency lost over two-thirds of its value against the dollar. The official inflation rate is 25 percent.

A: Iranian society is used to living with hardships -- perhaps more so than people in Spain and Greece. We can count on the patience of our people. What about you in Europe?

Q: Mr. Foreign Minister, thank you for this interview.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1715461>

- **‘U.S. trying to turn Iranians’ economic discontent into insecurity’**

TEHRAN, Oct. 8 (MNA) -- In an analytical report published on Monday, the Iranian Intelligence Ministry has analyzed a scenario devised by U.S. intelligence agencies.

In the report, the Intelligence Ministry stated that the United States has been conducting a propaganda campaign against Iran with the goal of turning the economic discontent in the country into insecurity, the Persian service of ISNA reported.

Some Iranian political analysts believe that the scenario was devised by U.S. intelligence agencies to help Washington realize its objectives, the report stated.

The report added that one of the goals of the plot is to reduce the Islamic Republic's income from oil exports and increase the expenses of the country as much as possible.

The political analysts believe that the seditionist current is also helping the scenario play out, the report said.

Through utilizing social networks, the seditionists are making every effort to give the impression that Iran's current economic situation is critical and convince Iranian citizens that their economic future is bleak, the report added.

Through this scenario, the U.S. is also seeking to sow discord between high-ranking Iranian officials and to create political chaos in the country, the report said.

It added that the enemy is trying to create chaos in order to make the people lose

hope in the government's ability to resolve the country's economic problems.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1715458>

3. SYRIA

- **Syrian forces step up attacks on rebel areas**

Heavy bombardment of Idlib, Homs and other areas reported as Turkey and Syria exchange fire for seventh straight day.



Syria's military has intensified its aerial and ground bombardment of rebel-held areas around the country, particularly in the provinces of Idlib and Homs, activists say.

Government fighter jets bombed the town of Maarat al-Numan in Idlib early on Tuesday, forcing many residents to flee their homes.

On Monday bomb blasts had rocked areas around the Syrian capital.

Government officials said a suicide bomber detonated a car bomb near a compound of the Syrian intelligence in Harasta on the outskirts of Damascus, while another blast took place in the Jobar area.

In-depth coverage of escalating violence across Syria

In Homs, heavy clashes were reported on Monday between government forces and opposition fighters in Homs' al-Khalidiyeh neighbourhood, as videos posted online appeared to show barrels of TNT explosives being dropped on the besieged areas.

Opposition strongholds in Homs have been under siege for at least 120 days, with humanitarian conditions continuing to deteriorate.

Speaking to Al Jazeera on Monday, Raji Rahmet Rabou, an activist in Homs, said: "The siege is a huge problem for us. We are dying every day, but nobody is paying attention to us.

"The last two days have been especially intense as the shelling has not stopped."

Fighting in north and east

The northern province of Aleppo and eastern Deir Az-Zor province also witnessed clashes between President Bashar al-Assad's troops and opposition fighters on Monday, activists reported.

In the southern province of Deraa, 20 people were reported killed in Karak al-Sharqi, including at least five rebel fighters, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said.

The SOHR reported that some of the deaths came as troops targeted cars ferrying wounded people to field hospitals and clinics for treatment.

Al Jazeera was unable to independently verify the reports of fighting due to restrictions on reporting inside Syria.

The fighting inside Syria came as Turkey's military struck back at Syrian military positions for a sixth day after a shell fired from Syrian territory landed in a Turkish border area, reports said.

Turkey retaliated in kind after the Syrian shell landed in Altinozu district, in southeastern Hatay province, at around 12:00 GMT on Monday, a Turkish official told AFP news agency on condition of anonymity.

"Turkish military retaliates immediately after every single Syrian shell," said the official. "We have anti-aircraft batteries pounding Syrian targets."

Earlier, Celalettin Lekesiz, Hatay's governor, said a total of six Syrian shells had hit the province so far, without any casualties.

It was not immediately clear if the governor's figures included Monday's shelling - the sixth consecutive day of Turkish retaliation.

'Worst-case scenarios'

Abdullah Gul, Turkish president, gave warning again on Monday against a spillover of the Syrian conflict into Turkey.

"The worst-case scenarios are taking place right now in Syria ... Our government is in

constant consultation with the Turkish military. Whatever is needed is being done immediately as you see, and it will continue to be done," Gul said.

"There will be a change, a transition sooner or later ... It is a must for the international community to take effective action before Syria turns into a bigger wreck and further blood is shed, that is our main wish," he told reporters in Ankara.

For his part, Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary-general, has raised concerns about arms supplies to both President Assad's government and rebel forces.

"I am deeply concerned by the continued flow of arms to both the Syrian government and opposition forces. I urge again those countries providing arms to stop doing so," he said at the opening of the World Forum for Democracy in Strasbourg, France, on Monday.

"Militarisation only aggravates the situation. I am calling on all concerned to abandon the use of violence, and move toward a political solution. That is the only way out of the crisis."

'Dangerous fallout'

The UN chief also spoke of a "dangerous" fallout from escalating violence along the Syrian-Turkish border.

"The escalation of the conflict along the Syrian-Turkish border and the impact of the crisis on Lebanon are extremely dangerous," Ban said.

Turkey's parliament has given the government the green light to use military force against Syria if necessary, while the UN Security Council has called for restraint between the neighbours.

Shells which killed five civilians on Wednesday at Akcakale, in Sanliurfa province, prompted Turkish retaliatory fire which has been repeated with every new Syrian shell that lands across the border as Assad's government battles rebel fighters.

Against this backdrop of escalating tensions, Abdulbaset Sieda, head of the opposition Syrian National Council, reiterated his group's call for foreign military intervention to support the rebels.

"We have called for a no-fly zone [and] humanitarian corridors to protect civilians," he told Al Jazeera in an interview from Syrian province of Idlib.

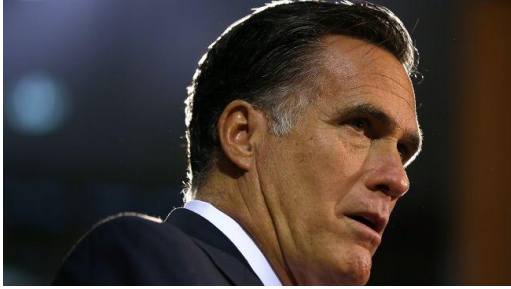
"We now have three million internally displaced people and half a million refugees in neighboring countries. These huge numbers require international protection.

"If they are not able to impose a no-fly zone, then provide our fighters on the grounds with anti-aircraft weapons to preempt further air strikes and destruction."

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/2012108172428581955.html>

- **Romney says will arm Syria insurgents if elected US president**

US Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney says, if elected, he would work with the US allies to arm the insurgents fighting against the government of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria.



“In Syria, I will work with our partners to identify and organize those members of the opposition who share our values and ensure they obtain the arms they need to defeat Assad’s tanks, helicopters, and fighter jets,” Romney said in a speech at the Virginia Military Institute on Monday.

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

Damascus blames outlaws, saboteurs, and armed terrorists for the unrest, but the opposition accuses the security forces of being behind the violence.

The Syrian government says that the chaos is being orchestrated from outside the country, and there are reports that a very large number of the armed militants are foreign nationals.

“It is essential that we develop influence with those forces in Syria that will one day

lead a country that sits at the heart of the Middle East,” Romney added.

The Republican presidential nominee also attacked US President Barack Obama, saying he failed to provide ‘the global leadership needed and expected of the United States.’

He further highlighted that Obama “has failed to lead in Syria,” declaring that the incumbent US president’s handling of the Syrian issue was emblematic of a president who does not “shape history” but opts to “lead from behind.”

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/09/265659/romney-attacks-obama-on-mideast-policies/>

- **Gul warns again against spillover of Syrian conflict into Turkey**

President Abdullah Gul warned again on Monday against a spillover of the Syrian conflict into Turkey as his country’s military struck back at Syrian military positions after a shell fired by the neighboring country landed in a Turkish border area, a Turkish official told AFP.



Turkey retaliated in kind after the Syrian shell landed in Altinozu district, in southeastern Hatay province, at around 1200 GMT, said the official speaking on condition of anonymity.

“Turkish military retaliates immediately after every single Syrian shell,” said the official. “We have anti-aircraft batteries pounding Syrian targets.”

Earlier, Hatay provincial governor Celalettin Lekesiz said a total of six Syrian shells had hit the province so far, without any casualties.

It was not immediately clear if the governor’s figures included the latest shelling.

Shells which killed five civilians on Wednesday at Akcakale in Sanliurfa province sparked Turkish retaliatory fire which has been repeated with every new Syrian shell that lands across the border as

Bashar al-Assad's regime battles rebel fighters.

Wednesday’s incident was the most serious between Damascus and Ankara since Syrian anti-aircraft fire brought down a Turkish fighter jet in June, and renewed fears of a broader conflict.

President Gul warned again against a spillover of the Syrian conflict into Turkey.

“Our government is in constant touch with our General Staff in this process,” Gul was quoted as saying by Anatolia, the state news agency.

“Whatever is necessary is being done as you already see, and will continue to be done,” said the president, without elaborating.

The Turkish parliament on Thursday gave the government the green light to use military force against Syria if necessary.

Also Thursday the U.N. Security Council on strongly condemned cross-border shelling by Syria and called for restraint between the two neighbors.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/09/242656.html?PHPSESSID=58ucahcko197mi23jftkvanbh6>

4. ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- **Israel strikes Gaza after Hamas retaliation**

Tanks fire shells at Gaza Strip after Palestinian groups retaliate with rockets for Sunday's deadly Israeli airstrike.



Israel has struck targets in the Gaza Strip after Palestinians fired rockets at southern Israel in what they said was a response to an Israel air strike on Sunday that killed one person and wounded several others.

The Israeli army said it had targeted " Hamas terror activity sites and terrorist squads responsible for the rocket fire" on Monday, but gave no further details.

Gaza hospital officials said one Islamic Jihad fighter thought to have been

involved in Monday's rocket attack had been wounded by Israeli tank fire east of the town of Rafah.

Residents of the town of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip said an Israeli tank fired at the suspected launch area, wounding four children and damaging a mosque minaret and a water tower.

The armed wing of the Hamas movement and the Islamic Jihad group fired a volley of rockets at Israel earlier on Monday, a day after an Israeli airstrike killed at least one person and injured nine others, including children.

According to the Israeli army, Sunday's air strike was aimed at two Palestinian fighters who were riding a motorcycle near Rafah when the attack occurred.

The Israeli military said the two men were members of "Global Jihadist" groups based in the Gaza Strip who had for years attacked Israeli civilians and troops and were also involved in weapons manufacturing.

The military named the two men as Talat Jarbi and Mohammed Maqawi.

Palestinian medical sources told the AFP news agency that Jarbi had lost both legs in Sunday's air strike.

"In response to the injury of civilians in the most recent strike on Rafah, the Qassam Brigades and the al-Quds Brigades fired a number of rockets at enemy military positions," Hamas's Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades armed wing said in a statement.

It was the first time since June that Hamas had acknowledged launching rockets at Israel.

Israeli police spokeswoman Luba Samri told AFP news agency on Monday that a barrage of more than 20 rockets hit southern Israel early on Monday, causing very light damage and no injuries.

The remains of "19 rockets were found in the Ofakim area, specifically near the Eshkol regional council. All rockets landed in open areas, and one home was damaged by shrapnel," she said.

The Israeli army says 470 rockets have been fired from Gaza this year, 10 in October alone.

Israel and Hamas, which governs Gaza, have mostly observed an unwritten truce since Israel attacked the Gaza strip, where the Israeli military offensive named Operation Cast Lead killed more than 1,400 Palestinians, majority of them civilians, including 400 children.

Thirteen Israelis were also killed, three of them civilians.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/2012107232838573238.html>

- **Report: Settlers attack undercover Israeli police in Hebron**

TEL AVIV, Israel (Ma'an) -- Three young Israeli settlers are in custody on suspicion of attacking undercover Israeli officers posing as Palestinian shepherds in southern Hebron, Israeli media reported on Sunday.

Israeli police said the settlers punched the officers and attacked them with clubs last week, assuming they were Palestinians, Israeli news site Ynet reported.

Another suspect fled the scene when police identified themselves to the masked group, the report said.

Police said they did not provoke the settlers, who said they were forced to remove shepherds from the land because police and army did not respond to their calls.

The three are being held in custody pending formal charges as the judge deemed they may be dangerous, the report said.

Palestinian farmers living in the south Hebron hills complain of constant attacks by settlers living in formal settlements and a crop of illegal outposts in the area.

Israeli authorities have outlined plans to demolish and evacuate eight villages in the area to make space for a military training zone.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=527046>

- **Fatah: Palestinians have not abandoned armed struggle**

Member of Fatah Central Committee Aloul says "no one has dropped armed

resistance from his dictionary," points out Fatah political program has reaffirmed "resistance is legitimate right against occupation."



The Palestinians have not abandoned the option of armed struggle against Israel, a top Fatah official in the West Bank said on Monday.

Mahmoud Aloul, a member of the Fatah central committee and former Palestinian Authority governor of Nablus, said that although the Palestinians have agreed to launch a "popular resistance against occupation, no one has dropped the armed resistance from his dictionary." Aloul's comments were made during an interview with the private Watan TV station in the West Bank.

He pointed out that Fatah's political program had reaffirmed that "resistance is a legitimate right to resist the occupation."

Aloul added, however, that “each option of the resistance requires certain conditions to be carried out.” Therefore, he explained, there was a consensus that the resistance should at this stage take the shape of a popular struggle.

Aloul criticized the PA leadership for raising expectations about the establishment of a Palestinian state.

“The Palestinian leadership has committed a sin regarding the creation of an independent Palestinian state,” he said.

“Building hospitals and schools does not mean that we are able to declare a state. Palestinians pinned high hopes on the messages they received from their leadership.”

Aloul cautioned that Palestinians were now in a state of suffering and depression because they felt that their leadership had misled them into thinking that they were close to achieving statehood.

The Fatah official said that the Palestinians’ red lines remained as solid as ever; the establishment of a Palestinian state on the pre-1967 lines, “liberating”

Jerusalem, removing the settlements and solving the issue of Palestinian refugees.

Aloul said that the PA decided to suspend the peace talks with Israel because they were a waste of time. “When there is a new atmosphere for conducting the negotiations, we will return,” he said.

“But first we want to know what we are going to negotiate about.”

<http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=287054>

5. AFRICA and EGYPT

• Egypt's Morsi pardons 'revolutionaries'

President Mohamed Morsi decrees pardon for political prisoners who were arrested during the revolution in 2011.

Egypt's President Mohamed Morsi has pardoned all political prisoners detained since the start of protests that toppled Hosni Mubarak last year.

The pardon covers citizens facing trial and those serving jail sentences except for those convicted of murder, the presidential spokesman said on Monday,

but did not give a specific number for the pardoned prisoners.

Activists have said that thousands of civilians ended up in army courts in the security vacuum that followed the fall of Mubarak in 2011. The campaign group, No to Military Trials, said at least 5,000 political prisoners were still in jail.

The move by Morsi was long demanded by Egypt's youth groups behind the uprising.

Many of those jailed were arrested in the protests that erupted during the 18 months an interim military government was in charge in Egypt under the leadership of Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi.

Some prisoners have even been tried since Morsi took office in June. Those already convicted for their role in the protests may also be pardoned.

Mohammed Gadallah, Morsi's legal advisor, said the decree is "one of the revolution's most important victories".

"It shows the revolution is now in power and guides the decision-making," Gadallah said.

"This is a legislation that protects the revolutionaries."

List of names

The decree asks the prosecutor general and the military prosecutor to prepare a list of names of those who may benefit from the pardon.

The first article of the decree, which was published on Morsi's official Facebook page, orders a "comprehensive pardon for crimes and misdemeanors or attempts to commit them in support of the revolution and the realization of its goals".

The only suspects exempted from the decree are those charged with premeditated murder over that time period.

Gadallah said the decree is likely to cover all major court cases where protesters clashed with military troops and security forces.

Another human rights lawyer, Ahmed Ragheb, praised Morsi's decree but said it doesn't include "all the victims of the past period".

Protesters currently on trial face charges ranging from resisting authorities, damaging public or private property or disrupting public order.

More than a 12,000 civilians have been brought before military tribunals, many of them on charges such as "thuggery".

It will be up to the prosecutor general and the military prosecutor to name those who will be pardoned. Suspects who are excluded can challenge the decision, and a judicial panel would be the final arbiter.

Morsi, who hails from the Muslim Brotherhood, said on Saturday he had fallen short of goals he promised to fulfil in his first 100 days in office.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/2012108203931826506.html>

- **Egyptian security forces die in road accident**

At least 21 police officers killed and 25 wounded after driver loses control of vehicle near Egyptian-Israeli border.



At least 21 Egyptian policemen have been killed in an accident after their driver lost control of their truck in the Sinai, where security forces are battling Islamist fighters, the interior ministry said.

Another 25 people were injured in the accident near the border with Israel, the official MENA news agency reported.

The dead and injured conscripts belonged to the interior ministry's Central Security Forces, which along with the army has been battling the fighters behind a series of deadly attacks in the lawless peninsula.

Al Jazeera's Sherine Tadros, reporting from Cairo, said there were no indications that the incident was caused by foul play.

"They are calling it an accident; there is no suggestion that it was anything else. It happened near the Egyptian border with Israel. The vehicle was carrying dozens of officers that apparently overturned," our correspondent said.

"We don't know much more detail than that but of course this comes after a month long operation by the Egyptian security forces who are trying to crack down on the lawlessness of the region."

Deadly road accidents are common in Egypt, due to bad road conditions and lax traffic regulations.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/201210810113454833.html>

- **Crops damaged by fuel shortages despite Mursi's promises, say Egypt farmers**

As Egypt's president marks his first 100 days in office, struggling farmers say Mohammed Mursi has failed to deliver on one of his key promises: to resolve the country's fuel shortages.



The farmers say they were neglected under the former government of Hosni Mubarak and had hoped for a better future under the new order.

But many say they feel let down.

"As for Egyptian farmers, we thought our daily lives would improve a little, but our conditions have become worse. As for fuel, we haven't been able to get any gas cylinders and now we have a severe shortage of diesel. Agricultural land needs to be irrigated, so we need to find enough diesels to operate the irrigation engines. But there isn't any," said farmer Abu Taleb Mohammed.

When he took office in June, Mursi announced a 100-day plan in which restoring the country's supply of energy was one of his top priorities.

But on Saturday, the president conceded that among his government's main shortcomings was the ability to supply

butane gas cylinders to Egyptians to cook with. He cited deep-rooted corruption in the country as one of the reasons for insufficient supplies.

The country's farmers say the lack of available diesel has indirectly led to a deterioration in the quality of the soil.

“The lack of water means there is now a concentration of salt in the soil. The concentration of salt has led to a problem for agriculture. The crops have begun to deteriorate. All of this is because of the increase in prices and because there is no diesel fuel. We are not able to find any diesel fuel,” said Sadek Alshemy of the pest control department.

Although it is now the world's biggest wheat importer, Egypt was once the breadbasket of the ancient Roman empire.

Farms in Menoufia in the Nile Delta have traditionally produced cotton, vegetables, maize and citrus fruit - much of it for export.

But the lack of fuel is making it impossible for farmers to pump water up from deep

wells, leaving the land parched and destroying the crops.

“We are suffering from a lack of fuel because most of the farms here are irrigated by diesel-operated machines. I have to send a worker to wait at a fuel station for seven or eight hours to get hold of diesel. And we get 20 or 40 liters of diesel, which is enough to run a water pump for only a couple of hours. So the crops are affected, they are thirsty, they lack water. This is the problem, and I call on the government to urgently provide us with diesel fuel,” said farm owner, Mohamed Shafiq.

With the farming industry in trouble, day laborers say they are struggling to make ends meet.

“What can I do with a daily wage of 30 pounds? A cylinder of butane gas (for cooking) costs me 20 pounds. It feels like I am working just to buy a cylinder of gas, not to feed my family. The life of an Egyptian farmer is very hard, nobody cares about Egyptian farmers at all,” said 27-year-old Moussa Abdel Rahman.

The State currently sells butane cylinders at about five Egyptian pounds (\$0.82) each as part of its energy subsidy programme. The actual cost of the cylinders is about 65 pounds.

Spending on fuel subsidies has soared as world prices and domestic consumption have risen but the authorities have been reluctant to cut them for fear of a popular backlash.

Amid ongoing shortages, the government, which is negotiating a \$3.2 billion emergency loan from the International Monetary Fund, has denied talk that it can no longer afford to pay the fuel bill.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/08/242614.html?PHPSESSID=58ucahcko197mi23jftkvanbh6>

- **Libyan assembly passes vote of no confidence dismissing prime minister**

TRIPOLI (Reuters) - Libya's national congress dismissed the newly elected prime minister on Sunday in a vote of no confidence which underscored the difficulties of forming a government which can unite the country's different factions and regions.

The vote came minutes after Prime Minister Mustafa Abushagur named 10 new ministers - his second and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to form a government - after he was forced to withdraw his previous cabinet in the face of protests.

The national congress will now need to choose a new prime minister who will have to try again to form a viable government as Libya, a major oil and gas exporter, seeks to emerge from the civil war that toppled Muammar Gaddafi last year.

Abushagur was elected by the assembly on Sept 12 and last week announced a government which included 29 ministries.

He withdrew the list after protests from the national congress and the public saying it was not representative of the country. Between 100 and 150 demonstrators from the western town of Zawiyah stormed the national congress on Thursday.

The original list had many unknown figures, and was believed to include several members of the political arm of

the Muslim Brotherhood. But there were no candidates from the National Forces Alliance, Libya's leading liberal coalition.

After withdrawing his initial choice, Abushagur was then given 72 hours to name a new government acceptable to the national congress or face a vote of no confidence.

He said he had come under pressure by political parties demanding roles in certain ministries.

"The first list was not successful, it had some mistakes, and I was prepared to fix it," he told the national congress on Sunday. "Some political entities that demanded certain positions began to discuss a vote of no-confidence. I would not bow down to the pressure of political entities."

Libya desperately needs a viable government so that it can focus on reconstruction and on healing regional divisions opened up by the war which toppled Gaddafi.

Hamuda Syala, spokesman for the National Forces Alliance led by wartime

rebel prime minister Mohammed Jibril, said the coalition had been let down by Abushagur's original list of ministerial appointments.

But he said the National Forces Alliance was in negotiations with the Muslim Brotherhood's political arm, the Justice and Development Party, to find "a suitable leader who will be representative of Libya's choice".

Abushagur appeared on state television late at night to offer his thanks to those who helped him.

"I call on the revolutionaries to take care of this country and not let anyone take advantage of it," he said. "I am ready to be a servant to this country and it will be a big honour to keep serving it."

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=31352>

- **Another lawsuit filed against Constituent Assembly**

Fifty advisors from the administrative prosecution's office have filed suit against the Constituent Assembly, demanding that its work be suspended and that the

legislation regarding its formation be annulled.



According to a state TV website, the lawsuit was filed on Monday before the State Council's Supreme Administrative Court. It cites President Mohamed Morsy, Prime Minister Hesham Qandil and assembly chairman Hossam Gheriany.

Gheriany retired from his position as president of the Court of Cassation in July. The lawsuit claims that he is therefore not legally eligible to chair the Constituent Assembly, although he was nominated to that position in March.

The office of the administrative prosecution had announced on Sunday that it would go on a three-day strike starting on Tuesday, in order to pressure the Constituent Assembly to make its powers clear in the draft constitution.

The state-owned news source MENA reported on Friday that those who had declared the protest feared that the administrative prosecution would be separated from the judiciary and would be moved to the executive branch under the new constitution.

The Constituent Assembly was formed by the Islamist-majority People's Assembly, which was dissolved in June. The assembly's detractors claim that the constitution-writing body is dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood and conservative Salafis.

Another lawsuit is currently before the administrative courts demanding that the assembly be disbanded, on the grounds that it is not representative of all members of Egyptian society.

The US-based Human Rights Watch has called upon the assembly to amend the proposed draft constitution, which it says would undermine key human rights.

"The draft provides for some basic political and economic rights but falls far short of international law on women's and children's rights, freedom of religion and

expression, and, surprisingly, torture and trafficking,” HRW said in a letter sent to the Constituent Assembly.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/another-lawsuit-filed-against-constituent-assembly>

- **With loans, a flood of Turkish business**

After receiving some substantial financial aid from the Turkish government, Egypt is increasingly turning to its Anatolian neighbor for much-sought after private investments.



This month, the Turkish government agreed to deposit US\$2 billion in the Central Bank of Egypt to fund small and medium-sized enterprises following an official visit made by President Mohamed Morsy to Istanbul late September.

In addition, Turkish businessmen are set to announce an array of new business

projects that they say will cement a level of unprecedented economic cooperation between the two countries by 2013.

The agreement took place about two weeks ago after Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and Egyptian President Mohamed Morsy met at the High-Level Syria Contact Group. The loan is intended to help finance Egypt’s infrastructure and increase its dwindling foreign currency reserves, Egypt’s Finance Minister Momtaz al-Saeed said.

Two weeks ago, Saeed announced that Egypt’s domestic debt has risen to LE1.39 trillion. The Morsy administration has been seeking foreign help in the hopes of mending the gaping deficit in the state’s budget and foreign currency reserves. In July 2012, Egypt’s budget deficit reached almost US\$20 million.

The Turkish Embassy in Cairo has announced that half of the US\$2 billion package would be in the form of bilateral loans, but no further details have been released as to how it might be structured.

“None of the Turkish or Egyptian officials who signed the papers regarding the aid

have discussed or explained how the loan will be spent or used,” Zeki Ekinci, chairman of the Turkish-Egyptian Businessmen Association (TUMIAD) told Egypt Independent.

However, it seems that the government loan could be a gateway for Turkish private investment.

Not yet public

Turkish companies are planning a series of projects and investments that have yet to be made public, Turkish business leaders say.

Chairman of the Egyptian-Turkish Group, Hassan Akyuz, said that among the new Turkish investments would be investment and trade companies, in addition to a hypermarket and Turkish hotels, such as Rixos Hotel.

Akyuz told Egypt Independent that though the projects have not been officially announced, they are already in the works.

“No less than 50,000 Egyptians will be employed at such projects, and as according to the law, the companies will

have at least nine Egyptian businessmen and one foreigner to work on each project,” he said.

An official at the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce told Egypt Independent that he could not discuss the projects as the details had not been made public.

Tightening economic ties

Egypt and Turkey significantly altered their economic relationship when the two countries signed a Free Trade Agreement in November 2005. The agreement resulted in a threefold increase in trade exchange between Turkey and Egypt from 2006 to 2012.

This marked a sharp departure from the previous decade. In the 1990s, the two countries were neither trade partners nor friends as a result of the policies of Mustafa Kamel Ataturk. The founder of the modern Turkish Republic, Ataturk believed in limiting Turkey’s involvement in Middle Eastern affairs.

Former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak steered clear of too close a relationship

with Turkey, disapproving of the close political ties between former Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's Refah Party and the Muslim Brotherhood.

However, economic and political connections have shifted with the rise of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey over the past decade, which is in favor of closer relations with Arab countries.

According to Ekinci, the bilateral treaty has led to an increase in Turkey's exports to Egypt, which include iron, steel, ready-made garments and clothes, while Egypt's exports to Turkey are mostly textile goods, construction material and chemical products.

There are a total of 210 Turkish companies in Egypt, specialized in manufacturing textile goods, spare parts and garments. These companies currently employ 50,000 Egyptian workers, according to Ekinci.

"The total investments from these companies alone have reached US\$1.5 billion, and in 2010, the level of trade between the countries reached US\$4 billion," he said.

As for 2012, trade levels are expected to increase further by 26 percent to reach US\$5 billion by the end of the year, which means that more and more investments and trade exchanges will continue to boost both economies through December.

But Turkish investors are receiving no special treatment, Ekinci said.

"Turkish investors do not want to be treated differently, because they want to have equal opportunities just like any other foreign investors," he said.

Given the similarities in cultures, traditions, politics and economics, Turkish investors have been long encouraged to invest and start projects in Egypt.

"There's absolutely no discrimination against us and we never feel it, we always feel like we are home," said Ekinci.

Strategic partners

Despite their planned projects, Turkish businessmen say that the climate for investing in Egypt is still challenging.

Akyuz said that Egyptian bureaucracy poses a particular obstacle to doing business. A simple legal procedure “takes months to get done when it could take only a few days,” he said.

Other problems include workers’ strikes and lack of security, which have discouraged international investment across the board. Turkish investments have proved harder than most in the past year and a half. Businessmen say they remain optimistic and have faith in Morsy.

“Egypt is one of the best strategic partners to Turkey, and I’m sure that it will very soon settle its economic and political issues,” said Ekinci.

Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan seems to agree. When he visited Egypt last year, he put forth an economic plan that he said would increase trade levels to US\$10 billion and investments to US\$5 billion within five years.

“I personally believe, and talk for all Turkish investors in Egypt, that if there doubts or problems with the policies of President Mohamed Morsy, Turkey would have never provided such a loan. He is

well respected and well-trusted,” says Ekinci.

But it’s not just good business sense, some say; it’s a matter of sticking to their word.

“When the revolution happened in Egypt, Turkey was one of the very few countries that supported it, and since then it promised to help Egypt in every way possible until the country is stable again,” Akyuz said.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/loans-flood-turkish-business>

6. JORDAN and LEBANON

● Hezbollah attacks Al Arabiya, claims leaked documents are fake

Lebanon’s Islamist group Hezbollah denied on Monday any involvement in the 2005 assassination of journalist and MP Gebran Tueni, following Al Arabiya television’s broadcast of Saturday’s special episode of Syria Leaks, which said that the group’s intelligence department and Damascus were both behind the operation, Lebanese An Nahar newspaper reported on Nahar Net online.



“Al Arabiya’s document on Hezbollah is fake and not everything published is a real document and you can tell that from the content,” Hezbollah's State Minister for Administrative Development Mohammed Fneish told reporters as he entered a cabinet session at the Grand Serail.

The group also disagreed with comments on “some of the March 14 figures and websites” after the episode was aired.

“The stances voiced by the March 14 forces on several issues are always based on fake documents and fabricated info,” the Hezbollah-issued official statement said. It alleged that the March 14 faction were exploiting “baseless accusations fabricated by the Saudi network Al Arabiya and attributed to Syrian opposition activists, including those related to the assassination of MP Gebran Tueni.”.

“It was not surprising that those who had excelled in fabricating false witnesses

have resorted to fake documents whose authenticity has been questioned by their regional allies, topped by the Qataris and the Turks, who have described Al Arabiya's documents as false, fabricated and baseless,” Hezbollah added, wondering whether the March 14 forces have received “an American memo to inflame the domestic situations.”

“Hezbollah denies any involvement whatsoever in the assassination of MP Gebran Tueni and stresses its condemnation of political assassinations,” the party said, noting that “some of those claiming keenness on the security of the country and its citizens do not enjoy the minimum sense of responsibility.”

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/08/242612.html?PHPSESSID=58ucahcko197mi23jftkvanbh6>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Yemen busts Iran spies, detains ‘American’ on Qaeda wanted list**

Yemen has dismantled a spy ring that included Iranians who entered the country posing as investors looking to set up a factory, the defense ministry said on its website Monday.



The spy cell also had members from Syria and Yemen, the 26sep.net website said, citing an informed source.

“Iranian, Syrian and Yemeni elements were arrested during the past period” across Yemen as part of “Iranian spy cells held in Yemen,” the site reported.

It said the Iranians had entered Yemen posing as investors with authorization to start a factory.

The Iranians began importing equipment through the port of Aden in Yemen’s south but when “one of the containers was inspected, it was revealed that the equipment it was carrying was for military... and not civilian purposes,” said 26sep.net.

When re-assembled, the equipment could be used for “making rockets and various weapons,” it added.

The website did not specify how many people involved in the spy ring were arrested. It also did not offer details on the role of Syrian and Yemeni members of the alleged espionage cell.

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

He also accused the Islamic republic of “trying to derail the political” process in Yemen, where a year-long popular uprising led to the ouster of former strongman Ali Abdullah Saleh after an agreement was sealed in November.

On Friday, al-Hayat daily quoted Hadi as saying that Iran was backing a faction of Yemen’s separatist Southern Movement seeking to secede by the force of arms.

Sunni-majority Yemen and Shiite-dominated Iran have often regarded each other with mutual suspicion. Sana’a suspects Tehran of supporting rebels of the Shiite Zaidi sect in north Yemen who

from 2004 fought six wars with central government forces before signing a truce in February 2010.

Meanwhile, Yemeni security forces on Monday detained a man believed to be an American who appeared on a list of wanted al-Qaeda suspects, a security official told AFP.

The suspect was detained in Ataq, the capital of Shabwa province, a jihadist stronghold in the south of Yemen, the official said.

He spoke in English, said he was a Muslim and had three passports in his possession - two American and one German, he added.

As the man appeared on an interior ministry wanted list, he was handed over to the intelligence services, who transferred the suspect to the capital Sana'a.

The official did not identify the suspect, nor give any other details of the circumstances of his arrest or why he was wanted.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/10/09/242654.html?PHPSESSID=58ucahcko197mi23jftkvanbh6>

- **UAE: Gulf states must tackle Muslim Brotherhood threat**

ABU DHABI (Reuters) -- Gulf Arab countries should work together to stop Islamist group the Muslim Brotherhood plotting to undermine governments in the region, the United Arab Emirates' foreign minister said on Monday.



The UAE, a major oil exporter and business hub, has arrested around 60 local Islamists this year, accusing them of belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood -- which is banned in the country -- and conspiring to overthrow the government.

Thanks to cradle-to-grave welfare systems, the UAE and other Gulf Arab monarchies have largely avoided Arab Spring unrest that has unseated rulers elsewhere.

But they fear the rise of the Brotherhood in Egypt -- and of other Islamist groups in other states -- in the wake of the revolutions could embolden dissent on their own turf.

"The Muslim Brotherhood does not believe in the nation state. It does not believe in the sovereignty of the state," Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahayan said at joint press conference with the Ukrainian foreign minister.

He said there were individuals within the Muslim Brotherhood who would be able to use their "prestige and capabilities to violate the sovereignty, laws and rules of other states".

"We need to communicate to see if there were individuals or organizations who were using these countries," he said, without naming the countries he was referring to.

The organization, which rose to power in Egypt after the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, has consistently sought to reassure Gulf Arab states it has no plan to

push for political change beyond Egypt's borders.

President Mohamed Mursi, propelled to power by the Brotherhood, says there is no plan to "export the revolution".

"Members of the Muslim Brotherhood respect their hosting countries and do not call for bringing down any system of governance in the countries they live in," Mahmoud Hussein, the Brotherhood's secretary-general, said.

The Muslim Brotherhood organization, founded in Egypt in 1928, is seen as a mentor for Islamist groups in the region.

The group of around 60 men arrested in the UAE this year belonged to the local Islamist group Al Islah.

Last month, local media reported that some of those detained had confessed that their organization was running an armed wing and had been plotting to take power and establish an Islamist state. Al-Islah has since denied this.

The reports said the group was coordinating with Brotherhood

organizations in three other Gulf Arab countries, and that they had received up to 10 million dirhams (\$3.67 million) from a counterpart in another Gulf Arab country.

Al Islah says it shares a similar ideology with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt but has no direct links and is pushing for only peaceful reforms.

Dubai's police chief Dhahi Khalfan said in March there was an "international plot" against Gulf states by the Muslim Brotherhood.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=527249>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Afghan war getting worse for civilians, ICRC says**

KABUL (Reuters) - The Afghanistan war is getting worse for civilians, with armed groups on the rise across the country and access to healthcare deteriorating as foreign combat troops depart, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said on Monday.

Outgoing head of the ICRC delegation in Afghanistan, Reto Stocker, a seven-year

veteran of Afghan aid efforts, said as the NATO-led war against the Taliban dragged into a twelfth year, the outlook for ordinary Afghans was increasingly bleak.

"Since I arrived here in 2006, local armed groups have proliferated. Civilians have been caught between not just one, but multiple front lines," Stocker told journalists in Kabul.

With NATO combat forces due to depart in 2014, aid groups and some Western diplomats are worried about a repeat of the vicious 1990s civil war that raged between rival ethnic-based factions, giving rise to the austere Taliban government.

Some security and aid workers in the north, once a centre for anti-Taliban resistance and where most of Afghanistan's untapped oil and gas resources are located, say insurgents and other armed groups are preparing for a security vacuum after the exit of foreign forces.

A security analysis prepared by the International Crisis Group think tank, also released on Monday, said President Hamid Karzai's increasingly unpopular

government could collapse after the NATO withdrawal, especially if people lost confidence in the outcome of presidential elections the same year.

"Plagued by factionalism and corruption, Afghanistan is far from ready to assume responsibility for security when U.S. and NATO forces withdraw in 2014," the ICG said.

"In the current environment, prospects for clean elections and a smooth transition are slim."

Adding to Karzai's woes, Western diplomats in Kabul say donors who together promised civilian aid worth \$16 billion over the next four years tied to serious efforts to combat endemic corruption, are losing hope that the government will deliver.

"Several countries are seriously considering pulling the plug," said one senior envoy who declined to be identified due to diplomatic sensitivities.

"BASELESS"

Karzai's chief spokesman, Aimal Faizi, said the ICG report had been discussed in a regular cabinet meeting on Monday and dismissed by senior ministers as "baseless and far from realities on the ground".

Stocker said he was confident there would not be a re-run of the 1990s civil war that followed the Soviet rush from the country, leaving once allied warlords to turn on each other.

In the fighting that set former President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his military commander, Ahmad Shah Masood, against the forces of rival anti-Soviet warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, two thirds of Kabul was razed and about 50,000 civilians died. Thousands of women and children were raped and tortured.

"Afghans have seen too much war. They cannot take it any longer," Stocker said, adding that the country had seen vast improvements in health and education and the war-racked economy that most people would not want to see squandered.

The World Bank in its most recent Afghanistan assessment said while growth

reached 8.4 percent in 2010/11, bolstered by big aid flows, the NATO pullout could halve that rate.

NATO figures released in August showed civilian casualties in the 11-year war were at their highest for several years, with the Taliban responsible for about 90 percent of deaths because of their use of indiscriminate roadside bombs.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=31358>

- **Afghan President to visit Pakistan for strategic pact talks**

Islamabad, Oct 9, IRNA -- Afghan President Hamid Karzai is scheduled to visit Pakistan in the next two months to hold follow-up talks on a proposed strategic partnership agreement between two uneasy neighbor states, Afghan sources have said.



President Karzai and his Pakistani counterpart have agreed in their meeting

in New York, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in late September, to finalize a strategic partnership agreement by 2013 to strengthen bilateral relations.

President Karzai was previously scheduled to visit Islamabad for a quadrilateral summit of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia and Tajikistan from October 2 to October 3. But the summit was postponed after the Russian President Vladimir Putin postponed his trip.

“Now a proposal has been floated that President Karzai visit Pakistan this year,” an Afghan source said.

Afghan Foreign Minister Zalmai Rasoul will visit Islamabad ahead of Karzai’s trip to discuss bilateral matters, including the proposed strategic partnership agreement, sources said.

He will also discuss the agenda of Karzai’s meetings. There will also be a review on the progress made on the issue of providing a safe passage to the reconciled Taliban leaders in Afghanistan.

The sources added that the Afghan government would present a draft of the proposed strategic partnership agreement during President Karzai's visit and the Pakistani government is likely to prepare its own draft.

The Afghan High Peace Council Chairman Salauddin Rabbani will also accompany President Karzai during the historical visit.

President Karzai said on Thursday that the bilateral pact would be signed if certain conditions were met, including stopping the "export of terrorism, suicide bombers, interference in internal affairs and causing the destabilisation of Afghanistan."

<http://old.irna.ir/News/Politic/Afghan-President-to-visit-Pakistan-for-strategic-pact-talks/80361493>

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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*