



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 minister says arms deal 'not cancelled'**

Defence minister denies reports that \$4.2bn arms deal with Russia has been scrapped over corruption fears.

Iraq's acting defence minister has denied media reports that a \$4.2bn package of arms deals with Russia was cancelled due to corruption concerns.



Saadun al-Dulaimi announced on Saturday the deal "the deal is going ahead", shortly after Ali Mussawi, a senior adviser to Nouri al-Maliki, Iraqi prime minister, said it had been scrapped.

Al Jazeera's Jane Arraf, reporting from Baghdad, said the order of attack helicopters and surface-to-air missiles will be used for "counterterrorism efforts", according to Iraqi officials.

She said the deal is a signal that Baghdad "for technical reasons and for political reasons, would like to not be entirely dependent on the United States" for military armaments.

This is especially important, our correspondent said, because much of the nation's weaponry was destroyed following the US invasion in 2003.

Russian position

Dulaimi denied that there was corruption in the deal, and said the government had simply been late in providing details about the deal to an anti-corruption committee.

However, speaking to Al Jazeera from Moscow, Pavel Felgenhauer, a Russian defence analyst, said in Russia "weapons are sold by a specialised agency and arms traders".

These groups are connected to the military "but are not the military".

Felgenhauer also said that Russia had no legislation forbidding commissions to "foreign intermediaries" in arms-sales contracts.

Therefore, there is a possibility that "there's big money involved for foreign countries" in such deals, Felgenhauer said.

Mussawi, while announcing that the deal had been cancelled, did not say exactly when the final decision was made to stop the deal.

No comment

The Russian embassy in Baghdad was not available for comment.

The deal was approved a month ago when a delegation led by Maliki visited Russia.

If it is finalised and implemented, it would make Russia the second-biggest arms supplier to Baghdad, after the US.

Russian media said the deliveries covered 30 Mi-28 attack helicopters and 42 Pantsir-S1 surface-to-air missile systems.

Discussions were also said to be under way for Iraq's eventual acquisition of a large batch of MiG-29 fighters and helicopters, along with heavy weaponry.

The statement announcing the deals said they were secretly discussed as early as April, and revisited again in July and August during visits to Russia by Iraqi delegations that included Dulaimi.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/2012111092311614537.html>

- **Al-Nujaifi calls to find an agreed law for Kirkuk's election.**

BAGHDAD / NINA / House Speaker Osama Nujaifi discussed, with members of the parliamentary committee in charge of preparing the law of Kirkuk Provincial Council elections, the findings of the Committee in its meeting at the headquarters of the UN mission in Iraq.



A statement from the Department of Media of the Parliament: "al-Nujaifi said during the meeting with the committee in the presence of Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, that there is a progress in the work of the Committee and a substantial convergence among the three components in order to reach a compatible law between all the components of Kirkuk,"

Nujaifi said, according to the statement: "The coming period will witness a breakthrough toward the legislation of the law, without changing in the legal status of the province."

He explained that "the Commission is required to focus on the contention points between the components to overcome these points and not to marginalize any component", calling on the Commission to: "find a final version of agreed election law for Kirkuk province."

For his part, Kobler said: "The various parties in Kirkuk have a genuine desire to hold the elections. We have agreed on several points with the parties in Kirkuk in the meeting held on Saturday at the headquarters of the mission." confirming another meeting with the Commission to resolve the rest of the contentious issues.

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

- **Kurdistani MP: The government and the Parliament are not able to solve the crisis.**

MP, of the Kurdistan Alliance, Abdul Bari Zebari ruled out that the current government and parliament can resolve the political crisis the country is going through.

He told the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / "We always hope that there will be solutions to the political crisis," noting "but with what we're saying now, the government or the current parliament can not reach any solution, especially in light of short remaining time of the government and the parliament."

Zebari added, "The lack of seriousness in reaching a required consensus, in addition to the emergence of new crises prove lack of seriousness in finding solutions and will leave all the problems and crises to the next elected parliament ."

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

- **Bahaa al-Araji: Russia asked Iraq to re-negotiate on the Arms deal.**

BAGHDAD / NINA / The head of the Parliamentary Committee on Integrity, Bahaa al-Araji said the Russian side asked the government to re-sign on the Russian arms deal and add new weapons if it so wishes.

He said in a statement to the NINA:"The contract on Russian arms has not been done yet, because there are suspicions of corruption around the arms deal and there a new committee will be formed, which will not contain any person from the former Committee and from different parties to re-format and correct the deal to ensure fairness. "

Araji added that "officials within the Office of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki may be responsible for the suspicions of the corruption in the Russian arms deal."

The Parliamentary Committee on Integrity announced that it addressed the relevant authorities to reveal the names of those involved in the Russian arms deal.

The spokesman of the Committee, Jaafari al-Moussawi said in a statement yesterday that "the Committee called on the relevant authorities to disclose the names of those involved in the Russian arms deal."

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki had signed, during his recent visit to Moscow, on Russian arms deal worth 4.2 billion dollars.

The deal included attack helicopters Mi-28 and surface-to-air missile systems.

It is said that al-Maliki has formed a new committee to renegotiate with the Russian government on sophisticated weapons according to new contracts, because there are suspicions of corruption in the previous contracts.

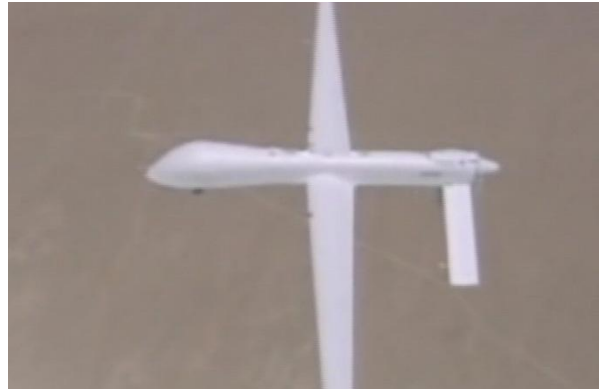
http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GEHKIF

2. IRAN

- **Iran warns US against airspace violation**

Tehran says it will act firmly against any US drone intrusion into its airspace.

Iran has warned the United States that it will react strongly against any intrusion by Washington into its airspace, local media reported.



Sunday's warning comes 10 days after two Iranian warplanes shot at a US drone.

"Yes, we opened fire, and it was with warning shots. If they do it again they can expect an even stronger response," the Iranian Students News Agency quoted General Amir-Ali Hadjizadeh, head of the elite Revolutionary Guards air and space forces, as saying.

Hadjizadeh was reported as saying on Sunday: "This spy drone entered Iranian airspace and had to turn around because of the immediate reaction by fighters of the Revolutionary Guards".

On Friday, Ahmad Vahidi, Iranian defence minister, confirmed the incident, saying the drone had "entered the space over the territorial waters of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Persian Gulf area".

George Little, Pentagon spokesman, said on Thursday the Iranian Su-25 Frogfoot fighters fired at the robotic Predator drone on November 1 but did not hit it.

"They intercepted the aircraft and fired multiple rounds," he said.

The US drone was "never in Iranian airspace" and came under fire from the fighter jets off the Iranian coast over international waters, Little said.

In a warning to Tehran, the Pentagon spokesman said the United States was prepared to safeguard its forces.

"We have a wide range of options, from diplomatic to military, to protect our military assets and our forces in the region and will do so when necessary," Little said.

Hadjizadeh added that the US unmanned aircraft had been "flying over Kharg island to gather information about economic activity on the island, and the arrival and departure of oil tankers".

Kharg, 25 kilometres off the Iranian mainland, is the Islamic Republic's main export terminal for its oil.

The November 1 drone incident came less than a week before the US presidential election, but the Pentagon kept it quiet until reports of the confrontation leaked out.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/2012111115240581846.html>

- **Iran’s FM calls for closer economic relations with Iraq’s KRG**

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi has called for closer economic cooperation between the Islamic Republic and Iraq’s Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).



Salehi made the remarks during a meeting with KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Idris Barzani in Tehran on Sunday.

The Iranian foreign minister reiterated that more meetings should be held to adopt guidelines on boosting economic and commercial ties, adding, “The Islamic Republic of Iran has offered its written proposal,” in this regard.

On Iran’s diplomacy about Syria, Salehi said that the Islamic Republic is in favor of negotiations between the Syrian government and opposition groups to create stability in the Middle Eastern country.

Barzani also stated that Iran’s security is of major importance for the KRG, adding that “we will not allow Iran’s security to be threatened.”

Barzani arrived in the Iranian capital on Saturday evening and was received by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Iraqi Ambassador Mohammed Majeed al-Sheikh, and Nazem Dabbaq, the representative of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in Tehran.

KRG Natural Resources Minister Ashti Hawrami, KRG Board of Investment Chairman Herish Muharam, and KRG Department of Foreign Relations Director Falah Mustafa Bakir are accompanying Barzani on the trip.

Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) political bureau chief Fazil Mirani and two senior KDP members are also in Barzani's delegation.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/11/271679/iran-fm-urges-closer-ties-with-krg/>

3. SYRIA

- **Syria opposition coalition picks new leader**

Syria's opposition appears to have overcome its deep divisions to rally behind a new leader within a new coalition that its Western and Arab backers hope can topple the Syrian government and take over the country.

After days of negotiations in Qatar under the watchful eyes of Arab, US and other officials, representatives of groups including rebel fighters, veteran dissidents and ethnic and religious minorities agreed on Sunday to join a new assembly that can form a government-in-exile.

They unanimously elected reformist Damascus religious leader, Mouaz al-Khatib, as its president.

Khatib, 50, was jailed several times for criticising Bashar al-Assad, Syria's president. He finally fled into exile this year.

Khatib, a preacher who was once imam of the ancient Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, immediately called on soldiers to quit the Syrian army and on all sects to unite.

"We demand freedom for every Sunni, Alawi, Ismaili [Shia], Christian, Druze, Assyrian ... and rights for all parts of the harmonious Syrian people," he said.

Deal welcomed

It remains to be seen whether the Syrian National Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces can overcome the mutual suspicions and infighting that have weakened the 20-month-old drive to end four decades of rule by Assad's family.

But for allies who see it emulating Libya's Transitional National Council, the deal was welcome on a day when Israel fired a missile after a Syrian mortar bomb hit the Golan Heights and Assad's air force strafed along Turkey's border.

"We will strive from now on to have this new body recognised completely by all parties ... as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people," Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, Qatari prime minister, said.

Qatar, the meeting's hosts, is an important supporter of the rebels.

Ahmed Davutoglu, Turkey's foreign minister, said there was "no excuse any more" for foreign governments not to support an opposition whose internal divisions had given many pause.

The US had also strongly promoted the plan for the Doha meeting to unite the various factions and, notably, subsume the previously ineffectual Syrian National Council into a wider body that would be more inclusive of minorities from a country of great ethnic and religious diversity.

Earlier on Sunday, Al Jazeera's Mohamed Vall, reporting from the Doha meeting venue, said: "We also know that this name - the Syrian National Coalition - will also change because they do not want it to sound like Syrian National Council when reduced to its acronym of SNC.

"There is also a longer version of the name, which is: The National Coalition of the Syrian Revolutionary Forces and the Opposition".

He said the Kurdish National Council asked for 48 hours to consult their leaders outside of Qatar.

France, a vocal backer of the rebels and which once ruled Syria, lauded the Doha deal.

"France will work with its partners to secure international recognition of this new entity as the representative of the aspirations of the Syrian people," Laurent Fabius, French foreign minister, said in a statement in which he called the Assad government "the criminal regime in Damascus".

Twenty months after street demonstrations inspired by the Arab Spring drew a military response from Assad, his enemies hope a more cohesive opposition can break a stalemate in the civil war and win more military and diplomatic support from allies who have been wary of the influence of anti-Western fighters, some of them linked to al-Qaeda.

While there has been renewed talk in Turkey and elsewhere of providing some sort of no-fly zones or other protection for refugees and the lightly armed rebels facing Assad's air force, Western governments have shown little appetite for new military ventures in such a complex Arab state.

And Russia and China, which have blocked previous moves against Assad in the United Nations Security Council, are unlikely swiftly to alter positions which call for dialogue with Assad and view opposition groups as being in thrall to the West.

Assad's close allies

Regional power Iran, in whose Shia brand of Islam Assad's Alawite minority has its religious roots, remains firmly behind the Syrian leader in a conflict which pits him against majority Sunni Muslims supported by Iran's Sunni Arab adversaries.

After long arguments over whether and how to form the new opposition assembly, the speed with which a consensus emerged within hours to ensure that Khatib stood unopposed for the post of president was notable and may encourage its supporters.

His deputies will be Riad Seif, a veteran dissident who had proposed the US-backed initiative to set up an umbrella group uniting groups inside and outside Syria, and Suhair al-Atassi, one of the relatively few women with a leading role.

Delegates said a third deputy may yet be named from among ethnic Kurds.

Mustafa Sabbagh, a businessman, was elected general secretary.

Al Jazeera's Hashem Ahelbarra, also reporting from the Doha conference venue, said the coalition had said that as soon as they received "full recognition from the international community, they will announce a provisional government".

"Ideally they say they will ask the international community to provide them with a humanitarian corridor, a no-fly zone in the northern parts of the country, preferably in Idlib province or in Aleppo, but they say that they practically need a month or two before being able to move to that area, to set up their provisional government," he said.

"This is a serious step against the regime and a serious step towards freedom," George Sabra, the new Syrian National Council leader, said of Khatib, who has long promoted a liberal Islam tolerant of Syria's Christian, Alawite and other minorities.

Critics of the SNC had said it was too much influenced by the Sunni Islamist Muslim Brotherhood and too little open to minorities, including Alawites, some 10 per cent of the population who fear a backlash if Assad is overthrown after a war that has taken on increasingly sectarian characteristics.

Regional fallout

In a sign of the wider sectarian confrontation across the Middle East, three people were killed on Sunday in the Lebanese coastal city of Sidon in fighting between Sunni Islamists and Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Lebanese Shia group.

In the Golan Heights, Israeli troops fired a guided missile into Syria on Sunday in a potent "warning shot" after mortar fire from fighting between Syrian troops and rebels hit the Israeli-occupied territory for the second time in four days.

Israel Radio said it was the first direct engagement of the Syrian military on the Golan since the war of 1973.

There was no immediate comment from the 1,000-strong UN force which patrols the area, and no reaction from Syria.

In other violence, Assad's troops bombarded the Ras al-Ain area on the border with Turkey, days after the town fell to rebels during an advance that has sent thousands of refugees fleeing for safety.

Increasingly critical of the failure of world powers to halt the war, Turkey is in discussions with its NATO allies over the possible deployment of Patriot surface-to-air missiles to defend against any spillover of violence. The move could also be a step towards enforcing a no-fly zone within Syria.

More than 38,000 people have been killed and many tens of thousands more displaced in the violence since March last year.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/2012111202415138198.html>

- **Wave of Syrian refugees floods into Turkey**

The United Nations is warning of an escalating humanitarian crisis inside Syria.

The world body says the number of people needing aid could rise to four million by next year.

At least 8,000 Syrians have fled into Turkey over the last 24 hours alone.

Al Jazeera's Sue Turton reports from the Turkey-Syria border.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/video/middleeast/2012/11/2012111045335859311.html>

- **Syria's opposition SNC elects George Sabra as new head**

DOHA, (Reuters) - The Syrian National Council, the main opposition body outside the country in the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad, elected veteran activist George Sabra as its head on Friday.

Sabra, a Christian, takes over a body that has come under heavy criticism from international allies for being ineffective in the fight against the Syrian government and for being riven by personal disputes.

Sabra immediately appealed for arms to fight Assad's forces. "We need only one thing to support our right to survive and to protect ourselves: we need weapons, we need weapons," he told reporters after his election by the SNC's executive council which has met this week in Qatar.

The SNC will start talks on Saturday with other Syrian factions including representatives of rebel groups inside Syria on forming a new, wider body that hopes to gain international recognition as a government-in-waiting.

Qatar, the United States and other powers are pressing the Syrian opposition groups to come together. Western countries and Syria's neighbours fear that hardline Islamist groups close to al Qaeda are growing in influence among rebels on the ground in Syria.

Qatar has hosted hundreds of figures from the SNC and other groups over the past week in five-star hotels, while U.S. diplomats have hovered on the sidelines to prod them towards an agreement. However, the SNC is worried that its influence will be diluted in any new body.

Sabra beat one other candidate to succeed Abdulbaset Sieda, a Kurd resident in Sweden, who took over from the SNC's first leader Burhan Ghalioun.

Muslim Brotherhood figure Mohammed Farooq Taifoor was elected as Sabra's deputy. The Brotherhood, a moderate Islamist group with affiliates around the Arab world, is seen as the dominant force within the SNC.

Sabra said his election showed that there was no sectarianism in the SNC. "The people here are Muslims and they elected a Christian," he said.

Sabra comes from the mixed Damascus suburb of Qatana and marched in early street demonstrations demanding Assad's removal last year before fleeing the country when secret police began targetting prominent pro-democracy campaigners.

A 65-year-old geography teacher, Sabra was known as a fierce critic of Assad before the uprising began. He is close to Riad al-Turk, a famed opposition figure who still operates underground in Syria.

Sabra is one of the writers of the Arabic version of the popular children's TV show Sesame Street.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=31756>

- **U.S. declares support for united Syrian opposition against Assad**

The United States late Sunday declared its support for the united Syrian opposition after various groups opposed to the government of President Bashar al-Assad decided to come together following talks in Doha, Qatar.

"We look forward to supporting the National Coalition as it charts a course toward the end of Assad's bloody rule and the start of the peaceful, just, democratic future that all the people of Syria deserve," State Department deputy spokesman Mark Toner said in a statement.

The Syrian opposition on Sunday signed a deal in Doha to establish a national coalition aimed at combating Bashar al-Assad's regime, an AFP journalist witnessed.

In a copy of the document obtained by AFP, the opposition parties agreed to work "for the fall of the regime and of all its symbols and pillars," and rule out any dialogue with Assad's government.

The opposition agreed to unify the fighting forces under a supreme military council and to set up a national judicial commission for rebel-held areas.

The agreement was signed by Sheikh Ahmad Moaz al-Khatib, who is the newly elected president of the coalition, and Georges Sabra, head of the Syrian National Council (SNC), which is the main member of the new coalition.

Khatib, a moderate originally from Damascus who quit Syria three months ago, will lead the National Coalition of Forces of the Syrian Revolution and Opposition, formed after the SNC agreed to the new group.

A provisional government would be formed after the coalition gains international recognition, and a transitional government after the regime has fallen.

State spokesman said the United States congratulated the opposition groups on their achievement and thanked the government of Qatar for its support.

“We will work with the National Coalition to ensure that our humanitarian and non-lethal assistance serves the needs of the Syrian people,” he said.

Syrian National Coalition

After days of wrangling in Qatar under constant cajoling by exasperated Arab, U.S. and other officials, representatives of groups including rebel fighters, veteran dissidents and ethnic and religious minorities agreed on Sunday to join a new assembly that can form a government-in-exile.

They unanimously elected reformist Damascus cleric Mouaz al-Khatib as its president.

The agreement comes after Syria’s fractious opposition finally put aside fierce arguments to rally behind a new leader within a new coalition that its Western and Arab backers hope can topple Bashar al-Assad and take over the country.

Khatib, a soft-spoken preacher who was once imam of the ancient Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, immediately called on soldiers to quit the Syrian army and on all sects to unite.

"We demand freedom for every Sunni, Alawi, Ismaili (Shi'ite), Christian, Druze, Assyrian ... and rights for all parts of the harmonious Syrian people," he told reporters.

It remains to be seen whether the Syrian National Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces can overcome the mutual suspicions and in-fighting that have weakened the 20-month-old drive to end four decades of rule by President Assad's family.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/12/249057.html>

- **President Al-Assad: We Are Fighting Terrorism and Implementing the Constitution to Protect Syrian People**

DAMASCUS, (SANA) – President Bashar al-Assad said in an interview with Russia Today TV broadcast on Friday that the results of any foreign invasion of Syria will be too dire for the world to bear, and that it will have a domino effect that will affect the world from the Atlantic to the Pacific, adding that the enemies of Syria are terrorism and instability.

Answering a question on who Syria's enemies are, President al-Assad said "Our enemy is terrorism and instability in Syria. It is not about persons. The whole issue is not about me staying or leaving. It is about the country being safe or not. So, this is the enemy we have been fighting as Syrians.

"For the president to stay or leave is a popular issue. It is not related to the opinion of some people. The only way can be done through the ballot boxes. So, it is not about what we hear, it is about what we can get through that box and that box will tell any president to stay or leave very simply."

President al-Assad went on to say "I was not the target right from the beginning; I was not the problem anyway. The West always creates enemies; in the past it was the communism then it became Islam, and then it became Saddam Hussein for different reasons. Now, they want to create a new enemy represented by 'Bashar'. That's why they say that the problem is the

president so he has to leave. That is why we have to focus of the real problem, and not waste our time listening to what they say."

Answering a question on whether he personally thinks he is the only man who can hold Syria together, President al-Assad said "We have to look at it from two aspects. The first aspect is the constitution and I have my authority under the constitution. According to this authority and the constitution, I have to be able to solve the problem. But if we mean that there isn't any Syrian who can be a president, then the answer is no, any Syrian could be a president. We have many Syrians who are eligible to be in that position. You cannot always link the whole country only to one person."

Every Syrian is involved in defending his country now

On whether President al-Assad thinks he is the man who can put an end to the conflict and restore peace, his Excellency said "I have to be the man who can do that and I hope so, but it is not about the power of the President; it is about the whole society. We have to be precise about this. The President cannot do anything without the institutions and without the support of the people. So, the fight now is not a President's fight; it is the Syrians' fight. Every Syrian is involved in defending his country now."

Answering a question on how to win this war in light of the death of many civilians and how to reconcile with the people, the President said "Let's be precise once again. The problem is not between me and the people; I do not have a problem with the people. The United States, the West, Turkey and many Arab countries are against me. If the Syrian people are against me, how can I be here? If a big part of the world, and the people, are against me, how can I stay here, I'm not Superman, I'm a human being, this is not logical. It is not about reconciling with the people and it is not about reconciliation among the Syrians; we do not have a civil war. It is about terrorism and the support coming from abroad to terrorists to destabilize Syria."

On whether President al-Assad believes there is no civil war in Syria, the President pointed out that " there are divisions, but divisions don't mean civil war, it is completely different. Civil wars should be based on ethnic or sectarian problems. Sometimes you may have ethnic or sectarian tensions but this do not make them a problem. So, if you have division in the same family or in a

bigger tribe or in a city, it does not mean there is a civil war. What is happening is completely different and that is normal. We should expect that."

Answering a question on whether the Syrian people will still want him as their President after the huge damage that affected the country, President al-Assad said "This is a hypothetical question because what the people think is the right thing, and regarding what they think, we have to ask them. I am not afraid about what some people think; I am afraid about my country. We have to focus on that."

On the reason behind the failure of the Syrian army and security forces in eliminating the enemies and in putting an end to the terrorist attacks, his Excellency said " In normal circumstances when we have the army and the secret services and the intelligence, we focus on the external enemy even if we have an internal enemy like terrorism, because the society is helping us at least not to provide terrorists' incubator. Now in this case, it is a new kind of war; terrorism through proxies, either Syrians living in Syria or foreign fighters coming from abroad. So, it is a new style of war, we have to adapt to this style and it takes time, it is not easy. And to say this is as easy as the traditional or regular war, no, it is much more difficult.

"Second, the support that has been offered to those terrorists in every aspect, including armaments, money and political aspect, is unprecedented. So, you have to expect that it is going to be a tough and difficult war. You do not expect a small country like Syria to defeat all those countries that have been fighting us through proxies just in days or weeks."

On the presence of fractions of terrorists who are not unified and have no unified strategy, President al-Assad said "This is not the problem. The problem is that those terrorists are fighting from within the cities, and in the cities we have civilians. When we fight this kind of terrorists, we have to be aware that we should do the minimum damage to the infrastructure and minimum damage to the civilians, but we have to fight, we cannot leave terrorists just killing and destroying. So, this is the difficulty in this kind of war."

As long as you have continuous supply in terrorists, armaments and logistics, it is going to be a long-term war

On the time that Syria needs to defeat the enemy, President al-Assad said "We cannot answer this question because no one claimed that he had the answer on when to end the war unless when we have the answer to when they are going to stop smuggling foreign fighters from different parts of the world, especially the Middle East and the Islamic world, and when they are going to stop sending weapons to those terrorists. If they stop, this is when I can answer you; I can tell that in weeks we can finish everything. This is not a big problem. But as long as you have continuous supply in terrorists, armaments and logistics, it is going to be a long-term war."

On how to win such war in light of Syria's extensive borders, President al-Assad said "No country in the world can seal the border, even the United States cannot seal its border with Mexico for example. The same can be applied to Russia which is a big country. So, no country can seal the border. You can only have a better situation on the border when you have good relations with your neighbor and this is something we do not have at least with Turkey now. Turkey supports more than any other country the smuggling of terrorists and armaments."

On the Turkish citizens' fears over what could happen between Syria and Turkey and if he believes that a Syrian-Turkish war is a plausible scenario, President al-Assad said "Rationally, no I do not think so – for two reasons. The war needs public support and the majority of the Turkish people do not need this war. So, I do not think any rational official would think of going against the will of the public in his country and the same goes for the Syrian people. So, the conflict or difference is not between the Turkish people and the Syrian people; it is about the government and officials, it is between our officials and their officials because of their politics. So, I do not see any war between Syria and Turkey on the horizon."

On when President al-Assad last spoke to Erdogan and how that conversation went, his Excellency said it was in May 2011, after he won the election and President al-Assad congratulated him, and that was the last time.

Answering a question on who's shelling Turkey, President al-Assad said "In order to find the answer, you need a joint committee between the two armies in order to know who shells who because on the borders you have a lot of terrorists who have mortars; so, they can do the same. You have to go and investigate the bomb in that place itself and that did not happen."

"We asked the Turkish government to have this committee but they refused; so, you cannot have the answer. But when you have these terrorists on your borders, you do not exclude them from doing so because the Syrian army does not have any order to shell the Turkish land because we do not find any interest in this, and we do not have any enmity with the Turkish people. We consider them as brothers, so why do it; unless that happened by mistake, then it needs investigation."

On whether the shelling of Turkey could have been done by mistake by government forces, President al-Assad said "That could happen. This is a possibility and in every war you have mistakes. You know in Afghanistan, they always talk about friendly fire if you kill your soldier; this means that it could happen in every war, but we cannot say yes."

Erdogan thinks that he is the new Ottoman sultan and he can control the region

Answering a question on how Turkey transformed from a friendly country to a foothold for the opposition, President al-Assad said "Not Turkey, but only Erdogan's government in order to be precise. Turkish people need good relations with the Syrian people. Erdogan thinks that if Muslim Brotherhood takes over in the region and especially in Syria, he can guarantee his political future, this is one reason. The other reason, he personally thinks that he is the new Ottoman sultan and he can control the region as it was during the Ottoman Empire under a new umbrella. In his heart he thinks he is a caliph. These are the main two reasons for him to shift his policy from zero problems to zero friends."

Many countries support Syria in their hearts but they do not dare to say that explicitly

On why Syria has so many enemies in the Arab world, President al-Assad said "They are not enemies. The majority of Arab governments support Syria in their heart but they do not dare to say that explicitly," asserting that this is because they are under pressure by the West, and sometimes under pressure of the petrodollars in the Arab world.

"Many countries support Syria in their hearts but they do not dare to say that explicitly. First of all, Iraq which played a very active role in supporting Syria during the crisis because it is a neighboring country and they understand and recognize that if you have a war inside Syria you

will have war in the neighboring countries including Iraq. I think there are other countries which have good position like Algeria, and Oman mainly and there are other countries I would not count all of them now but I would say they have positive position without taking actions," he added.

The problem between Syria and many countries is that we say "no"

On why Saudi Arabia and Qatar are so adamant about him resigning and how would an unstable Middle East fit their agenda, President al-Assad said "Let's be frank, I cannot answer on their behalf. They have to answer this question but I could say that the problem between Syria and many countries whether in the Arab world or in the region or in the West, is that we kept saying no when we think that we have to say no, that is the problem. And some countries believe that they can control Syria through orders, through money or petrodollars and this is impossible in Syria, this is the problem. May be they want to play a role. We do not have a problem, they can play a role whether they deserve this or not, they can play a role but not to play a role at the expense of our interests."

Answering a question on whether it's about controlling Syria or about exporting their vision of Islam to Syria, his Excellency said "You cannot put it as a government policy sometimes. Sometimes you have institutions in certain country, sometime you have persons who try to promote this but they do not announce it as an official policy. So, they did not ask us to promote their, let's say, extremist attitude of their institutions but that happened in reality whether through indirect support of their government or through the foundation from institutions and personnel. So, this is part of the problem, but when I want to talk as a government, I have to talk about the announced policy. The announced policy is like any other policy; it is about the interest, it is about playing a role, but we cannot ignore what you mentioned."

We are fighting terrorism and implementing the constitution by protecting the Syrian people

On acknowledging that government forces committed war crimes against Syrian civilians, President al-Assad said "We are fighting terrorism. We are implementing our constitution by protecting the Syrian people. Let's go back to what happened in Russia more than a decade ago when you faced terrorism in Chechnya and other places; they attacked people in theaters and

schools and so on, and the army in Russia protected the people, would you call it war crimes? No, you would not."

His Excellency added "two days ago, Amnesty International recognized the crimes that were committed few days ago by the armed groups when they captured soldiers and executed them. Also Human Rights Watch recognized this. Human Rights Watch recognized more than once the crimes of those terrorist groups and few days ago it described these crimes as war crimes, this is the first point.

"The second point, if you have an army that committed a crime against its own people, this is devoid of logic because the Syrian Army is made up of Syrian people. If you want to commit a crime against your people, then the army will divide, will disintegrate. So, you cannot have a strong army while you are killing your people. Third, the army cannot withstand for twenty months in these difficult circumstances without having the embrace of the public in Syria. So, how could you have this embracement while you are killing your people? This is a contradiction."

Answering a question on when was the last time he spoke to a Western leader and whether they gave conditions stating that if he left the post of presidency then there will be peace in Syria, President al-Assad said that the last time he spoke to a western leader was before the crisis, and as for the second point, he said "No, they did not propose it directly, no, but whether they propose that directly or indirectly, it is a matter of sovereignty; only the Syrian people will talk about this. Whoever talks about this in the media or in a statement directly or indirectly has no meaning and has no weight in Syria."

On where would he go if he wanted to leave, President al-Assad said "To Syria. I would go from Syria to Syria. This is the only place where we can live. I am not a puppet. I was not made by the West to go to the West or to any other country. I am Syrian, I was made in Syria, I have to live in Syria and die in Syria."

On whether there is any chance for diplomacy or talks at this point or if only the army can resolve the crisis, President al-Assad said "I always believe in diplomacy and I always believe in dialogue even with those who do not understand or believe in it. We have to keep trying. I think that we

will always achieve a partial success. We have to look for this partial success before we achieve the complete success.

"But we have to be realistic. You do not think that only dialogue can make you achieve something because those people who committed these acts are of two kinds: one of them does not believe in dialogue, especially the extremists, and you have the outlaws who have been convicted by the court years ago before the crisis and their natural enemy is the government because they are going to be detained if we have a normal situation in Syria. The other part of them is the people who have been supplied by the outside, and they can only be committed to the governments which paid them the money and supplied them with the armament; they do not have a choice because they do not own their own decision. So, you have to be realistic. And you have the third part of the people whether militants or politicians who can accept the dialogue. That's why we have been in this dialogue for months now even with militants and many of them gave up their armaments and they went back to their normal life."

<http://sana.sy/eng/21/2012/11/11/451662.htm>

- **Syria's opposition chooses president, formally signs coalition deal**

The Syrian opposition on Sunday signed a deal in Doha to establish a national coalition aimed at combating Bashar al-Assad's regime, an AFP journalist witnessed.

The agreement was signed by Sheikh Ahmad Moaz al-Khatib, who is the newly elected president of the coalition, and Georges Sabra, head of the Syrian National Council (SNC), which is the main member of the new coalition.

Khatib, a moderate originally from Damascus who quit Syria three months ago, will lead the National Coalition of Forces of the Syrian Revolution and Opposition, formed after the SNC agreed to the new group.

Prominent dissident Riad Seif, who had tabled an initiative to unite the opposition, and female opposition figure Suhair al-Atassi, were elected as vice presidents of the coalition.

Khatib had served in the past as the imam of the central Umayyad mosque in the Syrian capital before he was banned from leading prayers. He was arrested in 2011 and in 2012 over supporting the uprising before he left the country.

He is seen as an independent opponent without belonging to any political groups, and is not linked to the Muslim Brotherhood or any other Islamist party.

Atassi comes from the central flashpoint city of Homs, and belongs to a family that has been active in the secular opposition. She is not a member of the SNC.

In addition, Mustafa Sabbagh was elected as a secretary general of the coalition.

Meanwhile, the post of a third vice president will remain vacant for a Kurdish figure to be elected. Seif told AFP the post is allocated to the Kurds, who have asked to postpone the vote.

The SNC had come under intense Arab and Western pressure to accept the unity plan amid growing frustration among other groups opposed to President Bashar al-Assad.

The inked agreement stipulates that the bloc will be open to all factions, and will form a provisional government after gaining international recognition.

It will also support the unification of the revolutionary military councils, and will work for the fall of the regime and to dismantle the security organs, while ruling out any dialogue with the Damascus regime.

Former Syrian Prime Minister Riad Hijab who defected in August hailed the agreement as “an advanced step towards toppling the regime.”

Qatar

Meanwhile, Qatar said on Sunday that the new Syrian opposition should be recognized as the only legitimate representative of the Syrian people.

“Trust us that we will strive from now on to have this new body recognised completely by all parties ... as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people,” Reuters reported Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim saying.

He said Qatar would lead discussions at the Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council, and with the United States and European allies, to win the group such recognition.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/12/249032.html>

- **Syria opposition talks intensify as bombs hit army**

BEIRUT, (AFP) - Days of foreign-backed efforts to reorganise Syria's opposition were to come to a head on Saturday, as twin car bombs killed at least 20 soldiers in the south of the country.

Opposition talks in the Qatari capital Doha were to see the Syrian National Council vying to keep its leading role in the face of US- and Arab-backed proposals to form a new government-in-waiting that could win deeper support.

Forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad meanwhile suffered a new blow, as two car bombs tore through an officers' club in the southern city of Daraa, the cradle of Syria's nearly 20-month uprising.

The blasts struck minutes apart in the back garden of the club, killing at least 20 soldiers and possibly many more, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a key watchdog, said.

State news agency SANA reported that two car bomb attacks had hit the city, causing casualties and significant damage, but provided no further details.

In Doha, the SNC -- once regarded as the leading representative of the opposition but now derided in Washington as dominated by out-of-touch exiles -- was due to give its delayed response on Saturday to proposals for a new broader-based body.

The SNC had asked for two postponements while it elected its own new leadership amid strong resistance among some members to what they see as the group's sidelining in the new US-backed structure.

The group chose a Christian, George Sabra, as its new leader in a move seen as a response to criticism that Islamists play too dominant a role, but a major activist network inside Syria, the Local Coordination Committees, announced it was quitting the bloc in protest at its position on the unity talks.

Ahead of Saturday's meeting, the SNC was expected to set out a counterproposal to the plan already agreed by most other opposition groups.

The SNC proposal envisages the formation of a provisional government pending a general congress of the opposition, according to a document seen by AFP.

The existing plan, inspired by leading dissident Riad Seif who is reportedly seen by Washington as a potential new opposition leader, envisages the formation of a transitional government, a military council to oversee rebel groups on the ground and a judiciary to operate in rebel-held areas.

The 10-member transitional government would be elected by a new 60-member umbrella group drawn from civilian activists and rebel fighters inside Syria as well as the exiles who have dominated the SNC.

Back on the ground, Kurdish residents backed by militia took control of two towns in northeastern Syria near the border with Turkey after convincing pro-government forces to leave, the Observatory said.

The region's Hasakeh province has seen heavy fighting between Assad's forces and rebels, with 46 combatants killed in two days as the opposition seized the border town of Ras al-Ain on Friday.

The Kurds took control of the towns of Derbassiye and Tall Tamr late on Friday, the Observatory said.

They were backed by militia from the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which has links with Turkey's rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), it said.

The residents and militiamen surrounded government and security offices in both towns and convinced pro-government forces to abandon their posts, said the Britain-based Observatory, which relies on a network of activists and residents on the ground.

It said the residents had feared the same kind of violence that saw 9,000 Syrians flee to Turkey in 24 hours in the face of the fighting in Ras al-Ain.

Government forces now control just two major cities in the province, the capital Hasakeh and the far northeastern border town of Qamishli, the Observatory said.

Residents backed by militia also control some Kurdish majority areas of northwestern Syria.

Following Friday's exodus into Turkey, the United Nations warned that the total number of refugees from the conflict would likely hit 700,000 and that those in need of emergency aid in Syria would rise to more than four million early next year.

The Observatory says more than 37,000 people have died since the uprising against Assad erupted in March 2011, first as a protest movement and then as an armed rebellion.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=31757>

- **Syria's New Ambassador to Iran Sworn in before President al-Assad**

DAMASCUS, (SANA) – Before President Bashar al-Assad, Dr. Adnan Mahmoud on Sunday sworn in as Syria's Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Afterwards, the President received Dr. Mahmoud and provided him with his directives, wishing him success in his duties.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign and Expatriates Minister Walid al-Moallem.

<http://sana.sy/eng/21/2012/11/11/451864.htm>

4. ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- **Israeli army fires 'warning shots' at Syria**

PM warns of Golan retaliation after mortar round lands at Israeli army post, as violence rages on Syrian-Turkish border.

The Israeli army has fired what it called "warning shots" into Syria after a mortar round landed inside an army post in the



Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, in the first Israeli fire directed at the Syrian military since 1973.

The army warned in a statement that "fire emanating from Syria into Israel will not be tolerated and shall be responded to with severity."

An Israeli security source said the military fired a single Tamuz anti-tank missile, a weapon known for being highly accurate, in the direction of a Syrian army mortar crew.

"We shot toward them, but deliberately missed," Israeli military sources told the AFP news agency.

The Syrian troops had launched a shell which overshot the Golan disengagement fence, exploding near a Jewish town without causing casualties.

The army said it had filed a complaint with United Nations forces operating in the area. There was no immediate comment from the 1,200-strong United Nations Disengagement Observer Force which has patrolled the Golan since 1974.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, speaking in Jerusalem, warned that Israel would retaliate to any more cross-border fire.

"We are closely monitoring what is happening on our border with Syria and there too we are ready for any development," he told his ministers at the beginning of the weekly cabinet meeting.

Series of Golan exchanges

Sunday's cross-border fire was the latest in a string of incidents in which the fighting in Syria's ongoing bloodshed has spilled across the ceasefire line.

More than 37,000 people have lost their lives since the uprising against Syrian President Bashar Assad's rule erupted in March last year, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

On Thursday, three stray mortar rounds from Syria hit the Golan, which Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed in 1981 in a move never recognised by the international community.

And on Monday, an Israeli military vehicle patrolling the buffer zone was hit by gunfire, with the army saying it was caused by "stray bullets" from Syria.

No one was wounded, but the incident prompted an Israeli complaint to the United Nations Security Council in which it described the gunfire as a "grave violation" of a 1974 agreement on security in the buffer zone.

Two days earlier, three Syrian tanks entered Bir Ajam village, five kilometres southeast of Quneitra, in the demilitarised zone, sparking another Israeli complaint to the UN.

Mortar rounds from Syria have landed inside the Golan at least three times over the past ten days.

Turkish border clashes

Meanwhile, Syrian helicopters and artillery have bombarded the Ras al-Ain area near the border with Turkey, days after Free Syrian Army rebels captured it during an advance into the northeast, activists said.

Helicopters fired rockets at a grain storage area near the village of Tal Halaf and shells hit the border crossing in the northeastern oil-producing province of Hasaka, home to a large number of Syrian Kurds.

Syrian warplanes also launched air strikes on the eastern town of Abu Kamal near the Iraqi border and pounded rebel lines near Damascus and in the northern city of Aleppo, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an activist group, said.

Two civilians were reportedly killed in air raids on Abu Kamal, while several districts of Deir Ezzor city were shelled by tanks.

The Observatory also reported clashes between President Bashar al-Assad's forces and rebels during the night in the town of Harasta on the northeastern outskirts of Damascus.

The Local Co-ordination Committees, a network of opposition activists on the ground, meanwhile, reported heavy shelling overnight by regime forces on rebel areas southwest of the capital and in the town of Yabrud to the north.

In the northern city of Aleppo, where fighting between rebels and government troops has raged since mid-July, mortars rained down on the rebel bastions of Shaar in the east, Sukari in the south and Halab al-Jadida in the west, according to the Observatory.

Residents said fierce clashes erupted in the northwest districts of Zahraa and Liramun, where tanks fired on rebel positions, and in the embattled Old City.

The Observatory reported army shelling Sunday of the strategic rebel-held town of Maarat al-Numan, the nearby village of Maarshmisha and Idlib city in the northwest province of Idlib.

The army on Saturday retook a stretch of the Damascus-Aleppo highway in Idlib province used to send its reinforcements to main northern battlefields, but has failed to regain control of Maaret al-Numan.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/20121111121454453745.html>

- **PA's Abbas vows joint Arafat probe and UN bid**

Palestinian Authority chief says he will push for UN membership this month, and will work with Russia on Arafat inquiry.

Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority president, has said in a speech that he is co-ordinating with Russia, and with Swiss and French experts, on the exhumation of late president Yasser Arafat.



"We are currently in co-ordination with the French investigators, the Swiss experts, and also the Russian government to open the tomb," he said in a speech on Sunday marking the eighth anniversary of Arafat's death.

The Palestinian Authority has vowed to unearth Arafat's body partly because of an Al Jazeera documentary that found elevated levels of polonium-210 on the late Palestinian leader's personal effects. If tests on his remains reach the same conclusion, it would offer more conclusive evidence that he was poisoned.

But there have been doubts that the PA will follow through. Nasser al-Kudwa, Arafat's nephew, this week repeated his "opposition in principle" to an exhumation, "primarily because samples collected after eight years may not be clinically exploitable."

"We hope for new facts that we can tell our people and the public," Abbas said, adding that the investigation was "bigger and more important" than the "media uproar" created by the documentary.

Abbas also promised that the PA will submit a bid to the General Assembly later this month for non-state membership at the United Nations.

"We're going to the United Nations in November 2012, not 2013, or 2014," he said.

The Israeli government is frantically trying to round up "no" votes to avert the Palestinian bid for recognition, and has also threatened to suspend the hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes and customs duties that it collects on behalf of the PA and transfers to the authority.

The United States opposes the Palestinian bid, and vowed to veto a similar measure last year; Washington insists that a Palestinian state will come only through negotiations. Abbas criticised that argument in his speech on Sunday.

"Some powers are trying to tell us that the two-state solution doesn't come from the UN but through negotiations," he said. "Negotiations are crucial. But to get UN recognition is also key."

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/2012111110652794677.html>

- **Israel 'prepared to escalate' in Gaza dispute**

Prime minister says "...Israel will not sit idly by" after surge of salvos by Hamas and other Palestinian factions.

Israeli tank shells have killed at least five Palestinians and wounded 30 in the Gaza Strip after an apparent attack on an Israeli army patrol in the border area, Palestinian medics and local witnesses said.

The casualty toll in Saturday's violence was one of the highest in a single incident in Gaza in recent months. At least five of the injured, some of them children, are in critical condition, medical sources said.

There were reports early Sunday morning that Palestinian militants had fired rockets into Israel in retaliation, with at least six landing in towns near the Gaza Strip. Israeli media reported four people lightly injured.

Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, threatened further retaliation on Sunday morning if the rocket fire continues.

"The world must realise that Israel won't sit by idly in the face of attempts to attack us. We are prepared to escalate our actions," he said at the start of his weekly cabinet meeting.

Residents said a crowded mourning tent in the Shijaia neighbourhood near Gaza City was full of people paying respects to a bereaved family man when a shell struck.

Ambulances, private vehicles and motorbikes rushed the wounded to hospital, eyewitnesses said. Among those killed was an 18-year-old man.

"The occupation's targeting of civilians was a grave escalation that must not pass in silence," Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said.

"Resistance must be reinforced in order to block the aggression."

Border clashes

The Israeli army opened fire with tank shells hitting an urban area east of Gaza City after Palestinian fighters fired anti-tank missiles at an Israeli border patrol, according to Israeli sources.

The Israeli army confirmed that troops had been targeted by an anti-tank missile along the border.

"An anti-tank rocket was fired at Israeli soldiers during a routine patrol along northern Gaza. They responded to the fire," a spokeswoman said.

Military sources said four soldiers were wounded, two of them seriously, while army radio said the jeep was blown up. The military did not immediately confirm either report.

The attack was claimed by the PFLP's armed wing in a statement, which said its fighters had fired two anti-tank rockets at Israeli troops.

In a separate incident at another location, one person was wounded in an Israeli air strike in the town of Khan Younis.

'Further military response'

The clashes took place during a period of increased tension along the Israel-Gaza frontier.

On Thursday, an Israeli soldier was wounded east of Khan Yunis when a tunnel packed with explosives was detonated in an attack claimed by Hamas's armed wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, hours after a Palestinian teenager was shot dead by troops in the same area.

The armed wing of the Popular Resistance Committees in Gaza released a statement vowing that "the Zionist enemy will pay a high price for this crime against Gaza".

And Islamic Jihad also issued a warning, saying: "Every aggression against the Palestinian people will be followed by a response from the resistance."

An Egypt-brokered ceasefire went into force in the border zone on October 24 after 72 hours of bloodshed in which air strikes killed eight Palestinian fighters and armed groups fired more than 100 rockets at Israel, wounding three people.

The Gaza Strip, a coastal territory crowded with more than 1.5 million people, many of them refugees, has been under siege by Israel since 2007 after Hamas took over power from Fatah.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/2012111015281390679.html>

5. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **‘Destroy the idols,’ Egyptian jihadist calls on removal of Sphinx, Pyramids**

An Egyptian jihad leader, with self-professed links to the Taliban, called for the “destruction of the Sphinx and the Giza Pyramids in Egypt,” drawing ties between the Egyptian relics and Buddha statues, local media reported this week.



Murgan Salem al-Gohary, an Islamist

leader twice-sentenced under former President Hosni Mubarak for advocating violence, called on Muslims to remove such “idols.”

“All Muslims are charged with applying the teachings of Islam to remove such idols, as we did in Afghanistan when we destroyed the Buddha statues,” he said on Saturday during a television interview on an Egyptian private channel, widely watched by Egyptian and Arab audiences.

“God ordered Prophet Mohamed to destroy idols,” he added. “When I was with the Taliban we destroyed the statue of Buddha, something the government failed to do.”

His comments came a day after thousands of ultraconservative Islamists gathered in Tahrir Square to call for the strict application of Sharia law in the new constitution.

But in retaliation to Gohary's remarks, the vice president of Tunisia's Ennahda party, Sheikh Abdel Fattah Moro, called the live program and told Gohary that famous historic military commander Amr ibn al-Aas did not destroy statues when he conquered Egypt.

"So who are you to do it?" he wondered. "The Prophet destroyed the idols because people worshiped them, but the Sphinx and the Pyramids are not worshiped."

Gohary, 50, is well-known in Egypt for his advocacy of violence, Egypt Independent reported.

"He was sentenced twice, one of the two sentences being life imprisonment. He subsequently fled Egypt to Afghanistan, where he was badly injured in the American invasion. In 2007, he traveled from Pakistan to Syria, which then handed him over to Egypt. After Mubarak's fall in early 2011, he was released from prison by a judicial ruling," the newspaper added.

In recent months, fears have surfaced that the ultra-conservative Salafi political powers may soon wish to debate new guidelines over Egyptian antiquities.

Islamists have swept the recent presidential and parliamentary elections in the country's post-revolutionary stage, with the Muslim Brotherhood and the ultra-conservative Salafi Islamists rising to political power.

"The fundamental Salafis have demanded to cover Pharaonic statues, because they regard them to be idols," Egyptian author on ancient history Ahmed Osman told Al Arabiya English, explaining that Salafi Muslims follow conservative religious principles which view statues and sculptures as prohibited in Islam.

"But so far the government has done nothing to indicate what is the future of Egyptian antiquities," adds Osman.

Many hope that Egypt's new President Mohammed Mursi will help usher better preservation of Egypt's proud cultural heritage. Egyptian officials have recently announced the country will reveal more of its ancient buried treasures.

The tomb of Queen Meresankh III, the granddaughter of Khufu, of Great Pyramid fame, is set to be opened to tourists later this year, with the last resting places of five high priests also slated to be put on show.

Officials are also believed to be reopening the underground Serapeum temple at Sakkara, to the south of Cairo.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/12/249092.html?PHPSESSID=cf5td5q1ic46p7bieng52icmi3>

- **ECOWAS agrees to Mali intervention force**

West African leaders at an emergency summit have agreed on a 3,300-strong force to wrest control of northern Mali from

Islamist fighters, as fears grow over risks they pose to the region and beyond.

"We foresee 3,300 soldiers for a timeframe of one year," Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara, the current ECOWAS chairman, told journalists on Sunday after the summit.

The troops would come primarily from ECOWAS, but possibly from countries outside the bloc as well, he said.

The summit in the Nigerian capital Abuja was aimed at setting out a blueprint for military force in Mali's north that would be transferred to the UN Security Council via the African Union.

Discussions also involved the potential training of 5,000 Malian troops, according to Ouattara.

Political crisis

Ouattara said he hoped UN Security Council approval could come in late November or early December, which would allow the force to be put in place days afterward.

"We have countries that are offering battalions, others companies," he said.

ECOWAS countries he named were Nigeria, Senegal, Niger, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Togo.

From outside of ECOWAS, "Chad could also participate. We have had contacts with other countries - Mauritania, South Africa."

The summit's final communique stressed that dialogue remained "the preferred option in the resolution of the political crisis in Mali."

"However, regarding the security situation, recourse to force may be indispensable in order to dismantle terrorist and transnational criminal networks that pose a threat to international peace and security," it said.

An ECOWAS source had said earlier that regional military chiefs were proposing a total of 5,500 troops, with some 3,200 from the West African bloc and the rest from elsewhere.

It was not clear whether heads of state had rejected the proposal or if the bloc would continue efforts to reach that level.

'Concretise their commitments'

Algeria, seen as important to any military operation, has been hesitant to get involved, preferring a negotiated solution.

While not a member of ECOWAS, Algeria is viewed as key due to its superior military capabilities, intelligence services and experience battling Islamist extremism, along with the long border it shares with Mali.

Representatives from countries outside ECOWAS were invited to Sunday's summit, including from Mauritania and Algeria, as well as South Africa and Morocco, which currently hold seats on the UN Security Council. Libya and Chad were also represented.

The final communique urged "member states to concretise their commitments to provide military and logistical contributions to the ECOWAS military efforts."

ECOWAS Commission President Kadre Desire Ouedraogo has said the bloc should pursue a dual approach of dialogue and military pressure.

The UN special envoy for the Sahel, Romano Prodi, a former prime minister of Italy and ex-president of the European Commission, has said every effort would be made to avoid military intervention.

However, some analysts have questioned whether a negotiated solution is possible with Islamists intent on establishing a theocratic state.

Mali rapidly imploded after a coup in Bamako in March allowed Tuareg desert nomads, who had relaunched a decades-old rebellion for independence, to seize the main towns in the north with the help of Islamist allies.

The secular separatists were quickly sidelined by the Islamists, who had little interest in their aspirations for an independent homeland and set about implementing their version of strict sharia law, meting out punishments including stonings and destroying World Heritage shrines.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/11/20121111192710305682.html>

- **Former Libyan prime minister to be tried**

Libya's former prime minister will be put on trial for crimes he allegedly committed during the rule of Muammar Gaddafi.

Al-Baghdadi al-Mahmoudi was extradited from Tunisia, which he fled to in September 2011 after the fall of Tripoli to rebel forces.



"Al-Baghdadi al-Mahmoudi will appear tomorrow [Monday] on the occasion of a first case" against him, Taha Baara, the public prosecutor's spokesman, said in Tripoli on Sunday, adding that Mahmoudi faces charges of "prejudicial acts against the security of the state".

Baara said on Sunday that al-Mahmoudi is facing charges regarding his role in a number of cases during the civil war, as well as undermining the country's security.

Rights groups objected to his extradition on June 24, saying that he could face the death penalty and in July, Mahmoudi protested his innocence from his prison cell in the Libyan.

"I am not guilty, not guilty, not guilty," he said during a visit to the prison organised by the authorities in an apparent bid to quash rumours he had been tortured.

"I am ready to be tried by the Libyan people. I am sure of myself and of my innocence," he said at the time.

Along with Saif al-Islam, Gaddafi's most prominent son, Mahmoudi is one of the few remaining keepers of the many state secrets under Gaddafi, who was killed on October 20 last year.

A physician by training, Mahmoudi was loyal to Gaddafi until the end, serving as premier from 2006 up to the final days of his regime.

Missile disposal

Elsewhere in Libya, the Libyan air force announced on Sunday that it would begin dismantling a stockpile of outdated surface-to-air missiles which had been positioned around the country by the former leader.

Military engineers have started removing potentially toxic fuel from the Russian-made weapons, which were brought to Libya from the Soviet Union in 1972.

"The air force chief of staff officially announces the beginning of a plan to remove and clean all the affected areas," air force chief of staff, Colonel Gumma al-Abanny said.

Gaddafi scattered hundreds of SA-2 missiles across Libyan cities.

While NATO forces destroyed nearly 80 per cent of these in 2011, leakage of toxic gas from the remaining weapons is still a concern.

As well as outdated missiles, Libya's new rulers have also been struggling to rid the streets of smaller weapons, which have been in plentiful supply since last year's war.

In a recent drive, the government set up collection points in major cities, allowing Libyans to hand in small firearms, explosives and even rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/11/20121112244246422.html>

- **EU diplomat pledges increased European investment in Egypt**

European Union foreign ministers will begin three days of meetings with Egyptian officials on Monday, under the chairmanship of the EU High Commissioner for Foreign and Security Affairs, Catherine Ashton, according to the head of the EU delegation to Egypt.

At a press conference in Cairo on Wednesday, delegation head James Moran said the meetings would be the most important for Egyptian-European relations since the 25 January revolution.

“There is much to be done now since Egypt is still in transition and trying to write a new constitution,” he said. “The EU will do all it can to support Egypt’s economy and civil society.”

Moran said 80 percent of all direct investments in Egypt come from the EU.

“We are therefore interested in increasing investments, creating more jobs and contributing to the success of the democratic process in Egypt,” he said.

He also said the EU will do its best to protect women in Egypt and prevent harassment, praising Egyptian youth for protecting women in the streets. “We have a four-million-euro program for the protection of women's rights,” he said.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/eu-diplomat-pledges-increased-european-investment-egypt>

- **Pentagon official arrives in Cairo to discuss Sinai security**

The US assistant defense secretary for international security affairs arrived in Cairo Sunday, leading a delegation on a four-day visit to discuss bilateral cooperation, specifically in Sinai security, with Egyptian officials.



Derek Chollet, the assistant defense secretary, is expected to discuss ways the US can help the Egyptian government battle militant groups in Sinai, secure its border with Israel and prevent weapons smuggling.

Disorder has spread in Sinai since autocratic President Hosni Mubarak was ousted in a popular uprising early last year, with Islamist militants stepping up attacks on security forces and the Israeli border. Egypt's newly elected president, former Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsy, has pledged to restore security in the poor desert region.

Earlier this month, three policemen were killed by militants in a drive-by shooting in North Sinai. That incident came amid the largest security crackdown Sinai has seen in decades, as officials have hunted the perpetrators of another ambush that killed 16 border guards on 5 August.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/pentagon-official-arrives-cairo-discuss-sinai-security>

6. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Sectarian clashes in Lebanon turn deadly**

Four people killed in gun battle in Sidon between armed Shia group Hezbollah and supporters of a Salafist group.

Shooting between Sunni and Shia Muslim fighters near the Ein el-Helweh Palestinian

refugee camp in southern Lebanon has left at least four people killed and seven others wounded, security officials say.



The officials said the clashes on Sunday between followers of Salafi leader, Ahmad al-Assir, and members of the armed Shia group Hezbollah broke out after Shia religious banners for Ashoura were not removed in the port city of Sidon.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said al-Assir's bodyguard was killed in Sunday's shooting, and the wounded included a Hezbollah commander.

Assir had given an ultimatum to Hezbollah supporters to take down all posters promoting the Shia group, but that they refused.

Supporters of Assir then removed a poster of Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah chief who is a staunch ally of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, and clashes ensued.

Al Jazeera's Rula Amin, reporting from Beirut, said that the "deadline" was today for removing those posters.

"Hezbollah took down most of the banners and were not interested in a clash," she said. "Gunfire erupted but it's hard to pin down who started firing."

She said the Lebanese army had already deployed in the mostly Sunni city, which has little Hezbollah presence but is considered the gateway to southern Lebanon.

Mikati calls for calm

Unknown before the outbreak of the uprising in neighbouring Syria last year, Assir rose to prominence for his outspoken opposition to the Assad regime and his calls for disarming Hezbollah, the strongest military force in the country.

In response to Sunday's killings, Najib Mikati, Lebanese prime minister, called an emergency meeting with Marwan Charbel, interior minister, and the regional security council for southern Lebanon.

Lebanon's PM Mikati has requested the army and security agencies to arrest those behind the violence [Reuters] Afterwards, Mikati said he had requested the army and security agencies to take prompt measures to bring the situation under control and arrest those behind the violence.

"We call on everyone to remain calm and execute restraint at this critical and delicate juncture," Mikati said.

Lebanon's opposition coalition has accused Mikati, a prominent Sunni figure, of complacency in leading a Hezbollah-controlled government.

The Syrian revolt has deepened political and religious divisions in Lebanon, which is split between supporters and opponents of the Damascus regime dominated by Alawis.

Lebanon and Syria share similar sectarian strains. Most of Lebanon's Sunnis have backed Syria's mainly Sunni rebels, while Lebanese Shia tend to back Assad.

Sectarian tensions have been rising in Lebanon in connection with the civil war in neighbouring Syria and last month's assassination of a senior anti-Syrian intelligence official.

The killing of Brigadier General Wissam al-Hassan, a Sunni Muslim, sparked sectarian violence that killed at least 13 people.

Earlier this year, al-Assir and his supporters set up tents blocking a main road in Sidon for 35 days as part of an ongoing sit-in protesting the fact that Iran-backed Hezbollah maintains a formidable weapons arsenal.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/20121111152812771759.html>

- **Jordan's ex-spy chief given 13-year sentence**

Mohammad al-Dahabi found guilty of embezzlement and abuse of office and fined \$30m.

Jordan's former intelligence chief has been given a 13-year prison sentence and a fine of \$30m after being convicted of corruption.



Mohammad al-Dahabi was found guilty on Sunday of charges including embezzlement, money laundering, and abuse of office.

The presiding judge, Nashaat Akhras, also demanded in court that Dahabi pay \$29.6m in fines to the state, and return money he allegedly laundered and embezzled during his 2005-2008 tenure as the head of Jordanian intelligence.

The judge said the total amount is estimated at \$34m.

"You deserve the harshest punishment for being a traitor to the people who trusted you with a government position and state funds," Akhras told the ex-official.

Dahabi was arrested in February, when inspectors from the Central Bank of Jordan suspected transactions worth millions of dollars had gone through his bank account.

This rare case against such a high-profile official was meant to show Jordan's seriousness in efforts to tackle graft and corruption, a demand voiced in recent street protests.

Al Jazeera's Nisreen El-Shamayleh, reporting from the capital Amman, says: "This is a significant trial. It shows the government is serious about fighting corruption.. because of the massive protests, the King and [the] government have tried hard in fighting corruption."

In 2003, Jordan sentenced another ex-intelligence chief to eight years in jail for forgery of state documents and abuse of office. Sameeh al-Batikhi was released after serving his prison term.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/2012111173524308960.html>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Kuwaitis protest voting changes ahead of poll**

Thousands take to streets in protest of law that allows them to pick only one candidate rather than four in Dec 1 poll.

Tens of thousands have taken to the streets of Kuwait City in a peaceful opposition-led rally against new voting rules.



Sunday's protests at a square opposite the parliament come ahead of elections on December 1.

The enthusiastic crowds chanted "the people want the repeal of the law," ordered by Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah to change the voting system ahead of the second parliamentary poll this year.

"The law aims at preventing Kuwaiti popular participation in governance... and to establish autocratic rule and exploit the country's resources," Khaled al-Sultan, former MP, told cheering protesters.

Recent demonstrations against the electoral changes, ordered by Kuwait's ruler last month, have led to clashes between protesters and police as marches spread out of the areas usually designated for rallies.

Hundreds of Kuwaiti men streamed into the square where opposition leaders gave speeches from a stage to protesters, many sitting on carpets drinking tea as others sang Kuwaiti songs.

Hundreds of women sat in a separate area of the audience.

Helicopters circled overhead and police lined the streets around the square which were clogged with traffic.

Organisers estimated the gathering at around 200,000 people, which would be the largest rally in Kuwait's history, but onlookers said the number was around 50,000.

Comprised of tribal and liberal legislators, as well as youth groups, the opposition says the new voting rules are an attempt to skew the parliamentary election in favour of pro-government candidates.

"The amendment of the law is a breach of the constitution... Today, we are here to defend our constitution," Mishari al-Ossaimi, former MP said.

Sunday also marked the 50th anniversary of Kuwait becoming the first Arab state in the Gulf to issue a constitution in November 1962.

Opposition politicians held a majority in the last parliament which was fraught with legislative deadlock and dissolved by a court ruling in June.

One candidate

Under the new rules, each voter chooses only one candidate instead of four, a move the opposition says will prevent its candidates winning the majority they had in the last vote.

They say the four vote system better enabled candidates to form political allegiances during the election campaign by recommending supporters cast additional ballots for their allies.

Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, the 83-year-old emir who has led the country since 2006, has said the new rules are aimed at preserving national unity and warned last week there would be no leniency for threats to national security.

Although Kuwait, an OPEC member and United States ally, allows more dissent than most other Gulf states, in recent weeks it has begun to emphasise the limits of its tolerance and has arrested small groups of people at the protests.

Police used teargas and smoke bombs to disperse thousands of Kuwaitis protesting beside a motorway on November 4.

In October, two demonstrations were also disbanded by police.

"We have to be aware of the growing dangers in the region and must be aware that this shrapnel is falling around us," Sheikh Sabah said on Saturday in a speech marking the fiftieth anniversary of Kuwait's constitution, published by state news agency KUNA.

He said Kuwaitis should cast their ballot as a "national duty" and called for unity.

There are 397 candidates for the 50-seat parliament according to the election affairs directorate, which closed registrations on Friday.

Kuwait's opposition has urged a boycott of the election to select the country's fifth parliament in six years.

Some protesters are also calling for a government that is elected rather than appointed by the al-Sabah family, which has ruled Kuwait for more than 250 years.

They also want to see the creation of political parties, which are currently banned, meaning legislators form blocs based on policy and family ties.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/20121111175748350987.html>

- **Bahrain deploys paramilitaries to patrol city**

Government sends National Guard to patrol "strategic locations" that have been scenes of arson attacks and clashes.

Bahrain's paramilitary National Guard has been deployed into new areas in an apparent sign that authorities are stepping up efforts to quell political unrest.

A government statement said on Saturday the Guard, a force separate from the regular military, will be patrolling "strategic locations" that have been scenes of arson attacks and clashes.

Wider use of the Guard could signal a tougher strategy by Bahrain's Sunni embattled monarchy as riot police struggle to contain the Shia majority's 21-month demands for political reform.

Hadi al-Musawi, a spokesman for the main opposition group Al Wafaq, said Guard troops were seen setting up in Sitra, a centre of the unrest.

Previously, Guard forces have been used mainly at key sites in the capital Manama, including the landmark square that was the centre of the protests in their first weeks.

Meanwhile, heavy clashes erupted on Saturday after the funeral of a teenager killed in a traffic incident during a clampdown on marchers the day before.

Opposition groups claim the boy was hit by a car while fleeing security forces, but officials say the incident had no connection to the police action.

More than 55 people have died in unrest in Bahrain, which is home to the US Navy's 5th Fleet.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/2012111154646471496.html>

- **Kuwait releases royals detained over tweets**

Two members of ruling Al-Sabah family were arrested after writing tweets sympathetic to opposition groups.

Kuwait has released two members of the Al-Sabah ruling family after holding them for two days allegedly over tweets deemed critical of the government.



Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Sabah was released late on Friday, while Sheikh Nawaf Malek Al-Sabah was freed on Saturday afternoon.

"I asked them (police) to refer me to the public prosecution to defend myself from the horrifying accusations, but they insisted that I sign a pledge and they released me," Sheikh Abdullah said on Twitter.

Sheikh Nawaf's lawyer Khaled al-Suwaifan said on Saturday that his client was released but provided no details.

Sheikh Abdullah said he was questioned by the secret service police on accusations of insulting Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and instigating against the regime.

He is the grandson of the emir's half-brother, the late Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The two young royals have written tweets sympathetic to the Kuwaiti opposition, which has been organising protests against an amendment to the electoral law seen as a ploy to produce a pro-government parliament in a snap December 1 general election.

Young royal Sheikh Meshaal al-Malek Al-Sabah was detained for a few days in July for expressing political views deemed offensive.

Polls boycotted

Meanwhile, upcoming polls closed on Friday amid a total boycott by the opposition in protest over amendment of the disputed electoral law.

"Not a single opposition member has registered. This is a major success for the opponents," said Talal al-Kashti, director of Etijahat Studies Center, a private think-tank on local politics, especially elections.

As many as 387 hopefuls, including 15 women, filed nomination papers for the December 1 snap polls during the 10-day registration period, but 250 of them registered in the final two days amid opposition allegations of corruption.

Only 10 members of the 50-seat parliament elected in February registered.

The house was scrapped in a historical ruling by the constitutional court on June 20 which set the stage for the current political crisis.

"The next parliament will be entirely pro-government, toothless and with no real powers," Kashti said.

The opposition said it is boycotting the polls because the amended electoral law, claiming it allows the government to influence the outcome of the results and elect a rubber stamp parliament.

Under the previous law, Kuwaiti voters were able to choose up to four candidates, but that has now been reduced to only one.

The opposition vowed to continue its campaign against the election.

"After lower the curtain on the candidates registration play, its time for the (voting) boycott to bring the downfall of the illegitimate parliament," opposition figure and former Islamist MP Waleed al-Tabtabai said on Twitter.

The opposition plans to stage a large rally on Sunday to mark the 50th anniversary of the constitution and to protest against the electoral law.

More than 150 protesters and 24 police have been slightly injured at three demonstrations since October 21.

The upcoming election is the second this year and the fifth since mid-2006 as the oil-rich Gulf state has been rocked by ongoing political crises between parliament and the government led by the Al-Sabah ruling family.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/20121110144110705907.html>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Soldier dies in Afghanistan 'insider attack'**

UK defence ministry confirms death in Helmand province while 11 Afghan civilians lose their lives in land mine blasts.

An armed man wearing an Afghan army uniform has shot and killed a member of the US-led multinational forces fighting in Afghanistan.

Sunday's incident was the latest in a spate of so-called insider attacks that are fracturing the trust between NATO and Afghan forces.

Separately, officials said 11 Afghan civilians were killed by land mines on Sunday in explosions in the east and south.

The UK defence ministry confirmed that the insider attack had claimed the life of a British soldier from The Royal Scots Borderers, 1st Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

It said the soldier was shot by an individual wearing an Afghan army uniform at his base in the Nad-e Ali district of the southern Helmand province.

The defence ministry did not name the soldier but said his next of kin have been informed.

Mohammad Zarak, spokesman for Helmand's governor, said the shooting took place in Nad-e Ali district after an argument between an Afghan soldier and coalition soldiers.

Insider attacks

Coalition figures show at least 60 foreign soldiers have been killed so far this year and others have been wounded in about 45 insider attacks, where members of the Afghan security forces or fighters dressed in their uniforms turn their guns on US and allied troops.

The insider attacks have raised questions about how effectively the allied forces can train the Afghans to take over security of their own country in 2014 and beyond.

Foreign forces are due to turn over security responsibility to the local military by the end of 2014.

In other developments, a roadside bomb killed three men, two women and a baby in Khost province of eastern Afghanistan, Youqib Khan, deputy provincial police chief, said.

He said their vehicle hit the bomb as they were returning from a hospital.

Three other civilians were killed when their vehicle detonated a land mine on the road between Helmand and Kandahar provinces, a government statement said.

Also in the south, two civilians who were walking were killed by a land mine in Khakrez district of Kandahar, Ahmad Jawed Faisal, a spokesman for the provincial governor, said.

The UN says homemade bombs continue to be the weapons that kill the most civilians in the war.
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/11/2012111215024153369.html>

This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Sercan DOĞAN and **ORSAM Assistant Ebru DEMİR**. 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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