



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

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1. IRAQ

- **Maliki confirms the need to continue the implementation of the strategic framework agreement between Iraq and the United States.**

Baghdad / NINA /-- Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, confirmed the need to continue the implementation of the strategic framework agreement signed between Iraq and the United States, especially in the field of military cooperation and armaments.

Maliki said during receiving the commander of U.S. Central Forces Gen. James Mattis, and the accompanying delegation that Iraq needs defensive weapons to protect its sovereignty , independence and wealth.

For his part, General Mattis stressed the United States determination to meet Iraq's needs in defense, saying that Iraq needs has a definite nature , especially as is in an inflammable region, stressing on taking into account the time factor

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

- **Iraq takes part in the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.**

Baghdad / NINA /-- Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari arrived to Djibouti to participate in the 39th session for the ministerial meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to be held for the period 15- 17 November under the slogan (solidarity for sustainable development).

A statement by the Foreign Ministry said : " the draft agenda of the session includes a number of common concern issues of the Islamic countries , including Palestine file and situation in Syria , combating terrorism .problem of refugees in the Islamic world , the UN reform , fighting against Islamophobia , elimination of hatred and insulting to Islam as well as combating defamation of religions.

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

2. IRAN

- **U.N.'s nuclear report on Iran may not be all bad news for West**

VIENNA, (Reuters) - Iran is believed to have increased the number of centrifuges in an underground nuclear plant by nearly a third in three months, diplomats say, underlining the tough task facing major powers pressing Tehran to curb its atomic activity.

But despite a major expansion of its capacity to refine uranium at the Fordow facility, buried deep inside a mountain, Iran does not appear to have switched on its newly installed enrichment centrifuges yet, although this could happen soon, they said.

A U.N. report on Iran's nuclear programme is also likely to show this week that it continues to use some of its most sensitive material for reactor fuel, at least temporarily making it unavailable for any quick atom bomb bid.

This could help in "buying more time for dialogue", a Western diplomat said, referring to international efforts to seek a diplomatic solution to the decade-old dispute and avert the threat of a new Middle East war.

It may also explain why Israel, assumed to be the region's only nuclear-armed state, recently signalled that an attack on the Islamic Republic's nuclear sites was not imminent, after months of speculation that it might be.

But another Western envoy said the fact that Iran was converting some of its higher-grade uranium gas, a short technical step from weapons-grade material, into oxide powder for fuel should not distract from its bigger nuclear defiance.

"They haven't addressed the (U.N. nuclear agency's) questions, they haven't suspended their enrichment as required by the U.N. Security Council, so anything else they are doing around the margin is beside the point," this diplomat said.

The conversion of uranium refined to a fissile concentration of 20 percent into fuel is also reversible as long as it has not been introduced into a working reactor, although it would take a few months to turn it back into gas form, security experts say.

Tehran denies U.S. and Israeli allegations that it is seeking a nuclear weapons capability, saying its programme is entirely peaceful. But U.N. inspectors suspect past, and possibly ongoing, military-related nuclear work.

IRAN SENDING SIGNAL?

The question of when and how quickly Iran might be able to assemble a nuclear weapon if it chose to do so is hotly debated in the West because it could influence any decision by Israel to launch military strikes against the country.

The U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is expected to submit its next quarterly Iran report to member states on Friday, 10 days after U.S. President Barack Obama's re-election raised hope of a revival of diplomacy on the issue.

It is expected to show a defiant Iran pressing ahead with expanding its controversial nuclear programme, despite harsh Western sanctions targeting its vital oil sector, and continuing to sanitise a military site the IAEA wants to visit.

Iran's rial has slid against the U.S. dollar over the past year as sanctions on oil exports have slashed dollar-denominated sales, but experts say there is no sign as yet that this has changed the leadership's position on the nuclear programme.

At talks in Tehran next month, the Vienna-based IAEA will make a new attempt to persuade Iran to let it resume a long-stalled investigation into suspicions that it may have worked on developing a nuclear-armed missile.

At Fordow, located under rock and soil to protect it against any enemy attacks, diplomats say Iran has now put in place the nearly 2,800 centrifuges it was built for, up from about 2,140 in the previous IAEA report issued in late August.

It is unclear whether the necessary piping and other infrastructure have been completed for all of them. It is also not known why Iran may be holding back from expanding output there, even though the equipment for doing that is installed.

"It is politically driven but to what end is still a big mystery," a third diplomat in the Austrian capital said. "It is not necessarily a sign that there is a solution to be reached."

Iran started producing uranium enriched to 20 percent fissile purity at Fordow, compared with the 3.5 percent level needed for nuclear energy plants, in late 2011 and has been operating 700 centrifuges there since January this year.

World powers want Iran to halt the 20 percent enrichment, close down Fordow and ship out its stockpile of the material.

Iran has signalled it may be ready to suspend the higher-grade enrichment but says sanctions imposed on the major oil producer must be lifted in return, a demand the West rejects.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=31815>

3. SYRIA

- **Syrian rebels 'take army post' near Turkey**

At least 18 government troops killed in clashes near rebel-held town of Ras al-Ain, activists say.

Syrian rebels have taken control over a military post near Syria's northeastern border with Turkey after killing at least 18 government soldiers in clashes, according to an activist group.

The fighting - which also left an unknown number of soldiers wounded - took place on Wednesday near Ras al-Ain, a border town that the opposition fighters seized last week, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The UK-based rights group also said that some soldiers managed to flee the area, which is located in the province of al-Hassake.

Three rebels were killed and more than 10 wounded, according to the group, which relies on a network of activists on the ground.

Meanwhile in Damascus, Syrian warplanes bombed rebel enclaves on Wednesday, in an escalation of the aerial bombardment of districts close to the heart of the capital.

"The planes are firing rockets at the neighbourhoods of Qaboun and Jobar. They are flying high and you can hear the impact of the rockets," opposition activist Yasmine al-Shami told Reuters news agency.

Jobar is a working-class Sunni Muslim district that has been at the forefront of the 20-month uprising against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

Fighter jets also bombed Maaret al-Numan, a northwestern town rebels captured last month, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Syrian opposition headquarter

In a separate development, Syria's new opposition coalition said it will set up its headquarters in Cairo, Egypt's capital, as it lobbies foreign powers for recognition as the war-torn country's legitimate government.

Mouaz al-Khatib, a moderate Sunni Muslim cleric who fled Syria for Cairo in July, was elected on Sunday to head the coalition, the latest attempt to present a united front.

The opposition is under growing pressure to form a body that can rule after Assad as rebels advance on the ground and the country slides further into economic and social chaos.

"The decision has been taken to make Cairo the permanent headquarters for the Syrian opposition coalition to meet and plan ahead," an aide to Khatib told Reuters news agency on condition of anonymity.

US President Barack Obama says he is encouraged that the Syrian opposition has formed a new, more representative leadership council, but he says the US isn't ready to recognise the group as a "government in exile" or to arm it.

Prominent coalition member Walid el-Bunni from the Syrian National Council (SNC) confirmed the decision on Wednesday and said the movement was in talks with the Egyptian government to finalise arrangements for the new headquarters.

Six Arab Gulf countries and France have announced their support for the coalition but it still lacks full recognition from the United States, other European countries and the Arab League.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/20121114151645545785.html>

- **France to discuss ending ban on arming Syria rebels; Russia objects**

France will discuss supplying arms to Syrian opposition forces with its European partners in the coming weeks now that an opposition coalition has been established, Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said on Thursday.



France is wary of militarizing the 20-month-old conflict, but is also wary of leaving areas under opposition control unprotected against bomb attacks, Reuters reported Fabius saying in an interview with RTL radio.

“At the moment there is an embargo on arms, so no weapons are being delivered from Europe. The question will undoubtedly be raised for defensive arms but it’s something we can only do in coordination with the rest of Europe,” Fabius said.

He said Paris was talking to Moscow and United Nations special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi over a solution, as it waited for the Syrian coalition to form a provisional government in the weeks ahead that could open the door to supplying arms.

“We want to avoid going towards militarization. On the other hand we must prevent liberated zones from being destroyed. We must find a fair balance,” Fabius said.

However, Russia on Thursday warned nations backing the Syrian opposition against President Bashar al-Assad that they would violate international law if they started supplying the rebels with weapons.

“Promises are being made from a number of capitals of massive supplies of modern weapons,” foreign ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich told reporters. “Outside help to the opposition waging an armed battle against a legitimate government is a gross violation of fundamental norms of international law.”

Paris on Tuesday became the first European capital to recognize the coalition as sole representative of the Syrian people and said it would look at arming rebels battling President Assad’s forces once a provisional government is formed.

France has thus far ruled out sending weapons, concerned they could get into the hands of radical Islamists, but the coalition is urging European states to allow it access to arms.

President Francois Hollande will also meet George Sabra, the new leader of the Syrian National Council - now a minority player in the wider coalition - in Paris on Saturday, Fabius said.

Britain to hold Syrian 'options' meeting

Meanwhile, Prime Minister David Cameron was to chair a meeting of senior cabinet colleagues on Thursday to discuss Britain's military, humanitarian and diplomatic options in Syria, the BBC reported.

Cameron's deputy Nick Clegg and finance minister George Osborne were expected to attend the meeting along with Foreign Secretary William Hague and Defense Secretary Philip Hammond.

The report said a no-fly zone was among the options that may be discussed as well as supplying anti-aircraft weapons to the rebels fighting forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Cameron visited the Zaatari refugee camp, home to some 36,000 Syrian refugees, in Jordan last week.

Downing Street did not immediately confirm that the meeting was taking place.

There were reports, however, that Britain was already arming or training Syrian rebels.

On Tuesday, the London Daily Star reported that British Special Forces are training rebels to assassinate the Syrian president and his commanders.

Britain and France spearheaded what later became NATO's operation to oust Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi in 2011.

The United States and Britain have both voiced support for the Syrian opposition coalition, which formed in Qatar on Sunday, but have stopped short of declaring it a government-in-exile.

More than 39,000 people have been killed since the uprising against Assad's regime erupted 20 months ago, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights watchdog said on Thursday.

The Free Syrian Army (FSA) on Thursday claimed control of government buildings the northwestern city of Al-Rika and captured 30 Syrian regime soldiers, Syrian Media Network reported.

FSA also claimed control over Assad regime's security area in the eastern city of Abu Kamal.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/15/249785.html>

4. ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- **Gaza returns deadly rocket fire on Israel**

Three Israelis killed by rocket fire on southern town, as wave of violence that has left 13 Palestinians dead continues.

Five Palestinians were killed by Israeli air strikes on Thursday morning, as militants shot around 250 rockets into Israel, killing three Israelis.

The latest violence raised the total number of Gazans killed in 20 hours of Israeli air strikes to 13. At least 120 other residents of the coastal enclave have been injured, according to medics.

In the same period, Gaza rockets killed three Israelis and injured another five in a direct hit on a residential building in the southern town of Kiryat Malahi, said Israeli police.

"We have three killed," spokeswoman Luba Samri told the AFP news agency, saying four other people were also injured in a "direct hit on a house" in the town, 30km north of the Gaza Strip.

The fighting began when Israel assassinated Ahmed al-Jabari, head of Hamas' military wing, with an air strike on his car in Gaza on Wednesday. Jabari's bodyguard and son were also killed in the strike.

Thursday's rocket fire on Kiryat Malahi was claimed by Jabari's group, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, in a statement on its website.

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The world reacts to the air strikes in Gaza

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"Hamas and the terror organisations have chosen to escalate their attacks on the citizens of Israel in recent days," he said after consultations with his security cabinet.

"We will not tolerate a situation in which Israeli citizens are threatened by rocket fire."

Al Jazeera's Nadim Baba, reporting from Gaza, said: "In the last 30 seconds there was another big blast. [The strikes] have been going on all evening.

"It is not just air strikes, but also strikes from Israeli naval ships just off the coast of Gaza."

Baba said the streets of Gaza City on Wednesday evening were "eerily quiet, except for the sound of ambulances".

"The latest from medical sources is that at least seven people have been killed, including two children, and at least 60 people have been wounded, including ten children."

'Gates of hell'

The Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas headed by Jabari, issued a communique saying Israel had "opened the gates of hell on itself", and Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhum said the strike was tantamount to a "declaration of war".

"The occupation committed a dangerous crime and crossed all the red lines, which is considered a declaration of war", he said in a statement.

"The occupation will pay dearly for this and we will make it regret the moment they thought about it."

Hamas said it had fired at least 20 rockets into Israel in retaliation for Jabari's assassination, shortly after the air strike tore his car to pieces.

Mark Regev, spokesperson for the Israeli prime minister's office, told Al Jazeera: "We are continuing to hit Hamas targets, and their missile sites, because we knew they would [be]

responding immediately...Ultimately we did not want this round of fighting, it was forced upon us.

"We will not allow Hamas to terrorise our civilian population. All the options are open.

"Our most important goal is to protect our people. Hamas has deliberately targeted civilians. They deliberately use Gaza civilians as human shields, too."

Rising tensions

The strikes came after five days of rising tensions along the Gaza border which began on Saturday when Palestinian fighters fired an anti-tank rocket at an army jeep, sparking Israeli fire which killed seven.

Ehud Barak, the Israeli defence minister, said the strike was only the beginning of an operation with the goals of strengthening Israel's deterrence, damaging armed groups' rocket-firing capabilities and stamping out attacks on southern Israel.

"Israel doesn't want a war but the Hamas provocation of recent weeks, with recurring, frequent rounds of mortar and rockets fired at southern Israel, an explosive tunnel that was activated...and anti-tank fire at a jeep in Israel, forced us to act sharply and decisively," Barak said.

"We are at the beginning, not end of this action," he said, stressing the need to be "on high alert in Israel and West Bank... It won't be a quick fix.. but we'll reach goals we set for this operation."

He urged regional leaders to act "judiciously and with a cool head to promote stability and return of quiet, and not to be dragged to their deterioration".

The operation prompted widespread condemnation, with Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi recalling Cairo's envoy to Israel and summoning the Israeli ambassador for consultations, his spokesman said.

Following a request from Morsi, Arab League chief Nabil el-Arabi said the organisation was preparing to hold an emergency meeting over the violence.

Britain also urged restraint and Russia said it was "very concerned" about the escalation, while Washington said it was watching developments in Gaza "closely".

Israeli army spokeswoman Avital Leibovich said the operation, code named "Pillar of Defence", had only just begun with the air force hitting "close to 20 targets" used for launching rockets, especially those with a range of 40km, and causing "significant damage".

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/2012111419500140191.html>

- **Gaza conflict adds tension to Palestinian U.N. Bid**

Israel's air strikes on the Gaza Strip have heightened the tensions surrounding the Palestinian bid for observer membership at the United Nations planned for later this month.



The Palestinian U.N. envoy said Wednesday's attack - which killed the top Hamas military commander in the territory - was deliberately timed to torpedo the U.N. vote in two weeks and influence Israel's general election in January.

Israel's U.N. ambassador retorted that events in Gaza had shown the futility of the Palestinian campaign for international recognition.

Ambassador Ron Prosor said “they should change their request from a Non-Member State to Non-Member Terrorist State.”

The United States and Israel are lobbying furiously against the Palestinian bid, which president Mahmud Abbas is scheduled to put to the U.N. General Assembly on Nov. 29.

Abbas has had no control over Gaza since 2007, when the Islamist Hamas seized power from his Fatah faction in a week of street battles, cleaving the Palestinians into hostile rival camps.

The new military strikes on Gaza, which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has threatened to expand, come as the United Nations and many key players warn that time is running out to establish a Palestinian state.

The U.S. and Israeli governments say there can be no Palestinian state without direct peace talks that have been deadlocked for more than two years.

The Palestinians refuse talks while Israel expands its settlements in the occupied territories. Abbas has said, however, that he would return to talks if the U.N. vote is successful.

The United States is talking with Palestinian officials in a bid to at least delay the vote, U.N. diplomats said.

“The Gaza strikes will complicate negotiations around the Palestinian application even more,” one Western official said on condition of anonymity.

The Europeans are pressing Abbas to delay the U.N. move until after Israel’s election and President Barack Obama’s inauguration in January, in order to give the U.S. administration more time to prepare a new peace bid, diplomats said.

“The Palestinians are doing this because they are frustrated. They believe they have nothing to lose going for it now, so they will not change it unless the United States has something to offer,” said one Middle East diplomat.

U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice, who strongly defended Israel’s military strikes at an emergency U.N. Security Council meeting on Wednesday, said rocket attacks by Gaza militants are harming efforts to end the Middle East conflict.

“ Hamas claims to have the best interests of the Palestinian people at heart, yet it continues to engage in violence that does nothing but set back the Palestinian cause,” said Rice, a frontrunner to be the next secretary of state.

The Israeli ambassador meanwhile warned the Security Council meeting that Palestinian success at the United Nations could lead to more violence.

“The false idol of virtual statehood will change nothing on the ground, raising expectations that cannot be met,” he said.

“The state that they envision includes Gaza - that means it includes Hamas. The Palestinian leadership is marching down a road that can only lead to more conflict, instability, and violence.”

Palestinian ambassador Riyad Mansour questioned why Israel is fighting so hard against the U.N. vote if it believes the bid is meaningless, saying Israeli leaders are “dead afraid” of Palestinian admission to the General Assembly.

“I believe part of the timing of the attack by the Israelis on Gaza is trying to divert attention away from our energies in mobilizing the international community” for the U.N. vote, he said.

With U.N. membership potentially allowing a move to join the International Criminal Court and other multilateral bodies, Mansour said recognition “will open so many doors for us, to allow us to defend ourselves in a better way politically, diplomatically and legally.”

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/15/249786.html>

- **Egypt urges U.S. to ‘immediately intervene’ to end ‘Israeli aggression’**

Egypt’s Foreign Minister Mohamed Kamel Amr called on the United States to “immediately intervene” to end “Israeli aggression on Gaza, Reuters reported Thursday.



Amr “requested that the United States immediately intervene to stop Israeli aggression on the Palestinian people in Gaza,” MENA news agency reported, adding that Amr spoke to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton by telephone.

The United States said Wednesday it supported Israel’s right to self-defense and condemned militant rocket attacks on southern Israel.

But U.S. State Department spokesman Mark Toner said in a statement that “we encourage Israel to continue to take every effort to avoid civilian casualties” as it unveiled an operation targeting militant groups in the Palestinian territory.

On Thursday France has also said Israeli has the right to self-defense.

Mursi says attack ‘unacceptable’

Egyptian President Mohamed Mursi said Israel’s attacks on the Gaza Strip were “unacceptable” and would destabilize the region, in a televised address to the nation on Thursday.

It was the Islamist leader’s starkest rhetoric targeting the Jewish state since he took office in June following Egypt’s first free leadership election.

Looking more subdued and downcast than in previous public addresses, Mursi repeatedly looked away from the camera as he listed steps he had taken to recall Egypt’s ambassador in Israel and reach out to the United Nations Security Council.

“We are in contact with the people of Gaza and with Palestinians and we stand by them until we stop the aggression and we do not accept under any circumstances the continuation of this aggression on the Strip,” Reuters reported Mursi saying.

“The Israelis must realize that this aggression is unacceptable and would only lead to instability in the region and would negatively and greatly impact the security of the region,” he said.

It was the first time Mursi mentioned Israel by name in a public address. Ties between the two neighbors were never warm but have cooled further since Mursi’s predecessor Hosni Mubarak, a staunch U.S. ally, was deposed in a street revolt last year.

Egypt also officially requested on Thursday a meeting of the U.N. Security Council to discuss what it described as Israeli “aggression” on Gaza, Reuters reported the Foreign Ministry saying in a statement.

It said Egypt’s representative to the United Nations had sent formal requests to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and to the current head of the council, India’s representative.

The U.N. Security Council held a late night emergency meeting Wednesday on escalating tensions between Israel and the Palestinian territory of Gaza.

The 15-nation council held closed talks with the Israeli and Palestinian ambassadors to the United Nations. The major powers and United Nations have all urged both sides to pull back from all-out conflict.

Egypt had urged the Security Council meeting after Israel carried out more than 20 air strikes and sea artillery attacks on Gaza, killing the military commander for Hamas, which controls the

territory. Palestinian U.N. envoy Riyad Mansour said at least nine people were killed on Wednesday.

Arab ambassadors said they wanted the council to condemn Israel.

The Arab group of nations want the council “to condemn that barbaric attack” and “to send a strong message to call for a cessation of hostilities,” AFP reported Sudan’s U.N. envoy Daffa-Alla Elhag Ali Osman, current chairman of the Arab bloc, saying.

“We want the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility and to find an immediate way to stop this aggression against our people in the Gaza Strip,” said Mansour.

The Arab League said on Wednesday that it will hold a meeting on Gaza on Saturday.

Israel warns

Meanwhile, Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned that the military operation could be expanded and the country’s U.N. ambassador Ron Prosor said that “indiscriminate” rocket fire from Gaza had forced Israel’s hand.

Gaza “is a strategic threat against the state of Israel, missiles flying in to major cities in Israel,” Prosor told reporters.

“This is not finished yet,” added the Israeli envoy. “We have shown restraint but if this continues, Israel will do everything that it takes to defend its own citizens, like any other country would do.”

Rockets killed three people in Israel Thursday soon after three Palestinian fighters died in an air strike, as Israel pressed a vast Gaza operation which began with a hit on a Hamas chief.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/15/249772.html>

5. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Sudan Islamists meet to discuss Omar al-Bashir position under Arab Spring pressure**

Thousands of government-linked Islamists begin meeting in Sudan on Thursday, under pressure from Arab Spring-inspired reformers who say the Islamic regime has drifted from its religious foundation.



Reformers say corruption and other problems have left the vast African nation's government Islamic in name only, and question how much longer President Omar al-Bashir should remain in office.

But those calling for change lack the power to impose their views, and their hopes for the three-day meeting will be dashed, predicted Khalid Tigani, an analyst and chief editor of the weekly economic newspaper Elaff.

“So this may lead to a new split” in the Islamic Movement, he said.

The Islamic Movement, a social group at the heart of Sudan's ruling National Congress Party (NCP), is holding its first national conference since uprisings and civil war began driving out authoritarian leaders around the region in 2011.

While Islamists gained power through democratic elections in Egypt and Tunisia, a coup 23 years ago installed Sudan's Islamist regime -- and it is still there.

Mahjoub Mohamed Salih, publisher of the independent Al-Ayaam newspaper, said the conference would highlight divisions between grassroots Islamists and NCP loyalists, though he does not see the movement fracturing.

Some Islamists are now saying openly to the NCP: “You are just using Islam as a rationalization for things which are un-Islamic,” Salih said.

It is a “corrupt dictatorship, cruel dictatorship,” said Hassan al-Turabi, a key figure behind the 1989 coup. He broke with Bashir years later and formed his Islamist opposition party, the Popular Congress.

Turabi says he does not want Bashir's regime associated with Islam.

Amin Hassan Omer, from the Islamic Movement's ruling secretariat, said he expects such comments from critics but it is “nonsense” to suggest there is widespread dissatisfaction among younger Islamists over corruption.

Omer admitted reformers would be disappointed despite “a general sense of urgency for change” in the Islamic Movement, including the need for a younger leadership.

While only about 12 percent of NCP members come from the Islamic Movement, most of the party leadership belongs to the movement, said Omer, a state minister in the presidency.

The Islamic Movement is “one of the tools used by those who are in power to give themselves legitimacy among the Islamists, to continue controlling the government, the National Congress, in the name of Islam,” said Tigani, who calls himself an independent Islamist.

Ali Osman Taha, a government vice president, has been the Islamic Movement's secretary general for two terms and is not eligible to run again.

Analysts say he is a possible successor to Bashir, who has announced he will step down as ruling party leader late next year.

Questions over Bashir's future were reinforced when, according to official media, he “underwent a successful surgical operation in the vocal cords” last week in Saudi Arabia. It was his second minor operation in less than four months.

On the eve of the Islamic Movement conference, however, Bashir returned to Khartoum, smiling to thousands of supporters who lined streets around the airport to welcome him.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/15/249737.html>

- **Israel's military action on Gaza a test for Egypt's Brotherhood**

Now in power, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is facing one of its most challenging moments and with the country still recovering from devastating aftermaths of the revolution, the movement finds itself in a weak position to stand by its brethren in Gaza who are being pounded by Israeli warplanes.



As the Palestinian enclave comes under Israeli attacks, one of which has killed the head of Hamas military wing, the Muslim brotherhood president in the neighboring Egypt reacted by recalling his ambassador from Tel Aviv, but it remains to be seen what more action he will take.

The Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the political arm of the powerful MB movement now ruling the country, has criticized Israel saying it "must take into account the changes in the Arab region, especially in Egypt."

Contrary to its pre-power rhetoric, the Muslim Brotherhood and President Mursi are expect to exercise caution and self-restraint in response to the Israeli escalation in Gaza.

Ali Abdel Rehim, Egyptian political analyst, said he expects Mursi's reaction to be "worse" than ousted president Hosni Mubarak's response to the 2008 Gaza war.

"We don't see any reaction. And most probably, there will be no action from the Brotherhood," he said.

In 2008, Mubarak called for stopping the Israeli "aggression" on Gaza and sent humanitarian aid during a short truce period that had also allowed some Hamas leaders to escape to Cairo, Ali added.

Any reaction by the Brotherhoods will affect the "the domestic situation in Egypt," Abdel Rehim said.

The country's weak economy, incessant labor strikes, and severe social and political crises, are all factors that will likely restrain the Brotherhood's reaction, he added.

Even the idea of fabricating an external conflict to drive away attention on domestic issues "will not come to the minds of Egypt's Brotherhoods," Abdel Rehim said.

He added that earlier deals between the United States and Egypt regarding Israel's security had placed the Brotherhood under "experimentation."

Any attempts to interfere in the Israeli-Gaza relationships would make the Brotherhood appear as if abandoning its earlier agreements with the United States, he added.

"They are under experimentation and America is closely watching Egypt's reaction."

Egyptian journalist, Abdel Sattar Hatata, said the brotherhood will not be able to take any different stand on Gaza than the Mubarak's regime did due to the country's weak economy, unstable internal political conditions and tangled regional ties.

"The condition in Gaza will cause a huge loss to the Brotherhood in Egypt," said Hatata. "The new regime will not be able to take effective measures towards Israel" or stop the offensive on Gaza.

The Brotherhood had often urged Mubarak's regime to withdraw the country's ambassador from Tel Aviv, terminate the Camp David Treaty and break ties with Israel, said Hatata.

The statements issued by the Brotherhood so far diplomatically criticizes the escalating conditions, and lacks its earlier sharp tone, he explained, aiming not to drift into any military confrontations.

Playing double standards

Regarding the possibility that Egypt may keep a low profile in public while supply Hamas with weapons in private through smuggling, Abdel Rehim said such scenario is unlikely.

He said the Brotherhood knows the borders are monitored and that Israel and the United States will know about weapons smuggling.

Any smuggling acts will grant Israel the right to file a complaint at the United Nations against Egypt, said Hatata.

Even if the Brotherhood calls Islamists in Sinai to play this role, that would still be risky and dangerous to the Brotherhood, said Hatata, citing Egypt's inability to face Israel in the current time.

But, the movement may one day claim that it supplied Hamas with weapons as an "excuse" to cover up its failure to take a strong political action, Abdel Rehim said.

It would use this to justify its stand in front of the Egyptian people, he added.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/15/249678.html>

6. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Jordan violence escalates during second night**

Police stations come under fire as anger grows over fuel price hikes in the kingdom.

The violence over fuel price hikes in Jordan has escalated, as growing anger threatens to plunge the kingdom into a wave of unrest.



One armed civilian was killed and several policemen injured, some critically, when

gunmen stormed a police station in Irbid, in the country's far north, and fired on officers there on Wednesday night.

Another police station came under attack in the northern Amman suburb of Shafa Badran, where automatic weapons were used. One police officer was reportedly critically injured. A police official said the attackers took advantage of the protests to pursue a violent agenda.

In Salt, northwest of capital Amman, protesters set fire to a civil affairs office.

The scene was less deadly in Amman itself on Wednesday night, although up to 1,000 people had spilled onto the streets.

Hundreds of young men gathered at a usually busy road junction in the capital, facing off with riot police, who shot tear gas as tensions rose.

The unrest was not confined to the country's north, as about 2,000 protesters in the city of Karak, about 140km south of Amman, shouted: "Down, down with you, Abdullah," and "Get out and leave us alone" as they marched through the town on Wednesday, shattering shop windows, witnesses and police said.

Origins

The violence started on Tuesday night after news spread of the price increases, under which the cost of household gas will rise by 53 per cent and petrol around 12 per cent. The measure aims to rein in a bulging budget deficit and secure a \$2bn loan from the International Monetary Fund.

Minutes after state television announced the price rises, several thousand Jordanians poured into the streets.

The hikes, followed by an 11 per cent increase in public transport fares, drew sharp condemnation from the opposition, which warned of civil disobedience in the run-up to January general elections.

"The street is seething with anger and an explosion is coming," said Zaki Bani Irsheid, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Jordan's most powerful opposition group.

"We want to create a Jordanian Spring with a local flavour - meaning reforms in the system while keeping our protests peaceful."

Nationwide protests

In Amman, around 500 demonstrators clashed on Tuesday with anti-riot police and hurled stones at them after they were prevented from holding a sit-in near the interior ministry on Gamal Abdel Nasser Circle.

They set tyres and garbage containers ablaze and tried to block the main road between there and nearby Firas Circle in Jabal Hussein neighbourhood, but police prevented them and fired tear gas, an AFP journalist reported.

"Jabal Hussein is a popular shopping area. Now all shops are closed. It has turned into a ghost town," a resident told AFP.

Violent demonstrations broke out earlier this week across all 12 of Jordan's governorates, police said.

Protesters burned tyres to block traffic, torched police and private cars and at least 20 government offices, including court buildings. Police said at least 120 people have been arrested nationwide.

In the northwestern city of Salt, tens of protesters unsuccessfully tried to storm the residence of Jordanian Prime Minister Abdullah Nsur, while in the southern city of Maan, demonstrators fired in the air to force riot police out of town, wounding one officer, police said in a statement.

Protesters have demanded the resignation of Nsur and his 36-day-old government. Police used tear gas and water cannons to break up the protest outside his home in Salt on Tuesday night.

Jordan has been hit by frequent, but small, anti-government protests over the past 23 months, but these demonstrations have squarely shifted the focus from the government to the king.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/2012111421456916947.html>

- **Jordan: 1 gunman killed in police station attacks**

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — Gunmen attacked two police stations in Jordan Wednesday as demonstrators threw rocks and denounced their king over price hikes in a rare spike of violence.

One attacker was killed in the assaults, the first fatality in demonstrations in the kingdom this year. Thirteen police officers were among 17 seriously wounded in the attack in Jordan's north, police said. A police corporal was critically wounded in the second.

Two days of angry protests have threatened to plunge the U.S.-allied kingdom into a wave of unrest.

So far, King Abdullah II has steered his nation clear of the Arab Spring that has swept across the region, toppling the rulers of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen along the way. But Jordan's massive budget deficit and other economic woes could increasingly push the population into the opposition camp.

The motive of the bloody attack on the police station in the town of Wasatiyeh, on the western edge of the city of Irbid near the Syrian border, was not immediately clear, and authorities were investigating, a police official said on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to make press statements.

A Wasatiyeh resident identified the dead gunman as Qais Omari, 22, an activist with Jordanian youth movements taking part in the protests. The resident insisted on anonymity for fear of police retribution.

Gunmen staged another armed attack on a police station in the capital, Amman. The police official said gunmen sprayed the building from a moving car in Shafa Badran district, critically wounding a police corporal who was shot in the eye. He said the vehicle sped off as the attackers fired automatic weapons at cars in the street.

Tensions rose late Tuesday after the government raised prices for cooking and heating gas by 54 percent to rein in a bulging budget deficit and secure a \$2 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund. Minutes after state television announced the hike, several thousand Jordanians poured into the streets across the country, pelting police with stones, torching government offices and private cars and chanting slogans against the king.

"I like the king, but so what?" asked 29-year-old civil servant Daoud Shorfat, one of some 300 protesters in central Amman on Wednesday who police dispersed with tear gas and water cannons. "He can't feel our pain. ... He is watching the government raising the prices, while the people are barely able to feed their hungry children."

Violent demonstrations broke out across the rest of the country Wednesday as well, hitting all 12 of Jordan's governorates, police said. Protesters burned tires to block traffic, torched police and private cars and at least 20 government offices, including court buildings. Police said at least 120 people were arrested nationwide.

In the northwestern city of Salt, tens of protesters unsuccessfully tried storm the residence of the Jordanian prime minister, while in the southern city of Maan, demonstrators fired in the air to force riot police out of town, wounding one officer, police said in a statement.

Some 2,000 protesters in the city of Karak shouted "Down, down with you, Abdullah," and "Get out and leave us alone" as they marched through the town, shattering shop windows, eyewitnesses and police said.

Jordan has been hit by frequent but small anti-government protests over the past 23 months, but these demonstrations have shifted the focus from the government squarely to the king.

The leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Jordan's most powerful opposition group, called the protests "a wakeup call to the king to avoid a replica of the violence in Egypt and Tunisia."

"The street is seething with anger and an explosion is coming," the Brotherhood's Zaki Bani Irsheid said. "We want to create a Jordanian Spring with a local flavor — meaning reforms in the system while keeping our protests peaceful."

The riots are reminiscent of those in 1988 and 1996 over similar hikes on the price of bread and other food commodities under Abdullah's late father, King Hussein. Hussein was forced to introduce swift reforms that ushered in Jordan's first parliamentary elections in 22 years, an end to martial law and the renewal of a multiparty system that had been banned for decades.

Jordanian political commentator Osama al-Sharif said the new wave of protests pose a "serious challenge, probably the most crucial since he (Abdullah) became king" in 1999.

The 50-year-old king has been fighting off a host of domestic challenges, including a Muslim Brotherhood boycott of parliamentary elections, increasing opposition from his traditional Bedouin allies and an inability to keep the Syrian civil war from spilling over his border.

So far, Abdullah has largely maintained control, partly by relinquishing some of his powers to parliament and amending the country's 60-year-old constitution. His Western-trained security forces have been able to keep protests from getting out of hand. And most in the opposition remain loyal to the king, pressing for reforms but not his removal.

But as the pressure has mounted, Abdullah has been forced to make concessions. He has surrendered some of his absolute powers to an elected parliament, and renounced his right to appoint the prime minister, saying lawmakers will select the premier following Jan. 23 national elections.

The country's economic woes have added to the crush of challenges, and they show no sign of easing.

Jordan's budget deficit is expected to reach a year end record of \$3 billion, while foreign debt is expected to jump 27 percent to \$27 billion this year as the country grapples with rising poverty, unemployment and inflation.

Donations promised by Saudi Arabia and other oil producing Arab nations — a badly needed cash infusion for resource-barren Jordan — have failed to materialize, while the cost of sheltering some 265,000 Syrian refugees who have fled their civil war has put further strain on Jordan's already meager water, fuel and electricity resources and health care system.

On top of that, disruptions in cheap Egyptian gas shipments cost Jordan an extra \$7 million a day, the government said. The pipeline that transports the natural gas has been blown up more than a dozen times over the past year by militants in Egypt's Sinai desert, halting shipments. Jordan has switched to more expensive fuel oil to generate electricity.

Despite the challenges, Abdullah is expected to ride out the latest wave of protests, which are confined to certain areas in the country and have attracted relatively small numbers so far.

The stakes are high: Abdullah is a close ally of the United States and has been at the forefront of its global war on terrorism, including in Afghanistan. Jordan serves as a buffer zone to Saudi Arabia, another Sunni Muslim country, and to Israel, under a peace treaty signed in 1994, and Iraq. The kingdom hosts the largest Palestinian population outside the West Bank and Gaza.

"Washington's goal is to preserve the status quo, whereby Jordan is a "safe zone" in a sea of unrest," said a report by the Washington-based Middle East Research and Information project.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=31821>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Former Kuwaiti lawmaker still on travel ban, awaits trial for 'offensive' remarks**

Former Kuwaiti lawmaker and prominent opposition figure Musallam al-Barrak is still on travel ban pending his trial on Dec. 10 for charges of offending the country's Emir and undermining his status.



During an opposition rally last month, al-Barrak extended his criticism to the King of Jordan accusing him of sending "mercenaries" to help the Kuwaiti authorities crash unprecedented protests.

He criticised Jordanian King Abdullah II and described him as an "agent" of Zionism. "Those mercenaries sent by their Zionist king, the Jordanian king, are the sons of those who betrayed Kuwait in 1990."

Al-Barrak was referring to earlier media reports that 3,500 Jordanian troops were deployed in Kuwait to help quell popular demonstrations.

A source in Jordan's foreign ministry responded Barrak's statements were "petty, vulgar words," according to media reports.

Barrak was arrested on October 29 and remanded to 10 days in custody, sparking violent demonstrations in which more than 30 protesters and several policemen were injured.

He was eventually freed on Nov.1 on bail of \$35,700.

Three other former opposition MPs -- Falah al-Sawwagh, Khaled al-Tahus and Bader al-Dahum -- are to appear in court on Tuesday on similar charges. They were detained for five days last month before being freed on bail of \$17,800, according to AFP.

A fifth former lawmaker is to appear in court on November 26 while a sixth ex-MP is facing similar charges but no date has been set for his trial.

Kuwait's Islamist, nationalist and liberal opposition has been staging protests against a decision by the emir to amend the electoral law.

The opposition claims that the change is not legal and is aimed at electing a rubber stamp parliament when voters go to polls on December 1.

Three major protests in the past three weeks have turned violent but a massive rally on Sunday passed peacefully. The opposition has said it will continue protesting until the law is repealed.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/15/249789.html>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Death penalty request over Afghan massacre**

US army prosecutors request court-martial and death penalty for Sergeant Robert Bales, accused of killing 16 villagers.

Army prosecutors have called for a US soldier accused of killing 16 Afghan villagers to face a full court-martial and the death penalty.

Wrapping up their case in the pre-trial hearing, prosecutors described the "heinous and despicable" alleged massacre in March by Sergeant Robert Bales, details of which were given during an eight-day hearing at a military base south of Seattle.

"Based on the sheer brutality and nature of the crimes, it is our recommendation to proceed to a general court-martial," said prosecutor Major Rob Stelle at Joint Base Lewis-McChord outside Tacoma, Washington.

"Because of the heinous, brutal and methodical [nature of the alleged crimes], we ask that the sentencing authority have the full range of punishment," including the death penalty, he added.

The family of Bales insisted he was innocent until proven guilty, calling him "courageous and honourable," while his lawyer raised questions about the role of alcohol, drugs and stress in the tragedy.

Murder charges

Bales faces 16 counts of murder, six of attempted murder, seven of assault, two of using drugs and one of drinking alcohol.

Seventeen of the 22 victims were women or children and almost all were shot in the head.

The 39-year-old allegedly left his base in the Panjwayi district of southern Kandahar province on the night of March 11 to commit the killings, which included nine children. He allegedly set several of their bodies on fire.

Prosecutors at the so-called Article 32 pre-trial hearing have alleged that Bales left the base twice to carry out the killings, returning in between and even telling a colleague what he had done.

The week-long hearing included three evening sessions - daytime in Afghanistan - to hear testimony by video conference from Afghan victims and relatives of those who died.

Stelle said the case should go to a court-martial because "something horrible happened" and Bales was clearly aware of what he had done.

"The most telling evidence we have are the statements made by Sergeant Bales in the few hours [after the incident] - statements that demonstrate a clear memory of what happened and a clear sense of guilt," Stelle said.

'Number of questions'

But Bales's lawyer Emma Scanlan questioned whether there was enough evidence for the case to go to full trial, citing possible post-traumatic stress disorder and other medical issues.

"There are a number of questions that have not been answered," she said.

"We have been told that Sergeant Bales was 'lucid, coherent and responsive.' But we don't know what it means to be on alcohol, steroids and sleeping aids."

Reported inconsistencies included witnesses talking of possibly two gunmen, and mentioning a shooter with a light on his helmet, while Bales had none.

"We need to know if there was more than one person outside that wire," she said.

"We don't know so many things about this case ... we ask that everybody keep an open mind as we go forward as we investigate what is actually going on here."

'Presumed innocence'

The hearing was held to decide whether Bales should face a full court martial. Investigating Officer Colonel Lee Deneke said he would submit a written recommendation "later this week or over the weekend".

A three-star general at the base will then rule on whether to proceed with a court-martial.

In a statement read out by Stephanie Tandberg, the soldier's sister-in-law, after the hearing, the family said it had yet to learn the how, why and what of the incident.

"Much of the testimony was painful, even heartbreaking, but we are not convinced the government has shown us the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about what happened that night," it said.

"As a family, we all grieve deeply for the Afghani families who lost their loved ones on March 11, but we must all not rush to judgment.

"In America, due process means innocence is always presumed unless and until a trial proves otherwise.

"There has been no trial yet, and our family member is presumed by law, and by us, to be innocent."

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2012/11/2012111424053931314.html>

- **Pakistan to host D-8 Countries summit on Nov: 22**

Islamabad, Nov. 15, IRNA -- Leaders of the Developing Eight (D-8) countries will meet in Islamabad on 22 November for the Eighth Summit Meeting at the invitation of the President of Pakistan, the Foreign Ministry has said.



The President of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of Egypt Mohamed Morsi, President of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of Nigeria Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, and Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan will attend the Summit, a Foreign Ministry statement said. Malaysia is likely to be represented by Deputy Prime Minister. Confirmation of participation by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh is awaited.

D-8 is a multilateral grouping of eight emerging economies of the Muslim world that represent different regions. It reflects combined population of around one billion and a market of about one trillion dollars. The member countries envisage increasing intra D-8 trade to over US\$ 500 billion by 2018.

Pakistan will take over the chairmanship of the D-8 for the next two years until 2014. The event is of extraordinary significance as it is poised to adopt the Organization's Charter and its Global Vision.

In a special ceremony following the Summit meeting, the leaders will witness signing ceremony of the Charter by the Foreign Ministers. The leaders will also adopt Islamabad Declaration 2012 reaffirming their joint resolve to make concerted efforts to confront common challenges.

On the margins of the Summit, President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf will hold bilateral meetings with visiting leaders. The forthcoming Summit will witness visit of an Egyptian President after four decades and that of a Nigerian leader after around 28 years. The visit of D-8 leaders to Pakistan will open new vistas for expanding trade and investment relations with all D-8 countries.

Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf will inaugurate the D-8 Trade Exhibition and D-8 Business Forum and on 19 and 20 November, respectively. Both events will be flagship events of the D-8 Summit to be attended by top corporate leaders from Pakistan and other members of the Group. Given the government's efforts to promote interaction with the private sector, these business activities will provide a solid platform at which Pakistan's public and private sector will be able to showcase wide possibilities in joint ventures and investment. The Business Forum will focus on infrastructure development, value-addition in textile sector, opportunities of joint ventures in alternate energy, engineering, and agro-based industries.

In addition to the leaders, Foreign Ministers, senior government officials, governors of central banks, heads of trade promotion organizations, business leaders and exhibitors will also participate in the main and sideline activities. Prior to the Summit, preparatory meetings of the D-8 Council of Ministers (comprising the Foreign Ministers) and the D-8 Commission will also be convened on 21 November and 19-20 November, respectively. Our Foreign Minister will chair the Council meeting.

The meeting of the governors of central banks of D-8 countries will make recommendations for cooperation on financial and monetary issues. The meeting will also discuss the impact of global economic crisis, cooperation through trade and capital inflows, and development finance.

The Meeting of D-8 heads of trade promotion organizations and Trade Exhibition together with an interactive Seminar will be spread over 4 days. These events will provide an occasion to Pakistan's private sector to exchange information on existing potential and learning about other markets.

President Asif Ali Zardari will inaugurate and chair the Summit session, which coincides with the 15th anniversary of the founding of the D-8 and will focus on the theme of "Democratic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity".

<http://old.irna.ir/News/Politic/Pakistan-to-host-D-8-Countries-summit-on-Nov,-22/80416793>

This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Sercan DOĐAN. 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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