



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procees of Iraq

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1. IRAQ

- **Talabani heads meeting of PUK Political Bureau over next PC elections (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Nov 7 (AIN) -The Political Bureau of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan chaired by the General Secretary, President, Jalal Talabani, discussed the upcoming Iraqi Provincial Council elections scheduled to take place in April 2013.

A statement by the PUK cited "The April's Provincial elections will be occurred nationwide except for Kirkuk and the three provinces of Kurdistan region."

"The party discussed the issue of determining a policy towards tackling the latest developments in Kirkuk, calling for unity among the Kurdish blocs and organize the necessary procedures ahead of the elections," the statement added.

"The Bureau's regular meeting in Sulaimani city also shed light on the Iraq and Kurdistan Region's latest developments as well as the PUK-KDP strategic agreement," the statement continued.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22115

- **Amiri urges to speed up holding conference of proximity among Islamic sects (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Nov 7 (AIN) –The Secretary General of Badr Organization, Minister, Hadi al-Amiri, called to speed up holding the conference of Proximity among Islamic sects.

A statement by the Iraqi Scholars Assembly received by AIN cited "During his visit to the Assembly, Amiri called to hold this conference that the Assembly called for earlier."

"The ISA is ready to present the required assistance to grant the success of the Conference," the statement added.

"Amiri assured that holding the conference in the current time will help in consolidating the national unity among the various sects in Iraq, expressing his gratitude to the efforts exerted by the ISA to preserve a strong and unified Iraq," the statement continued.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22118

- **Kurds Reject Maliki's Demand For Control of Pesherga Militia (al-monitor)**

By: Bassem Francis and Mohammad al-Tamimi.

Translated from Al-Hayat (Pan Arab).

November 7, 2012

A senior official at the Ministry of Peshmerga in Iraq's Kurdistan region has called the demand of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to place the Peshmerga forces under the jurisdiction of the federal government an "illusion." He vowed to make an official response in the next week to the accusations by Maliki.

Meanwhile, a Kurdish lawmaker accused the prime minister of obstructing the ongoing negotiations between Baghdad and Erbil.

In an interview with Al Sumaria TV on Monday evening [Nov. 5], Maliki declared his willingness to release funding for the Peshmerga forces if they place themselves under the jurisdiction of the federal authorities, since the constitution prohibits the financing of the Peshmerga, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

He accused the KRG of "violating the constitution by controlling the weapons left behind by the former Iraqi army, including tanks, artillery and rocket launchers, while the other federal [entities] are getting armed with light weapons."

He revealed that he has "evidence supported by figures and copies [of transactions] belonging to the persons who [sign] contracts and buy weapons in the region."

Maliki described the objections to the formation of the Tigris Operations Command as “unconstitutional, because the federal army has the right to have a presence in Basra or Zakho, and no one has the right to prevent it constitutionally. There are implicit intentions and a lack of desire for the federal authority to have control or a presence.”

He said that the army “is more [entitled] than the Turkish troops to have a presence [in Iraq’s Kurdish region].”

He wondered about “the reasons behind the silence over the continued presence of Turkish troops in the al-Amadiyah and Bamarni bases since 1995 until today, while these bases are equipped with tanks, armored vehicles and aircraft, and convoys enter and exit them amid complete silence.”

He warned the Peshmerga against “committing a mistake by attacking the Iraqi army.”

Spokesman for the Ministry of Peshmerga Lt. Gen. Jabbar Yawar told Al-Hayat that the ministry “will hold a press conference next week to provide clarifications on Maliki’s recent statements.”

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/10/kurds-reject-malikis-demand-to-control-pesherga-militia.html>

- **Death sentences issued against Hashimi's guards (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Nov 7 (AIN) –The Iraqi Central Criminal Court issued death sentences against a number of the guards of the death sentenced Vice-President, Tariq al-Hashimi, for charges related to terrorism.

Judicial source stated to AIN "The ICC issued capital penalty against six among Hashimi's guards for charges of supplying a car bomb to be detonated in al-Madaan area of southern Baghdad targeting the pilgrims heading to Karbala province on Ashura occasion."

Earlier, the Central Criminal Court issued a third death sentence in absentia against the judicially wanted Vice President, Tariq al-Hashimi, on last Sunday.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22116

- **Maliki heads meeting of Foreign Policy Committee (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Nov 7 (AIN) –The Foreign Policy Committee held its meeting on Wednesday under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki.

"A statement by the Foreign Minister received by AIN cited "The members of the meeting are the ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning, and Oil, in addition to the National Security Adviser and Acting Head of the National Intelligence."

"During the meeting, the participants discussed a number of important issues related to Iraqi - Kuwaiti relations, Syrian crisis, relations with the United Nations and facilitating the granting of visas for investors, businessmen, and guests of Iraq," the statement concluded

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22123:](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22123)

- **Maliki, Kevorkian discuss mutual cooperation (Aswat al-Iraq)**

BAGHDAD, Nov 7/ Aswat al-Iraq: Premier Nouri al-Maliki called for developing bilateral relations with Armenia and finalizing cooperation agreement as soon as possible.

During a meeting with Armenian Deputy Premier Armin Kevorkian here today, both sides stressed finding new vents of bilateral cooperation.

Maliki disclosed that Iraq is planning to have a railway network that will make it a passage for goods and commodities heading for Europe.

Regarding the terrorist attacks against the Armenians in Iraq, Maliki pointed out that the Christians are "original partners in this country" and terrorism targeted not only the Christians, but all segments of the Iraqi society, irrespective of their religions and minorities.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28q4ga4x45c32exqblhil1wevj%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=151298&l=1

- **Angry protesters attack Iranian consulate in Sulaymaniyah (Shafaq News)**

Shafaq News, Nov 7 / Angry citizens attacked the Iranian consulate in Sulaimaniyah province by stones because the Iranian authorities arrested their Kurdish relatives who work as traders on Wednesday, demanding Tehran to disclose their fate.

Eye witnesses told "Shafaq News", that "the families of the Kurdish Iraqi traders who have been detained by the Iranian authorities, gathered in front of the headquarters of the Iranian consulate in Sulaimaniyah to protest the continued detention of these traders since a long time".

The witnesses said that "those traders had traveled to Iran for business", stressing that "the Iranian authorities detained them since more than seven months ago without any committing any crime."

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/4005-angry-protesters-attack-iranian-consulate-in-sulaymaniyah.html>

- **Iraq's US Fighter Jet Deal Imperiled By Israeli-made Recorder Onboard (al-monitor)**

By: Jawdat Kazem. Translated from Al-Hayat (Pan Arab).

November 7, 2012

The Iraqi parliamentary Security and Defense Committee demanded that the contract for the purchase of United States F-16 fighter jets be canceled in the event that the US refuses to replace the Israeli-made recording devices that they contain.

Meanwhile, Iraq's Foreign Relations Committee ruled out the possibility of cancelling the deal unless a special law is enacted.

Iskandar Watout, vice chairman of the Security and Defense parliamentary committee, told Al-Hayat over the phone: "The Committee in particular and the Parliament in general refuse the existence of this Israeli device in the F-16 aircraft, and if it is not removed, we will seek to cancel the contract and replace the aircraft with others from different sources.

"The committee will interrogate those responsible for the deal in order to find out the reason why there is an Israeli information recording device in the aircraft to be imported by Iraq," he added.

Officers in the Iraqi Air Force had revealed the existence of an Israeli-made recording device in the F-16 aircraft manufactured by [American aeronautical firm] Lockheed Martin.

MP Asmaa al-mousawi, member of the Foreign Relations Committee told Al-Hayat that "it is not possible to cancel the deal for the sake of responding to personal demands.

"Discovering the recording device in the US aircraft — the sale of which was agreed upon — is a good thing, and it is in the benefit of the Iraqi Air Force that it has been spotted it while the potential of these aircraft was merely being explored, knowing that the pilots of other countries — which have been importing these aircraft with the same specifications for years — failed to do so," she explained.

"Iraq can remove those devices from the aircraft, no one can stop it, and the rumors about US pressure aimed at preventing the removal of these recording devices is not true, as the said deal consists of providing the country with aircraft, regardless of how the country will use them or whether it will possibly introduce modifications to their technical and mechanical structure."

A source in the State of Law coalition told Al-Hayat that "the fuss about the recording devices in the US aircraft is more of a political, rather than a technical issue."

The source added that "the US has not imposed any conditions on Iraq during the aircraft deal. Therefore, one cannot make blind accusations."

The source added that "officials in the Iraqi Air Force have formed a technical committee to determine the extent of damage caused by this device and to find a strong technical mechanism that can remove the recording device without damaging the structure and work of the aircraft, all the while providing them with other anti-spyware devices."

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/01/10/iraq-israel-aircraft-deal.html>

- **Iraq struggles to sign up oil buyers for 2013 term deals (Reuters)**

By Alex Lawler and Florence Tan

LONDON/SINGAPORE, Nov 7 (Reuters) - Iraq is struggling to find buyers for all its 2013 oil output on term contracts, industry sources said, as foreign refiners complain of high prices and variable quality from the world's fastest growing crude exporter.

Tough contract negotiations between Iraq's State Oil Marketing Organization (SOMO) and buyers in Asia, Europe and the United States are underlining how well the global market is supplied, despite diving exports from neighbouring Iran.

"Iraq was hoping to sell larger volumes but I don't think they've succeeded yet," said an industry source with a buyer of Iraqi crude, who declined to be identified because the talks are commercially sensitive.

"A lot of the big oil companies asked for less, if anything. I think the Iraqis have to get a grip on the quality and get a grip on the prices to reflect that."

Using foreign expertise and investment, Iraq is rapidly expanding its oil exporting capacity after the sanctions against former dictator Saddam Hussein and the 2003 U.S.-led invasion which overthrew him.

New production is starting up in the south and the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region has agreed to keep volumes of its output flowing into Iraq's northern pipeline.

But the variable quality of Iraqi oil, official prices that buyers believe are too high and the availability of cheaper spot supplies are all deterring some refiners from agreeing to increase their 2013 term contract supplies, sources say.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/11/07/iraq-oil-idINL5E8M2CN420121107>

- **Iraq finalizes contract with LukOil (Aswat al-Iraq)**

BAGHDAD, Nov 7 / Aswat al-Iraq: Russian LukOil and its partner Japan's Inpex Corp. Wednesday finalized a deal with the Iraqi Oil Ministry to explore for oil and gas at a block in southern Iraq.

The final contract was signed in Baghdad by the General Director of the South Oil Company Diyaa Jaafar and the Executive Director of the LukOil Kati al-Juburi.

These international firms won their deals in May at Iraq's fourth energy bidding round, which had attracted few firms because of tough contract terms set up by the Iraqi Oil Ministry.

International oil companies prefer production-sharing contracts that would allow them to register reserves, while Baghdad offered them less attractive technical services deals.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28q4ga4x45c32exqblhil1wevj%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=151294&l=1

- **Iraq expels Turkish company from oil exploration deal**

Iraq has expelled Turkey's state-owned energy firm TPAO from a consortium that clinched an exploration contract this year in southern Iraq.

"For reasons to do with non-technical issues and outside the responsibility of my office and me personally... the Turkish company TPAO was excluded from the consortium," Abdul-Mahdy al-Ameedi, director of Iraq's contracts directorate, said in Baghdad on Wednesday.

In May 2012, Iraq awarded the oil exploration deal in the oil-rich Basra province to Kuwait Energy (40 percent stake), TPAO (30 percent stake) and the United Arab Emirates' Dragon Oil (30 percent stake).

"This decision is final, there is no approval to sign the contract for Block 9," he added, referring to the exploration block in south Iraq. "The decision (to expel TPAO) is from the cabinet."

"The cabinet rejected the approval of Turkey's TPAO as a partner," he stated. "Removing TPAO has no connection with Kurdistan deals. We know TPAO has no deals in Kurdistan. But this decision was taken for other reasons."

Turkey is importing oil from the Iraqi Kurdistan region without Baghdad's agreement and despite repeated statements from the Iraqi government, stressing that all oil contracts in the country, including in the Kurdish region, must go through the central government.

Ankara-Baghdad relations turned sour last year after Ankara expressed support for fugitive Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, who faces terrorist charges in his country, and gave him refuge.

The two countries are also at odds over the Syrian unrest. While Turkey has become one of the main supporters of anti-Damascus insurgents, Baghdad has refused to join calls for President Bashar al-Assad to step down.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/08/271033/iraq-kicks-out-turkish-energy-firm/>

2. IRAN

- **Iran remains electricity exporter despite sanctions: report (Tehran Times)**

Iran is a net exporter of electric power and currently exports electricity to neighboring states including Armenia, Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, and Afghanistan.”

A specialized energy website has acknowledged the ineffectiveness of international sanctions against the Islamic Republic, saying Iran continues to remain a net exporter of electricity.

The Oilprice.com said in an article that sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council, European Union, and the United States have failed to hinder Iran’s electricity exports.

“There is one sector of Iran’s energy industry that is flourishing - electricity exports. And this trade, lucrative as it is, stymies Washington’s efforts to squeeze Iran’s economy because, in four out of five instances, the trade is with U.S. allies,” the website noted.

“Iran is a net exporter of electric power and currently exports electricity to neighboring states including Armenia, Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, and Afghanistan,” the article added citing the U.S. government’s Energy Information Administration (EIA).

The website stated that Iran’s neighboring states have opted to interact with the Islamic Republic, notwithstanding Washington’s pressures.

“Iran’s rising electrical exports to its neighbors present Washington policymakers hawkish on Iran with the unpleasant reality that the nations importing Iranian electricity are all involved to a lesser or greater degree with regional U.S. military policies, whose cooperation could be endangered if the American administration pressured them too far to downgrade their energy relations with Tehran,” wrote the Oilprice.

The United States, Israel and some of their allies have repeatedly accused Iran of pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program.

Under pressure from Washington, the United Nations Security Council has imposed four rounds of sanctions against the Islamic Republic. The Security Council's measure was followed by a series of illegal unilateral embargoes against Iran by the U.S. and the European Union.

Iran refutes the allegations and argues that as a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, it is entitled to develop and acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. (Source: Press TV)

<http://tehrantimes.com/economy-and-business/103102-iran-remains-electricity-exporter-despite-sanctions-report>

- **Iran to boost joint oilfields' output to 800,000 bpd**

TEHRAN, Nov. 7 (MNA) - Iran has launched 17 development projects at oilfields which are shared with its neighbors, with the aim of boosting production at the sites to 800,000 barrels per day over the course of two years.

Iran shares 18 oilfields, four gas fields, and 6 associated oil and gas fields with neighboring countries, the Mehr News Agency reported.

The report did not mention the current output at the joint oilfields.

Iran has announced that it will implement 11 plans by the Iranian calendar month of Mordad 1392 (July 22-August 22, 2013) with the goal of boosting oil production by 175,000 barrels per day.

Once all the phases of the development plans are implemented, output will be increased by another 500,000 barrels per day.

Oil Minister Rostam Qasemi has said that the country's oil output is projected to increase by 1.5 million barrels per day by 2016.

In July, Qasemi announced that new oil reserves of up to 6 billion barrels have been discovered in southwestern Iran.

The reserves are located around the Yadavaran oilfield in Khuzestan Province.

With the new oil discovery, Iran's oil recoverable reserves stand at about 160 billion barrels.

Iran has the world's fourth-largest reserves of recoverable oil, after Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, and Canada.

With 34 trillion cubic meters of natural gas reserves, Iran has the world's second-largest natural gas reserves after Russia.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1737972>

- **Iran Navy watchful of foreign movements in waters south of country: Cmdr.**

Iran's Navy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari says the Iranian naval forces are fully monitoring all the movements of the foreign forces in the international waters south of the country.



"We monitor, within the jurisdiction of the Navy, all the movements of the regional and extra-regional forces on a 100-percent level. It means that there is not a single moment when we do not know where a certain warship of a certain country is," Sayyari said in an interview with Fars news agency on Wednesday.

He added that the Iranian Navy monitors the movements using different methods and military equipment, including vessels, submarines, and manned and unmanned aircraft.

He also said that Iran planned to extend its presence in the international waters and added the Navy intended to deploy forces to the Atlantic Ocean.

Iran's Navy has been increasing its naval presence in the international waters to protect naval routes and provide security for Iranian merchant vessels and tankers.

In line with international efforts against piracy, the Iranian Navy has been conducting patrols in the pirate-infested Gulf of Aden since November 2008 in order to safeguard merchant containers and oil tankers owned or leased by Iran or other countries.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/08/271065/iran-navy-monitors-foreign-movements/>

- **Iran condemns Israeli war rhetoric, vows firm response to aggression**

Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations Mohammad Khazaei has strongly condemned the “provocative and unjustifiable” war rhetoric by the Israeli regime’s officials, saying the Islamic Republic will give a firm response to any aggression.



The Islamic Republic of Iran has never initiated a war and has never had an intention to attack other countries but... in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter on the inherent right of [individual or collective] self-defense, in case of any attack on its nation or territory, Iran will not hesitate about giving a firm response to such attacks and adopting any necessary measure,” Khazaei said in a letter to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and head of the Security Council on Wednesday.

In his latest warmongering remarks against Iran, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on November 5 that he is ready to order a strike on the country’s nuclear facilities.

Khazaei denounced the “provocative, impudent and threatening” remarks by the Israeli premier against Iran’s nuclear energy program and warned that such statements are a blatant breach of the UN Charter and international regulations and rights and would threaten regional peace and security.

It is ridiculous that such warmongering remarks and unfounded claims are being made by the officials of a regime whose atomic weapons and their covert proliferation are the most important threat to regional and international peace and security, the Iranian diplomat pointed out.

He urged the UN to show an immediate reaction to the Israeli regime’s threats and aggressive moves, saying the body should adopt necessary measures to prevent their repeat.

Israel has repeatedly threatened Iran with a military strike, falsely claiming that Tehran is pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program.

Iran rejects the allegations against its nuclear energy activities, arguing that as a committed signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it has the right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

In addition, the IAEA has conducted numerous inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities but has never found any evidence showing that Iran's nuclear energy program has been diverted to nuclear weapons production.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/08/271059/iran-condemns-israeli-war-rhetoric/>

- **Iran expects practical change in US policies, Mehmanparast says**

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman says only practical and fundamental changes in Washington's policies could restore the trust of the Iranian nation towards the United States.



The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that only respect for the rights of the Iranian nation, as well as a fundamental and practical reconsideration of the US government's wrong policies in the past could reduce the Iranian nation's distrust towards the US administration, Ramin Mehmanparast said on Wednesday.

He stressed that Iran will judge the US by its actions not words. "Any evaluation of the promise of change will be based on the actual policy and performance of US officials," he stated.

Incumbent US President Barack Obama won a clear victory over Republican challenger Mitt Romney for another four-year presidential term on Wednesday.

Mehmanparast said the outcome of the US presidential election shows that Americans want a president that avoids extremist policies and works to improve the country's economic situation.

He stressed Iran's policy of respecting popular vote, and called on Washington to meet the US voters' demands regarding change, improving the welfare of the US citizens, and an end to the administration's costly unilateralism.

"The truth is that people in the Muslim world and Middle East are still waiting for the realization of US president's promises," the spokesman pointed out.

He added that only adopting a new approach based on non-interference in the internal affairs of the regional countries could restore part of US credibility in the region.

Mehmanparast further described promoting global peace and stability through mutual understanding as one of the main principles of Iran's foreign policy.

Tehran welcomes any honest move by countries interested in mutual understanding, he concluded.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/08/271023/iran-expects-change-in-us-policies/>

- **Iranian Envoy, Lebanese FM Discuss Bilateral Ties, Regional Developments**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Tehran's Ambassador to Beirut Qazanfar Roknabadi and Lebanese Foreign Minister Adnan Mansour conferred on the two countries' relations and exchanged views on the latest developments in the region.

During the meeting held in Beirut on Wednesday, Mansour stressed the sensitivity of the current developments in the region and praised the "constructive role" played by the Islamic Republic for strengthening stability and security in the region.

He also voiced pleasure in the results of the two countries' agreements on facilitating the visa requirements for reciprocal visits by Iranian and Lebanese nationals.

Roknabadi, for his part, said that the West has failed in its conspiracies against the regional nations, the Iranian nation in particular, and stated that further strengthening of convergence among nations, specially around the axis of resistance (against Israel and the bullying powers) ensures a prosperous future for the region.

He further renewed Iran's call for the Lebanese groups' commitment to dialogue, unity, solidarity and maintenance of Lebanon's stability and tranquility.

Iran and Lebanon enjoy cordial relations and have further expanded these ties in recent years.

The two sides have exchanged several delegations of high-ranking officials in the last two years.

Iranian and Lebanese officials have recently doubled efforts to further expand the bilateral relations and mutual cooperation between the two nations.

The two countries signed a cluster of economic agreements during Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's landmark visit to Beirut in October 2010.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107117746>

3. SYRIA

- **Arab League says Assad's days are numbered**

Pan-Arab bloc says Syrian leader will not stay in office much longer, urging opposition to bridge their differences.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime will not stay in power for much longer, Nabil el-Araby, the head of the Arab League, has said, urging the opposition meeting in the Gulf state of Qatar to put aside their differences.

"It is important to unify the opposition's visions, especially because everyone knows that the regime in Syria will not remain for long and one day there will be a new situation in Syria," he told reporters in Cairo on Wednesday.

El-Araby's comments came as the Syrian National Council's (SNC) general assembly of nearly 420 members meeting in the Qatari capital Doha moved to choose two leadership bodies and a president.

Attempts at new leadership have followed intense international pressure from critics who say the exile-dominated group needs to be overhauled as it does not represent the Syrian opposition on the ground.

Al Jazeera's Omar al-Saleh, reporting from the conference in Doha, said: "The electing process is ongoing. By Thursday morning there will be a new leadership, but the problems will remain huge as the SNC are seen to be weak."

Western pressure

The meeting took place as Western efforts to help rebels oust Assad have shifted dramatically, with Britain saying it will deal directly with rebel military leaders and Turkey saying NATO members have discussed protecting a safe zone inside Syria with Patriot missiles.

Britain announced it would begin direct talks with military figures in Syria's armed opposition groups, as Prime Minister David Cameron called for a new international approach to ending the conflict.

In a statement to parliament, William Hague, the foreign secretary, said Britain still would not supply weapons to the rebels and said officials would stress to the opposition groups the importance of respecting human rights.

Cameron himself toured a desert refugee camp for Syrians in northern Jordan on Wednesday.

"I am hearing appalling stories about what has happened inside Syria so one of the first things I want to talk to [US President] Barack [Obama] about is how we must do more to try and solve this crisis," he said.

In Ankara, a Turkish foreign ministry spokesman said Turkey was in talks with NATO about the possible deployment of Patriots, primarily used as anti-ballistic missiles, but Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's prime minister, said no request had yet been made.

Turkey has beefed up border security with tanks and anti-missile batteries in the face of the deadly conflict across the border, which has spilled over into each of Syria's neighbours.

Sectarian violence

Meanwhile, Syrian rebels shelled a key area of Damascus that is home to many members of Assad's Alawite minority, embassies and government buildings, as they stepped up attacks on his power base on Wednesday.

Sectarian divides are a key factor in Syria's armed rebellion, with many in the Sunni Muslim majority frustrated at more than 40 years of Alawite-dominated rule.

State news agency SANA reported that shells had hit a home and mini-bus carrying passengers in Mazzeh 86, which lies beneath Assad's hilltop presidential palace, killing at least three civilians.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a London-based watchdog that relies on a network of activists and medics on the ground, confirmed the shelling and said at least three civilians were killed and 12 wounded.

It previously reported a car bombing in an Alawite area of the suburb of Qudsaya on Tuesday that killed 19 people and another on Monday in Mazzeh that left 13 dead.

Fighting raged and air strikes were reported in other parts of the country, while SANA reported that a judge was killed when a car bomb exploded outside his home in the northeast of Damascus.

In the town of Nabak near Damascus, a suicide bomber drove a van loaded with explosives into an army position, killing six soldiers, the Observatory said, adding that at least 100 people had been killed across Syria on Wednesday.

It said more than 37,000 people had now died since the uprising against Assad's regime erupted in March 2011, first as a protest movement and then an armed rebellion after repression.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/201211718412509760.html>

- **UK leads calls to 'shape' Syria opposition**

British Prime Minister David Cameron said UK and allies should do more to open direct communication with rebel leaders.

Western efforts to oust Syrian President Bashar Assad have shifted dramatically, with Britain saying it will deal directly with rebel military leaders and Turkey saying NATO members have discussed protecting a safe zone inside Syria with Patriot missiles.



The developments came within hours of President Barack Obama's re-election on Tuesday, which US allies said they have been waiting for before implementing new strategies to end the deadlocked civil war that has killed more than 36,000 people over the past year and a half.

British Prime Minister David Cameron, visiting a camp for Syrian refugees in Jordan, said the US, Britain and other allies should do more to "shape the opposition" into a coherent force and open channels of communication directly with rebel military commanders.

Previously, Britain and the US have acknowledged contacts only with exile groups and political opposition figures inside Syria.

And a Turkish official said Turkey and allies, including the United States, have discussed the possibility of using Patriot missiles to protect a safe zone inside Syria.

The foreign ministry official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of ministry prohibitions on contacts with the news media, said planning for the safe zone had been put on hold pending the US election.

He said any missile deployment might happen under a "NATO umbrella", though NATO has insisted it will not intervene without a clear United Nations mandate.

"There is an opportunity for Britain, for America, for Saudi Arabia, Jordan and like-minded allies to come together and try to help shape the opposition, outside Syria and inside Syria," Cameron said. "And try to help them achieve their goal, which is our goal of a Syria without Assad."

International pressure

Cameron is currently on a tour of the Middle East and speaking on Obama's re-election said: "I am hearing appalling stories about what has happened inside Syria so one of the first things I want to talk to Barack about is how we must do more to try and solve this crisis."

The news comes as the Syrian National Council's (SNC) general assembly of nearly 420 members met on Wednesday to choose two leadership bodies and a president during a conference in the Qatari capital Doha.

Syria's main opposition bloc has succumbed to intense international pressure from critics and begun electing new leaders to appease critics who say the exile-dominated group does not represent those risking their lives on the frontlines to oust the regime.

The SNC, largely made up of exiles, has been criticised as ineffective and out of touch with those trying to topple Assad.

The US has called for a more unified and representative opposition, suggesting an end to the SNC's leadership.

SNC officials say the internal election may not be enough to deflect such criticism and halt US-backed efforts to set up an alternate leadership group.

Al Jazeera's Omar Al Saleh, reporting from Doha, said: "The new leadership will discuss an initiative given by an opposition member who is also a current of the SNC.

"That initiative is backed by the international community, France, US as well as Qatar, KSA and other countries. According to that initiative, a new council might emerge," he said

"The SNC fears that that council might be a replacement to them and this is for the political wrangling and negotiations will be decisive for the fate of the Syrian revolution" he added.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/20121117102036178991.html>

4. ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- **Abbas congratulates Obama, Hamas urges end to Israel bias**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- President Mahmoud Abbas on Wednesday congratulated US President Barack Obama after he defeated his Republican challenger.

Abbas expressed hope that Obama would continue his efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East, the Palestinian Authority news agency Wafa reported.

PLO negotiator Saeb Erekat expressed hope that Obama would stand by the Palestinian decision to gain non-member state status in the United Nations, Wafa reported.

He called on Obama to act against Israeli settlement activities and other violations against the Palestinian people.

Erekat also expressed hope that Obama would focus on democracy, peace and stability in the region in his second term and implement a two-state solution with Israel.

In Gaza City, the Hamas government called on Obama to re-evaluate his foreign policy concerning Palestine, and end his bias towards Israel.

"We listened to the moderate speech by Obama in the wake of his first presidential victory, but his policy did not fit into this discourse and in front of him now is an opportunity to apply what he had promised the people of the region away from the pressures of the Israeli lobby," Taher al-Nunu said.

He called on Obama to build ethical policies to deal with the region's issues, and restore the rights of the Palestinian people.

Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri told Ma'an that any change in opinion by the Arab and Islamic world concerning the United States would depend on whether Obama rebalanced US foreign policy towards the region's issues.

Obama's re-election is a chance for him to abandon his biased policies towards Israel, Abu Zuhri added.

Israel alliance 'stronger than ever'

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also congratulated Obama and said the strategic alliance between their two countries was "stronger than ever".

"I will continue to work with President Obama to ensure the interests that are vital for the security of Israel's citizens," Netanyahu, who has had a testy relationship with the US leader, said in a short written statement.

One major rift between the two leaders has been their approach in dealing with Iran's nuclear aspirations, with the United States urging Netanyahu not to launch any go-it-alone military action.

Netanyahu faces his own electoral test in January, when Israel holds a national ballot that opinion polls predict his right-wing Likud party will win.

Netanyahu's defense minister, Ehud Barak, who was a frequent visitor to Washington over the past four years, said in his own statement he had no doubt Obama will continue his policies, which "fundamentally support Israel's security".

"It is possible to overcome any differences in positions that may arise," Barak said.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=534875>

- **'Those claiming PM interfered in election harm US ties'**

Finance Minister Steinitz slams Olmert for accusing Netanyahu of publicly backing Romney in US election; Olmert expected to announce political intentions upon return from US trip.



Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz slammed former prime minister Ehud Olmert's Wednesday accusation that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu interfered in the US election, Israel Radio reported Thursday.

Whoever raises such accusations, Steinitz said, wants to harm the US-Israel relationship, and Olmert's assertion that Netanyahu publicly endorsed Romney harms the deep ties between the two nations.

Following US President Barack Obama's re-election Tuesday night, Olmert told Jewish community leaders in New York that "The prime minister has a right to prefer one candidate over another, but it would be better, obviously if he kept it to himself. What took place this time was a breaking of all the rules, when our prime minister intervened in the US elections in the name of an American billionaire," a reference to Jewish-American casino magnate and Netanyahu-ally Sheldon Adelson.

"Netanyahu's behavior in recent months brings up the question if Netanyahu has a friend in the White House, and I'm not sure," Olmert said. "This could be very critical in certain areas."

Olmert's associates have said that he will decide on his political future following the US election, and Obama's reelection is encouraging to the former prime minister. He is expected to make an announcement soon after he returns to Israel after November 15.

Olmert's political prospects encountered new challenges Wednesday night when the State Attorney's Office filed a Supreme Court appeal against the acquittals and light sentence he received over corruption charges.

If the state wins at the Supreme Court level, Olmert could be convicted of harsher crimes than he was at trial, and could even end up going to jail.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=290992>

- **State appeals Olmert acquittal to Supreme Court**

If appeal is successful, the former PM could be convicted of harsher crimes, putting his political future into question.

The State Attorney's Office filed a Supreme Court appeal against the acquittals and light sentence of former prime minister Ehud Olmert on Wednesday night, possibly putting his highly speculated political future into jeopardy.



If the state wins at the Supreme Court level, Olmert could be convicted of harsher crimes than he was at trial, and could even end up going to jail.

The decision could have tremendous repercussions on the upcoming elections, which Olmert has considered taking part in as a challenger to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

That said, the appeal in and of itself, does not legally prevent Olmert from running, however more complicated it makes his political fortunes and clouds his future in the event of additional convictions.

Although the state attorney first announced three weeks ago its intention to appeal the acquittals for the central corruption charges, it did not specify, until filing the appeal, which charges it would be appealing.

In the end, the appeal attacks Olmert's acquittals for most of the main charges in both the Rishon Tours and Talansky affairs. The appeal also asks to overturn Olmert's acquittal on charges that he misled the state comptroller regarding funds he received as part of the Talansky Affair.

There were some more minor charges dropped from the appeal that had been part of the original indictment.

Olmert was convicted in the Jerusalem District Court only of the minor crime of breach of trust in the Investment Affair.

The last part of the appeal asks to give Olmert a harsher sentence for this conviction.

The Jerusalem District Court did not give Olmert any community service as requested by the state, but only sentenced him to a conditional sentence, plus a NIS 75,000 fine.

The state also appealed former Olmert confidante Shula Zaken's acquittals in the Rishon Tours case, partially ending speculation that she would cooperate with the state in the Holyland case in exchange for the state not appealing the acquittals.

The state also asked that Zaken receive a harsher sentence for her convictions, for which she had received a light sentence.

Regarding the Rishon Tours Affair, the state said the lower court had agreed with almost all of the state's factual findings.

The state said there could be no reasonable doubt that Olmert knowingly committed fraud, in light of the fact that the affair involved over \$90,000 in double-bookings of plane flights by his staff on his behalf, and that he had been deeply involved in the working of his staff and written correspondence to those non-profit institutions paying for his flights.

Whereas the lower court found that in spite of the situation being problematic, it still could not preclude other possibilities besides Olmert knowing of the fraud, the state said the Supreme Court should find that the standard of beyond a reasonable doubt had been met.

In essence, the state said that the lower court had held it to an even higher and impossible standard than beyond a reasonable doubt in its conclusions about the evidence, particularly since the court found the state's summation of the facts more convincing than Olmert's.

Similarly, in the Talansky Affair, the state said the court had again entertained wildly unlikely scenarios to acquit Olmert and to conclude that the state's evidence did not meet the beyond a reasonable doubt standard.

According to the appeal, the court found that Olmert had received huge amounts of cash, at least hundreds of thousands of dollars worth, from American Moshe Talansky.

The state argued that Olmert's old friend and associate, attorney Uri Messer, held most of the funds in a secret safe, and that the safe was secretly administered only by Zaken, making it impossible to say that Olmert had no knowledge that he was committing fraud.

In both cases, the state had evidentiary problems since none of Olmert's staff or associates would cooperate with the state and the court considered the only witness against him, Talansky, problematic in terms of credibility.

Whereas the court had acquitted Olmert for not reporting the Talansky funds to the state comptroller, holding that at most Olmert had omitted doing something he should have done – reporting the funds.

But an “omission” could not be construed as an affirmative act, which was required for a conviction, the court ruled.

In the appeal, the state said the absence of reporting of so many transfers, such a large volume of funds and of actively hiding the funds in a secret safe, qualified as enough to sustain a conviction.

Finally, the appeal challenged the lower court’s basis for giving Olmert a light sentence in the Investment Affair.

The court convicted Olmert for making decisions that helped friends and associates of his regardless of his clear conflict of interest, but refused to give him any community service, saying that his being toppled from the premiership and four years fighting in court demanded a more lenient sentence.

Although the court said his breach of public trust conviction was not a mere “technical” error, it also noted that he had been acquitted for the Talansky Affair, the charges which led to his downfall as prime minister.

The court viewed this fact as being a particular injustice to Olmert.

In contrast, the state, in its appeal, quoted the Supreme Court in its refusal to reduce former president Moshe Katsav’s sentence for rape from seven years in prison.

In that opinion, the Supreme Court says that Katsav’s very high position makes it even more important that he receive no special leniency to emphasize that there is one law for all.

The state noted that it recognized that the nature of Katsav's crimes differ significantly from Olmert's crimes, but that like Olmert, Katsav was also convicted of additional crimes which were not the ones that led to him being toppled from the presidency.

Meanwhile, Olmert positioned himself for a political comeback, slamming Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in a meeting with Jewish community leaders in New York on Wednesday.

Olmert's associates have said that he will decide on his political future following the US election, and US President Barack Obama's reelection is encouraging to the former prime minister. He is expected to make an announcement soon after he returns to Israel after November 15.

"Netanyahu's behavior in recent months brings up the question if Netanyahu has a friend in the White House, and I'm not sure," Olmert said.

"This could be very critical in certain areas."

Olmert also criticized Netanyahu for turning Israel into a partisan issue.

"The prime minister has a right to prefer one candidate over another, but it would be better, obviously if he kept it to himself. What took place this time was a breaking of all the rules, when our prime minister intervened in the US elections in the name of an American billionaire," Olmert added, in reference to Jewish- American casino magnate and Yisrael Hayom owner Sheldon Adelson, a major donor to Republican candidate Mitt Romney and Netanyahu.

Obama was a friend to Israel before his reelection, and will continue to be a friend to Israel, Olmert concluded.

<http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=290923>

- **Israel no top priority for Jewish voters in US election: Report**

Only 10 percent of Jews in the United States considered the Israeli regime their “top priority” when voting in the US presidential election of November 6, a report says.

Israel’s daily Yedioth Ahronot reported on Wednesday that the results of a survey conducted by the GBA Strategies (Gerstein-Bocian-Agne) on the Election Day showed only about ten percent of Jews “said they were most influenced by issues pertaining to Israel.”

About 53 percent of the Jewish voters said economy was the most important issue, according to the poll.

Meanwhile, pollster Jim Gerstein said when it came to choosing the US president, the Jews were unaffected by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s statements about Iran.

On September 2, the Israeli premier called on the international community to set a “clear red line” for Iran over its nuclear energy program.

The report added that 70 percent of the Jews supported Barack Obama and 30 percent voted for his Republican rival Mitt Romney. Obama had the support of 74 percent of Jewish voters in the 2008 presidential election.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/08/271063/israel-no-top-priority-for-jews-in-us/>

- **Amnesty International calls on Israel to free Palestinian prisoner**

Amnesty International (AI) has called on Israel to free a Palestinian activist, who was handed down a four-month prison sentence for participating in a demonstration against illegal Israeli settlements.

On Tuesday, a military court in Israel sentenced Bassem Tamimi and fined him 5,000 shekels (1,283 US dollars) for joining a demonstration last month, activists said.

On Wednesday, AI's Middle East and North Africa director Philip Luther called Tamimi a "prisoner of conscience" who should be released immediately.

"This unjust jail sentence is the latest example of Israel's harassment of Bassem Tamimi, who has been persecuted solely for peacefully protesting against Israel's illegal settlements," said Luther.

"Bassem Tamimi has a long record of peaceful protest, and this court hearing showed that even the military prosecution has acknowledged he did not use or advocate violence at the demonstration," he added.

On October 24, Israeli forces arrested Tamimi during a demonstration against Israeli occupation in a Geva Binyamin settlement, north of al-Quds.

The international community regards all the Israeli settlements across the West Bank as illegal under international law.

Nearly 500,000 Israelis live in more than 100 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/08/271042/israel-must-free-palestinian-activist/>

5. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Egyptian Official: Tehran, Cairo Supporting Peaceful Settlement of Syrian Crisis**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Head of Egypt's Interest Section in Tehran Khalid al-Said Ibrahim Amari said that Tehran and Cairo share similar views on the crisis in Syria, adding that pursuing diplomatic avenues to end the Syrian unrests is top on the agenda of both countries.

Ameri made the remarks in a meeting with Chairman of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Alaeddin Boroujerdi in Tehran on Tuesday.

The Egyptian official said that Iran and Egypt believe in diplomatic solution to Syrian crisis, favoring dialogue and negotiation as the key to stability and calm in the country.

He noted that his country wants cooperation with Iran within the framework of quartet plan for settlement of Syrian crisis.

Boroujerdi, for his part, said that cooperation between Iran and Egypt as the two key Muslim states can help solve many problems facing Muslims and promote unity and solidarity among Muslim states.

Syria has been experiencing unrest since March 2011 with organized attacks by well-armed gangs against Syrian police forces and border guards being reported across the country.

Hundreds of people, including members of the security forces, have been killed, when some protest rallies turned into armed clashes.

The government blames outlaws, saboteurs, and armed terrorist groups for the deaths, stressing that the unrest is being orchestrated from abroad.

In October 2011, calm was eventually restored in the Arab state after President Assad started a reform initiative in the country, but Israel, the US and its Arab allies are seeking hard to bring the country into chaos through any possible means. Tel Aviv, Washington and some Arab capitals have been staging various plots in the hope of increasing unrests in Syria.

The US daily, Washington Post, reported in May that the Syrian rebels and terrorist groups battling the President Bashar al-Assad's government have received significantly more and better weapons in recent weeks, a crime paid for by the Persian Gulf Arab states and coordinated by the United States.

The newspaper, quoting opposition activists and US and foreign officials, reported that Obama administration officials emphasized the administration has expanded contacts with opposition

military forces to provide the Persian Gulf nations with assessments of rebel credibility and command-and-control infrastructure.

According to the report, material is being stockpiled in Damascus, in Idlib near the Turkish border and in Zabadani on the Lebanese border.

Opposition activists who several months ago said the rebels were running out of ammunition said in May that the flow of weapons - most bought on the black market in neighboring countries or from elements of the Syrian military in the past - has significantly increased after a decision by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Persian Gulf states to provide millions of dollars in funding each month.

Earlier this year, Cairo offered talks involving four countries Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran on the crisis in Syria.

Late in September, Iranian, Egyptian and Turkish foreign ministers attended a meeting of the Contact Group on Syria in a bid to find a peaceful solution to the current crisis in the Arab country.

Saudi Arabia was not represented in the meeting of the contact group on Syria as his foreign minister was reportedly suffering an ailment.

In a joint press conference after the tripartite talks with Mohammed Kamel Amr and Ahmet Davutoglu, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi underlined the need for patience and awareness to restore calm in Syria, and said that only a solution agreed by all Syrians can soothe the crisis in the Arab country.

Salehi also said that members of the Contact Group on Syria share identical views about finding a solution to the current crisis in Syria.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107117646>

6. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Hezbollah threatens to use force to reopen blocked roads**

SIDON, Lebanon: Hezbollah has prepared a plan to use force to reopen the highway connecting Beirut to the south should it be blocked, and asked the Progressive Socialist Party to relay this message to the Future Movement. A security source told The Daily



Star the plan was to prevent supporters of the Future Movement and other March 14 groups from shutting down the highway, particularly along the coastal village of Nahmeh and near the exits to the Iqlim al-Kharoub villages of Barja and Jadra.

If the highway is closed, armed groups would open fire to reopen it.

The source said the armed groups were made up of more than 150 members that operate under the Resistance Brigades. They are from Hezbollah, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, the Arab Tawhid Party and other March 8 parties centered in Iqlim al-Kharoub and the Chouf.

Following the assassination of Brig. Gen. Wissam al-Hasan last month, supporters of former Prime Minister Saad Hariri's Future Movement blocked the highway connecting the capital to the south for three days – a stronghold of Hezbollah and Amal.

Some drivers and passengers were assaulted, though the Future Movement denied having any responsibility for the violence.

According to the source, Hezbollah informed the PSP in recent meetings it would no longer tolerate highway closures or violence against those traveling along the road.

The party said the road would be reopened at any cost and asked PSP officials to relay this message to the Future Movement.

In remarks last month, Wi'am Wahhab, head of the Arab Tawhid Party, said that members of his group would "cut the hand" of anyone trying to block the highway along Nahmeh which also leads to the Chouf Mountains.

The source said that these remarks were in line with Hezbollah's plan.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Nov-08/194290-hezbollah-threatens-to-use-force-to-reopen-blocked-roads.ashx#axzz2BWpZUR33>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Hezbollah slams Bahrain over accusations of being linked to bombings**

Hezbollah has censured the Bahraini regime over accusations that the Lebanese resistance movement was involved in the recent bombings that killed two people in Bahrain.

"We condemn any sign of accusations against us in this issue. We believe Bahrain's intelligence carried out these bombings in order to exploit them to crack down on the peaceful opposition and to avoid responding to their rightful demands," Hezbollah said in a statement issued on Wednesday.

On November 6, the Bahraini regime said it had arrested four people suspected of involvement in the November 5 bombings that also injured one person in the capital Manama. Bahrain accused Hezbollah of being behind the explosions.

Hezbollah also stated that the latest allegations are part of a wider series of false accusations aimed at charging the Lebanese resistance movement with involvement in the uprising against the Al Khalifa regime.

The Bahraini uprising began in mid-February 2011.

Bahraini protesters hold King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa responsible for the death of the demonstrators during the uprising.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/08/271053/hezbollah-raps-bahrain-over-accusations/>

- **Bahrain revokes citizenships of 31 people**

List of 31 people, many of them activists and two former MPs, comes amid ongoing government crackdown on opposition.

Bahraini authorities have revoked the citizenships of 31 people, among them two former members of parliament, for having "undermined state security," state news agency BNA reported.



The names of the 31 activists, including brothers Jawad and Jalal Fairuz, both ex-MPs who represented the opposition Shia al-Wefaq party, were listed in Wednesday's report, which quoted an interior ministry statement.

Also named was Ali Mashaima, son of prominent activist Hassan Mashaima who is head of the Shia opposition movement Haq and who is serving a life sentence for allegedly plotting against the monarchy.

The government move comes after Bahrain late last month banned all protests and gatherings to ensure "security is maintained," after clashes between Shia-led demonstrators and security forces in the Sunni-ruled country.

The Gulf state, Bahrain, home to the US Fifth Fleet and strategically situated across the Gulf from Iran, has experienced unrest since February 14 last year when protests erupted calling for democracy.

Hundreds of people were arrested when the security forces, aided by troops from neighbouring Saudi Arabia, crushed the uprising within a month. However, protests resumed months later and happen on a regular basis in villages around the country.

Many activists, some whose names appear on Wednesday's list, were tried in a special military court set up at the time.

Another former MP and leading al-Wefaq member, Matar Matar, told AFP that some named on the list were acquitted by the military court while others were never charged with "undermining state security."

Other opposition sources said that some of the named activists are currently living abroad.

'Grave concern'

According to the International Federation for Human Rights, 80 people have died in Bahrain since the unrest began.

Two local rights groups -- The Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights -- voiced "grave concern" over the decision to revoke the citizenships.

"The BYSHR and the BCHR express grave concern over the systematic targeting of prominent political activists, former members of parliament, clerics and others," they said in a statement.

The decision, they said, "is intended to punish them for expressing peaceful dissent and thereby intimidate others from exercising their right to freedom of expression."

The groups called on the United Nations and world powers to persuade the authorities to "reverse this provocative decision" and to "immediately stop the systematic and widespread human rights violations against the citizens of Bahrain."

Tension has been running high in the kingdom following a spate of bombings on Monday in the capital Manama which killed two Asian expatriates. Four people have been arrested in connection with the bombings.

King Hamad ordered on Tuesday "the swift arrest of the terrorists who carried out the recent terrorist acts in Bahrain" and urged citizens to help "bring them to justice so they receive their punishment over this appalling act."

In a Wednesday statement, six Bahraini groups -- including al-Wefaq -- announced they reject and condemn "all forms of violence regardless of its source" and "defend the rights of citizens in free expression and peaceful gatherings."

The United Nations on Tuesday condemned the bombings. "These violent acts cannot be justified by any cause. We call on all concerned to exercise maximum restraint and to refrain from any provocations," said UN spokesman Martin Nesirky.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/20121117122240601519.html>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Huge blast targets Rangers HQ in Karachi**

KARACHI: A high-intensity blast took place targetting the Rangers Headquarters in Karachi's North Nazimabad area early Thursday, DawnNews reported.



According to media reports, a truck slammed into one of the entrances of the Rangers compound killing one person and leaving more than a dozen, including civilians, injured.

The injured were shifted to the city's Abbasi Shaheed Hospital.

The blast was heard across the city and fear and panic gripped the citizens. It caused damaged to nearby buildings and shattered windows in the vicinity.

Senior police official Javed Odho told a television channel that the bomber had used more than 100 kilograms of explosives in the attack.

Witnesses reported seeing a large plume of smoke in the sky.

Television footage of the blast site showed what appeared to be an apartment block with a gaping hole in the middle where the bomb went off and part of the two-story building was razed.

Emergency and rescue teams had reached the site of the explosion.

A portion of a building inside the Rangers compound collapsed and caught fire and efforts were being made to put out the blaze.

Rangers created a perimeter around the building to hold off journalists and bystanders.

One of the Rangers, Muhammed Farooq, said he was preparing for work when he looked out the window and saw a vehicle smash through the main gate and into the building.

“Then there was a really big bang and I lost my balance and I saw a lot of smoke and then I lost consciousness,” he said, speaking from the hospital.

The area was cordoned off by security forces as investigations into the incident went underway.

Governor Sindh Dr Ishratul Ebad Khan and Interior Minister Rehman Malik condemned the attack and sought a report from IG Sindh on the incident.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

<http://dawn.com/2012/11/08/bomb-blast-near-rangers-headquarters-in-karachi/>



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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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