



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

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1. IRAQ

- **Ahrar bloc leader: National Coalition has no reform package**

BAGHDAD, Aug. 10 (AKnews) -The National Alliance (NA) is trying "to waste time" through its calls for reform package, said leader of the Ahrar Bloc which is a rank in the Shiite Sadr Current.

In July the NA (which reinstated Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki) invited the political parties for negotiations over its reform package in a bid to end the political crisis in the country.

Amir Kanani, Ahrar bloc leader, said "there is no reform package ...What is there is an agreement of the political parties which created the government but some parties after achieving the PM post evade enforcing it."

He described the NA's calls for reform "only waste of time until the term of the current government expires."

This week Osama al-Nujaifi, spokesperson for the Iraqi Council of Representatives, said the issue of withdrawing confidence from Maliki has been suspended as the political leaders are negotiating.

The efforts by Iraqi List, Kurdistan Blocs Coalition (KBC) and Sadr MPs to withdraw confidence from Maliki began after their senior leaders described Maliki as a "dictator."

After a signature campaign to withdraw confidence from Maliki failed, the Iraqiya and KBC MPs tried to call Maliki to the Council of Representatives and withdraw his confidence inside the Council. That also seems to have failed.

In the face of such threats, the NA confirmed it still supports Maliki and called for negotiations over a political reform package.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/321112/>

- **Committee meets for creation of negotiation council with Baghdad**

ERBIL, Aug.9 (AKnews)- On Saturday the committee tasked with forming the Supreme Negotiations Council with Baghdad will meet for the first time to discuss the composition and the authorities of the Council, MPs said.

The creation of the Supreme Council was decided on Monday in a meeting of the political parties and Kurdish MPs, chaired by Kurdistan Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani.

Sardar Abdulla, an MP from the Gorran (Change) Movement, said the committee meets at 10.00 a.m. on Saturday in Kurdistan Parliament.

MP Sozan Shahab of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) said the first meeting of the committee will be devoted to discussion of its components and authorities and the party which should supervise the council.

She added the bill proposed by the oppositional Gorran bloc earlier for the formation of the Supreme Council "will become a basis for forming the council."

The council is intended to finalize the suspen

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/320986/>

● Zebari meets Jalili in Baghdad

ERBIL, August 9 (AKnews) - Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari welcomed the general secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Saeed Jalili in his office in Baghdad.



Jalili and an accompanying delegation arrived at Baghdad International Airport on Wednesday, said a statement from Iraq's Foreign Ministry.

Zebari and Jalili discussed the latest developments in the region and Iraq and highlighted the uncertainties in Syria. Both sides expressed concern about violence escalating and the absence of a political solution in the country.

Both parties also discussed the latest development of Iran's nuclear file.

After his visit to Lebanon and Syria, Jalili visited Baghdad on Wednesday where he was welcomed by the national security advisor for the Iraqi government, Faleh Fayad.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/320964/>

- **Iraq supports Syrian people's peaceful objectives, Maliki**

BAGHDAD/ Aswat al-Iraq: Iraqi government expressed today its support to any effort that will realize the objectives of the Syrian people in a peaceful way and preserve the security and stability of the region, Premier Maliki said here.

Premier Maliki, during his meeting with the Secretary of the Iranian Notational Security Council Saeed Jalili, confirmed supporting any stand that will realize the peaceful objective of the Syrian people through dialogue.

In an official statement, Maliki stressed the importance of dialogue and understanding to avoid disasters and

preserve the security and stability of the region.

Both sides discussed the situation in Iraq and the region, particularly the Syrian question, the statement added.

Jalili arrived here coming from Beirut and Damascus.

Since March 2011, Syria suffered a series of turbulent and violent actions for popular demand for political reforms, while the Syrian government suppressed the demonstrators and killing thousands, according to UN reports.

Arab League and UN efforts failed to stop the violence in Syria amid the fleeing of a number of Syrian senior officials and officers, amid fears of civil war that will lead to political vacuum there and will affect the whole region.

[http://en.aswataliraq.info/\(S\(ta5ydgvpj5ldgm1rd3cf245\)\)/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=149913&l=1](http://en.aswataliraq.info/(S(ta5ydgvpj5ldgm1rd3cf245))/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=149913&l=1)

- **Maliki's Parliamentary questioning frozen - Nujaifi**

BAGHDAD/ Aswat al-Iraq: Parliament Speaker Usama Nujaifi announced today that the questioning of Premier Nouri al-Maliki was "frozen at the present time", expecting the start of reforms and dialogues to end the current political crisis.

In a press conference held today at the Parliament, he added that "the general situation is appropriate for real dialogues".

Iraq has been witnessing continued political crisis which culminated in some demands to demote Premier Maliki who was charged with "dictatorial" behavior.

Arbil-Najaf alliance (consisting of Iraqiya Bloc, Sadrist Trend and the Kurdish Alliance) tried to withdraw confidence from Maliki, charging him with "unilaterally ruling the state and violating the constitution."

President Talabani refused to respond to the powers demanding Maliki's demotion, noting that the demand bore less than 164 signatories, stressing that dialogue and

the National Conference are the best ways to overcome political crises.

Talabani's stance stirred criticism from Iraqiya Bloc, the Sadrist Trend and some Kurdish MPs who described his opinion as "unexpected."

A number of meetings were held in Arbil, Najaf and Sulaimaniya over the last few weeks among the blocs that demanded Maliki's demotion to determine their final stand on the political crisis.

[http://en.aswataliraq.info/\(S\(ta5ydgvpj5ldgm1rd3cf245\)\)/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=149911&l=1](http://en.aswataliraq.info/(S(ta5ydgvpj5ldgm1rd3cf245))/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=149911&l=1)

- **100 terrorists arrested in south of Mosul**



100 terrorists arrested in south of Mosul
The third battalion of the federal police arrested on Thursday, 100 terrorists,

including key leaders in al-Qaeda Terrorist, Organization in south of Mosul. A security source in Nineveh province in a statement to PUKmedia said: a force from the third battalion in the federal police launched a crackdown on the terrorists in south of Mosul, and was able to arrest of 100 of them , including a number of leaders in the al-Qaeda, and found a quantity of explosive devices and automatic weapons.

<http://pukmedia.co/english/index.php/77/iraq/1952-100-terrorists-arrested-in-south-of-mosul>

- **Syria crisis: Rebels lose key district of Aleppo**

Syrian rebel commanders say they have lost control of the strategic Salah al-Din district in the northern city of Aleppo after a government offensive.

The city has come under fresh bombardment, as the government attempts to recapture areas seized by rebel fighters.

The fighting comes as Iran is hosting its own international meeting on the Syrian crisis.

A new PM has been appointed to replace Riad Hijab who defected on Sunday.

The Free Syrian Army (FSA) has confirmed it has retreated from Salah al-Din, a densely packed area of narrow streets on the south-west side of Aleppo, where rebel fighters had been heavily dug in.

State media had reported the army was now in full control of the district, saying it had inflicted heavy losses on hundreds of "terrorist mercenaries".

"We have staged a tactical withdrawal from Salah al-Din," rebel commander Hossam Abu Mohammed of the Dara al-Shahbaa Brigade in Aleppo told the AFP news agency by phone.

"The district is completely empty of rebel fighters. Regime forces are now advancing into Salah al-Din."

The rebels still control several other districts, including some in the east of the city which activists say are coming under very heavy bombardment, according to the BBC's Jim Muir in neighbouring Lebanon.

State television reported clashes there too, in the Hananu quarter. It said dozens of rebels had been killed or wounded, while others had thrown down their weapons and fled.

On Wednesday, Syria's state military launched a large operation to retake Aleppo from the rebel fighters, who overran some districts three weeks ago.

Aleppo is Syria's largest city, and Salah al-Din is considered a vital supply route for government troops coming from the south.

The Syrian Observatory said at least 26 people were killed in Aleppo on Wednesday - it said they were among 130 people killed across the country.

Meanwhile, three days after Prime Minister Riad Hijab defected to the opposition, the health minister Wael al-Halqi has been named as his replacement.



Mr al-Halqi is a Baath Party loyalist from Deraa in the south of the country, where the uprising began in March last year, and where violence is still raging, our correspondent says.

Riad Hijab was said to have crossed into Jordan on Wednesday.

Syrian friends

Syria's staunch regional ally, Iran, says the conference taking place in Tehran is being attended by countries with a "realistic" position on the crisis.

Western governments have expressed scepticism that Tehran can mediate, because of its close relationship with the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said the foreign ministers' summit would be a gathering of countries with "a correct and realistic position" on the Syrian conflict.

He said it would be an opportunity "to replace military clashes with political,

indigenous approaches to settle the disputes".

Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi was earlier quoted by state media as saying "12 to 13 countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America" would be taking part, but did not name them.

Kuwait's foreign ministry told al-Seyassah newspaper it would not be sending a representative. Lebanon has also said it will not attend while Russia is sending its ambassador and not Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

This is a meeting of people who are already close to Tehran and to the Syrian regime, our correspondent says.

There is deep scepticism in the West about Iran assuming a peacemaker role, given its recent strong commitments to the survival of the Assad government, he adds.

<http://pukmedia.co/english/index.php/77/international-news/1943-syria-crisis-rebels-lose-key-district-of-aleppo>

- **Kurdish member of Baghdad provincial council escapes life attempt**

Eman Ahmed Barzanji a Kurdish member of Baghdad Provincial Council escaped an assassination attempt Wednesday, when a sticky bomb attached to her car went off in al –Greaat area in northern Baghdad, a source in the Federal Interior Ministry told PUKmedia.

The explosion resulted in the death of a woman and wounding three of Barzanji's bodyguards, the source clarified.

<http://pukmedia.co/english/index.php/77/iraq/1951-kurdish-member-of-baghdad-provincial-council-escapes-life-attempt>

- **Fadhila Party: Iraqi government was forced to sign the agreement with Peshmerga.**

Karbala / NINA / Mohammed al-Hindawi , a leader of Fadhila Islamic Party (Virtue) said , that the federal government was forced to sign an agreement with Kurdistan region on the deployment of joint forces to protect the border with Syria on the region.

He told / NINA / "This agreement forced upon the Federal Government to protect

Iraqi borders with Turkey and Syria because the Kurds insist not to allow Federal Force to pass through their territory to the border between Iraq and the neighboring countries"

He added that "the federal government does not want to escalate the situation and this is a bit of wisdom at this stage, because the Kurdish side insist to go to all options, although the damage to the Iraqi and Kurdish people in general. "

He continued: "We do not think as the other party thinks, because resolve the crisis in this way is better than confrontation and bloodshed."

It is mentioned that the Ministry of Defense has reached a joint agreement with the Peshmerga forces to deploy troops in the border areas with Syria.

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

- **Kurdistan government discuss the outstanding issues with Baghdad.**



Baghdad / NINA / the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan region, under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Nijervan Barzani discussed yesterday evening at its regular meeting, the outstanding issues with the central government.

A statement by the presidency's office of the province said that " the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs submitted , a report on the disputed areas, which witnessed military movements by the Iraqi army, " noting that " all movements of the Iraqi military in those areas are clear violations and the behavior is contrary to the agreements signed between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the federal government in Baghdad, under the supervision of the United States as he put it "

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

- **National Accord Movement calls to reconsider the security file.**

BAGHDAD / Nina / the National Accord movement called to reconsider the security file and give it a social dimension makes it a collective responsibility to be achieved in partnership and promote a sense of national sovereignty and the concepts of justice and equality.

the movement condemned through its official spokesman Hadi Zalmi ,in a press release (Souaira bombing) in Wasit province saying "The terrorists are continuing, in cold blood, killing innocent Iraqis, in the month of mercy and guidance (Ramadan) , when their hands extended to commit a sinful crime by targeting innocent people in the city of Souaira in Wasit , where dozens of dead and wounded in the criminal bombings.

The movement demanded "the government to hold it constitutional and moral responsibilities in protecting the lives of citizens and their interests and impose security and stability.

It is mentioned that five people were killed and / 25/ were wounded when a car bomb went off northern city of Kut.

A source in Kut police told / NINA /that a car bomb, was parked in a market in Tanmeah village on the outskirts of Souaira , exploded and killed five people and wounded / 25 / in preliminary outcome and also led to the destruction of a number of shops and residential buildings near the site of blast.

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

- **Iraq 'lost fight against Arbil'**

PNA - The central government in Baghdad has lost its energy fight against the regional administration in Arbil, says Mehmet Sepil, the chief executive of Genel Energy, which is active in the lucrative northern Iraqi oil fields

The northern Iraqi oil fields have proven their potential, while the slow action in southern Iraq is pushing energy firms toward the north, according to Mehmet Sepil (inset) of Ankara-based Genel Energy. Hürriyet photos

The central Iraqi government in Baghdad has lost its energy struggle against the rapidly developing Kurdistan Regional

Government (KRG), which controls the autonomous north, according to Mehmet Sepil, the chief executive of Genel Energy, one of the most influential companies operating there.

The lingering problems between Baghdad and Arbil over opening the northern oil and gas fields to international companies has been solved “de facto,” Sepil told Anatolia news agency in an interview.

“Baghdad has lost its oil and natural gas fight against northern Iraq,” Sepil said. “Let’s take a look at companies operating there currently: Exxon, Chevron, Total and Gazprom. These are some of the largest oil companies in the world. What’s more, Exxon, Total and Gazprom are also working in Baghdad [oilfields]. Baghdad says it will put those who operate in northern Iraq on a blacklist, but the largest companies in the world are working there. This issue is over. In addition, Baghdad operates too slowly, so the oil companies are escaping from there and moving to the north. The energy fight is over today. The important question is when Baghdad will admit this.”

Ankara-based Genel recently bought 21 percent of U.S.-based Hawler Energy’s share in the Bina Bawi field, raising its share there to 44 percent, Sepil said.

“The region will see a large consolidation. The number of [oil]companies in northern Iraq, which is between 40 and 50 today, will fall to between 10 and 15 in two or three years,” Sepil said, adding that the region has already proved its potential. What is happening in northern Iraq is typical, according to Sepil. “First the small companies penetrate, they find the oil, and sell [the field] after benefiting from it. Now this is the process taking place in northern Iraq.”

Genel to transport Kurdish gas and oil to Turkey

The company’s goal is to bring Kurdish gas and oil to Turkey. Sepil estimates that northern Iraq’s oil production will be at 1 million barrels per day by 2015. “Turkey may be able to buy twice what it currently needs from northern Iraq soon. It may also buy some 10-15 billion cubic meters of natural gas from there.”

Turkey's natural gas demand has increased by some 2 million cubic meters annually due to rapid growth. The only way for Turkey to cut costs will be to diversify its current supplies from Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran.

Genel Energy was formed by the merger of Vallares and Genel Energy International in November 2011. Vallares was a fund founded by former BP CEO Hayward, British financier Nat Rothschild, banker Julian Metherell and investment manager Tom Daniel. Genel Energy International was owned by Mehmet Emin Karamehmet, a Turkish tycoon. The merged company trades on the London Stock Exchange.

After the merger, Genel had capital worth \$3 billion, Sepil said, noting that the company is determined to take its place in the consolidation in northern Iraq with its current potential of \$1.4 billion. The company's investment plans also include Africa. Genel is the largest producer in northern Iraq currently, Sepil said.

The Bina Bawi field has great potential, as does the Taq Taq field, where Genel is also active, Sepil said. "Currently OVM runs operations there, but with the acquisition

we became the holder of the majority shares. Bina Bawi's potential is equivalent to half a billion barrels, we believe. The capacity might even be higher."

The company is also willing to take part in other regional projects, as it is already working a shorter-term project to take Taq Taq oil to the Kirkuk-Ceyhan line, the major pipe between Iraq and Turkey.

<http://www.peyamner.com/English/PNAnews.aspx?ID=285219>

- **Iraqi forces not pulled back from disputed area**

PNA - The agreement between Iraq's government and its Kurdistan region still not implemented for pulling back their troops from a disputed area along side the Syrian border, Kurdish official said.

Along the Syrian border to ease tensions Jabbar Yawar, secretary general for the Peshmerga, said that the forces remained there under the command of Iraqi Premier and Kurdistan Region's President Massoud Barzani.

Baghdad and Kurdistan deployed troops to Syria's frontier to protect against any spillover but problems surfaced when Kurdish Peshmerga forces blocked Iraq army soldiers from entering a disputed area along the frontier.

Last Monday however Baghdad and Kurdistan region agreed to pull back troops from a disputed area.

The Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan region, Thursday, announced that the Ministry of Peshmerga has provided a report on the movements of the Iraqi army in the disputed areas, considering that this report proves "violations and irregularities" of the agreements signed between the Government of the region and the center

<http://www.peyamner.com/English/PNAnews.aspx?ID=285208>

2. IRAN

- **Iran FM decries Western 'logic of power' on Syria**

Iran's top diplomat Ali Akbar Salehi
Fri Aug 10, 2012 8:47AM GMT

Westerners think that they can control everything via military might, but such policy failed in Iraq and Afghanistan and will also be defeated in Syria.”

Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi

Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi has lashed out at Western countries for their pursuit of 'the failed logic of power' instead of 'the power of logic' over the Syrian unrest.

“Westerners think that they can control everything via military might, but such policy failed in Iraq and Afghanistan and will also be defeated in Syria,” Salehi said in a press conference after a day-long consultative meeting on Syria in Tehran on Thursday.

It would be a mistake to topple the Syrian government by mounting pressure on it, taking off-the-cuff measures and running interference in the country's affairs, he added.

He warned against the spread of extremism in case of the continuation of the Syrian crisis, calling on all countries,

particularly the regional states, to exercise prudence in order to settle the unrest in the Arab country.

The Iranian minister emphasized that a 'Syrian-Syrian' solution without any foreign meddling would be the best way to resolve the unrest in the country, saying the Syrian people have national sovereignty and can make decision in this regard.

Salehi once again voiced Iran's readiness to prepare the necessary ground for resolving the Syrian unrest and expressed hope that the government and insurgents would declare a ceasefire to stop bloodshed in the country.

He further announced that Syrian Minister for National Reconciliation Ali Haidar would make a visit to Tehran.

The top Iranian diplomat added that Iran has been in contact with insurgents in Syria since almost a year ago and noted that there are different groups among the insurgents including those inside and outside the country.

There is a difference of views between Iran and the insurgents in Syria while in some occasions both sides share common ideas, he noted.

Salehi said, in line with its principles, Iran believes that every nation should enjoy civil rights including human rights, justice and freedom, independence and respect.

He pointed to Iran's proposal to host talks between the Syrian government and insurgents in a bid to end the 16-month violence in the Arab nation and stated that most insurgents are ready to hold negotiations with the government in Iran without any precondition.

On July 16, Salehi first voiced Iran's preparedness to facilitate dialogue between the Syrian government and insurgents.

Syria has been experiencing unrest since mid-March 2011.

While the West and the Syrian opposition accuse the government of the killings, Damascus blames "outlaws, saboteurs and armed terrorist groups" for the unrest,

insisting that it is being orchestrated from abroad.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/08/10/255464/iran-raps-wests-logic-of-power-on-syria/>

- **Iran to Participate in OIC Extraordinary Summit in Mecca**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi confirmed that an Iranian delegation will take part in the emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Mecca.

Speaking to reporters here in Tehran on Thursday evening, Salehi stated that Iran will attend the OIC meeting to help reduce differences through dialogue.

"By attending the summit, we will express our viewpoints and try to bridge the gaps and narrow the differences through dialog," the Iranian minister stated.



"The Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to heal the rifts and reduce the differences, and focus more on joint issues through such talks."

He announced that the Iranian delegation will hold talks with Saudi officials on regional developments.

The summit will be held in the presence of top officials from Muslim countries in Mecca on August 14-15.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9104253569>

- **'NATO awaits perfect pretext to enter Syria'**

I think NATO is waiting for the proper moment. My experience of over 40 years in the Anti-war movement has been that they have time tables, they have schedules, and they like to create pretexts by which to sell their next war."

A political analyst says NATO is silent over the situation in Syria because it awaits the opportunity and the perfect pretext to enter the Arab nation.

Press TV has conducted an interview with the Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War's Ken Stone to further discuss the situation in Syria.

The following is the transcription of the interview.

Press TV Turkey has just accused Syrian President Bashar al-Assad of arming the Kurdish militant group, the PKK that has fought the Turks for decades. If true, how many more reasons do you think Turkey is going to need before actually entering Syria? Because we know that the downing of that Turkish jet by Syria is one of the incidents that has provoked Turkey in a sense and it seems this is another one in a series of events now.

Stone Well, I'll take my cue from the previous speakers and I agree that Turkey is the most-likely entry to a regional war. I think Turkey, as a member of NATO will probably try to act as the cat's paw for NATO by making some kind of incursion at some point into Syria. I think that's the real danger. I don't know when this will take place, or what more excuses or pretexts Turkey might need.

I think now that Aleppo has been re-secured by the government of Syria, they will be re-evaluating their time table, that is to say the so-called Friends of Syria, will be re-evaluating their time tables, their schedules and the means by which they attempt to carry out this illegal and inhumane attack and spread terrorism within the sovereign country of Syria.

Press TV Why do you think NATO has been so quiet?

Stone I think NATO is waiting for the proper moment. My experience of over 40 years in the Anti-war movement has been that they have time tables, they have schedules, and they like to create pretexts by which to sell their next war. They need something they can project as a humanitarian intervention. For example in Libya, the so-called Viagra for rape scheme that they sold or in Iraq, when the so-called Kuwaiti incubator babies scam and the so-called protection of the Kosovars in the former Yugoslavia.

I think NATO is waiting in the wings, for the right moment, the right pretext and the right excuse, and the right humanitarian justification, which is

basically a smoke screen behind which they carry on their old strategies, these old colonial powers like Britain, France, Italy, and the United States. They want to re-colonize the Middle East and Central Asia.

Press TV I think between point A and B, there has got to be, on the scenario, that Assad does have to leave power. Aren't the Americans and their allies worried about these supplies, such as there has been in Turkey arming the militants with stinger missiles that that could be used against them? Are they ready for that type of scenario to unfold because that is one of the consequences isn't it?

Stone I think the strategy being followed by the so-called Friends of Syria is a reckless strategy and of course, on the one hand they are talking about the human rights of the people of Syria. On the other hand, they are taking away from the people of Syria the right of the nation's self determination.

What I liked about the Iranian Foreign Minister [Ali Akbar Salehi] said that only the Syrian people have the right to determine their own future, nobody else.

They have the right to self determination. These countries who are in the Friends of Syria, including unfortunately Canada, are trying to rig the end of the game. They are trying to make it so that the only possible outcome is regime change. But I don't think that that is the only possible outcome.

There are other possible outcomes. For example, I applaud your minister for having the Tehran summit you're talking about where 30 countries will come and try to continue the UN initiative under Kofi Annan to find a peaceful solution through dialogue, not through war. That's another possible solution and I applaud the minister of Iran for doing that.

Press TV One of the things we have not discussed is Israel. How much of a role do you see Israel playing? Our guest there talked about Susan Rice and perhaps some other politicians. There's a province in Turkey said to be running them up with Mossad trainers, not to mention the CIA running around there training these militants. But how much is Israel behind the scenes here in terms of causing what's happening on the ground in Syria?

Stone Israel was only behind the scenes until yesterday. Today, or last night, according to Press TV, the intelligence minister of Israel, announced that Israel is totally in favor of regime change in Syria. And of course it would be because what advantage would there be for Israel literally? It would eliminate an ally of Iran, it might remove the Russian military base from Tartus. A change in regime in Syria would mean that the regime would no longer support the Hezbollah in Lebanon.

A change in regime in Syria might mean that a new government might let Israel stay permanently and annex the Golan Heights. So, another regime in Syria might also mean no support for Palestinian resistance. So Israel has everything to gain from an intervention in Syria and a regime change there.

Its interests are tied identically to those of the United States and the so-called Friends of Syria. I mentioned it was a reckless thing what the Turks are doing because the [Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip] Erdogan has the Illusions of Grandeur, but I think that we've seen from wars in the 20th century that something that can start quite small can

blow up into a regional war and even a world war.

It's reckless what they're doing. But I wanted to say one more thing, and that is not only what is happening in Tehran is a good thing and those countries that have appeared there should be applauded, but the people in those countries that are there for example Canada, not represented in Tehran. Canada is a member of the Friends of Syria. People in Canada and other countries who are not going to be in Tehran, they should be doing things. They should kick up a fuss. They should hold their governments to account. They should be sending letters to their members of parliament. They should be holding demonstrations and marches. This is the time to do it.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/08/10/255466/nato-after-opportunity-to-enter-syria/>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Israel OKs Egypt attack helicopters in Sinai**

By HERB KEINON, REUTERS08/09/2012
21:35Approval necessary due to limits on

weaponry in area dictated by Camp David accords; Barak requested to allow helicopters.

The security cabinet on Thursday approved a request from Defense Minister Ehud Barak to allow Egypt to deploy five attack helicopters in Sinai.

The approval was necessary because under the Camp David Accords there are strict limits on the type of weaponry that can be brought into the peninsula.

Related:

Hamas, Fatah squabble in aftermath of Sinai attack

'Sinai terrorists supported from Afghanistan, Iraq'

The approval came a day after the Egyptian army used air power against terrorists in the region.

Barak said Egypt was acting “to an extent and with a determination that I cannot previously recall.”

“Whether this ends with [its] regained control of Sinai and allows us not to worry as much as we have in the past few

months, this I do not know,” he told Israel Radio.

Meanwhile, gunmen fired shots at a police station in El- Arish, the main administrative center of North Sinai, on Thursday, as an Egyptian military offensive there entered its second day.

Hundreds of troops in armored cars drove out of the town to hunt Islamists blamed for killing 16 Egyptian border guards on Sunday, the biggest spike in violence that has been growing steadily since last year’s overthrow of president Hosni Mubarak.

The gunfire in El-Arish, the nerve center of the government’s otherwise shaky control of the North Sinai region, showed how difficult it will be for Egypt to impose order. It followed attacks on checkpoints in the town on Wednesday.

Israel has welcomed Egypt’s offensive while continuing to express worries about the deteriorating situation in Sinai, home to anti-Israeli gunmen, Beduin tribes angered by neglect by Cairo, gun-runners, drug smugglers and al-Qaida sympathizers.

The unidentified gunmen in El-Arish fled before police could respond, a security source said, denying a report by state television that police had fought back.

Hundreds of troops and dozens of military vehicles had reached the town, security sources said, part of an offensive not seen since the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Dozens of armored vehicles, some equipped with machine guns, could then be seen driving out of El- Arish toward the settlement of Sheikh Zuwaid that military aircraft attacked on Wednesday. The troops saluted passersby and flashed victory signs, or filmed their departure with video cameras.

Egypt's President Mohamed Morsy on Wednesday fired the region's governor and country's intelligence chief in response to public anger over Sunday's attack.

No one has claimed responsibility for the assault, in which the assailants seized two armored vehicles to storm the Kerem Shalom border crossing with Israel. One made it through before the attackers were killed by Israeli fire.

Israel says Islamists based in Sinai and Palestinian hardliners in neighboring Gaza pose a growing threat to its border. Palestinians use illegal tunnels to smuggle in guns and travel across to join those on the Egyptian side.

Israel has also been wary of Morsy's ideological affinity with Hamas, the Islamist group ruling Gaza, fearing he would take a softer position on Palestinian terrorism than Mubarak.

Morsy has brushed aside accusations that his politics would make it difficult for him to take a strong stance against groups sworn to destroy Israel.

His response to Sunday's attack, which happened during the evening iftar meal that breaks the daytime fast during Ramadan, is underpinned by public anger over the deaths of the border guards.

In Egypt, there is wide respect for rank-and-file soldiers who are often poorly paid conscripts working in isolated places far from their families.

Comments suggesting outgoing intelligence chief Mourad Mwafi had been

aware of a threat but took no action fueled that anger – despite suggestions he had been used as a scapegoat.

“... We never imagined that a Muslim would kill his Muslim brother at iftar,” Egypt’s state news agency MENA quoted Mwafi as telling his Turkish counterpart.

Morsy’s powers, are in any case, hemmed in by the army, which retains a strong role in setting security policy.

Residents in El-Arish, meanwhile, welcomed the security sweep, seeing it as an opportunity to curb criminality among Beduin tribes, including those in Sheikh Zuwaid, who make their living smuggling goods and people through a network of more than 1,000 tunnels into Gaza.

“We want the army to return to the border,” 45- year-old shopkeeper Hassan Mohamed said. “The tunnels have destroyed the lives of people in El-Arish. We want them to hit the Beduin hard.”

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<http://www.ipost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=280732>

- **'Netanyahu, Barak mulling fall strike on Iran'**

Yedioth Ahronoth says PM, defense minister said to be in favor of striking Tehran's nuclear facilities before US elections in November despite IDF's objections

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak advocate an attack of Iran's nuclear facilities in the upcoming fall, Yedioth Ahronoth's senior commentators Nahum Barnea and Shimon Shiffer reported Friday.

According to Barnea and Shiffer, "Not a single state official or military official or even the president – supports an Israeli attack in Iran."

The report stated that Netanyahu and Barak believe that setting back Iran's nuclear project is worth the risk – while defense officials believe the opposite to be true. The report also referred to Netanyahu's certainty that US President Barack Obama will not stop Iran's nuclear development on time.

Barnea and Shiffer referred to the fact that advisors from both the PM's office and the White House are aware of the possibility that an Israeli action just before the elections might cause an embarrassment to Obama's administration and advance his Republican opponent Mitt Romney.

"In America, many, including government officials, are convinced that the military action that Netanyahu and Barack are promoting is set to cause one thing – force America into a war with Iran against its will. Israel will need the Americans' help", Barnea and Shiffer wrote.

According to Yedioth Ahronoth, Barak admits it is clear that Iran will respond to an attack on its nuclear facilities, also by utilizing Hezbollah.

This will result in casualties and fatalities and every day of fighting will cost NIS 1.5 billion (approx. \$380,000).

Still, the defense minister further argues that Israel "will not be destroyed" and that such an operation will not make Israel hated across the globe. In Barak's opinion, those in the IDF who oppose an attack in Iran are afraid of a commission of inquiry. Barak therefore made it clear that everyone against an attack is free to resign.

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4266973,00.html>

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- **Hamas urges Egypt to open Rafah crossing**

Haniyeh calls on Morsi to open border crossing closed since Sunday's Sinai attack, says 'Gaza could never be anything but a source of stability for Egypt'
Reuters

The head of the Hamas government in Gaza urged Egypt on Thursday to open a vital border crossing closed since gunmen killed 16 Egyptian guards in neighboring Sinai on Sunday.

Ismail Haniyeh pledged his support for Egypt's investigations of the attack, which has led to the biggest Egyptian military assault in the Sinai Peninsula in nearly 40 years.

"At the same time I call upon my brother, Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi to

open the Rafah crossing, to regain a lifeline for Gaza," Haniyeh said at a dinner ending the daylong Ramadan fast.

"Gaza could never be anything but a source of stability for Egypt," Haniyeh added, saying those responsible for the Sinai slayings were conspiring to tighten an Israeli blockade on Gaza in force since Hamas seized control of the territory in 2007.

Gaza's Islamist rulers have ruled out suggestions that Palestinian gunmen took part in the Sinai massacre, and have criticized Cairo for imposing "collective punishment" on the Strip.

The Rafah crossing normally sees some 800 people a day leave for Egypt and beyond, and is the only window on the world for the vast majority of Gazans.

Who is behind Sinai attack?

No one has claimed responsibility for Sunday's assault, in which the assailants seized two armored vehicles to storm an Israeli border crossing. One made it through before the attackers were killed by Israeli fire. The incident was the

deadliest along the Israeli-Sinai border in decades.

In addition to challenging the durability of a 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty already strained by Western ally Hosni Mubarak's fall from power last year, the violence also raised questions about ties between Egypt's nascent Muslim Brotherhood-led government and Hamas in Gaza.

Egyptian officials suggested initially that Palestinian gunmen were involved in the Sinai attack.

Haniyeh denied this, arguing that the attack's "prime beneficiary was the occupation," a common shorthand for Israel by Hamas officials whose ideology rejects Israel's existence as a Jewish state.

"Gaza is innocent of this crime. Neither our investigations nor our contacts have proven so far anyone from Gaza was involved," Haniyeh said.

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,734,0,L-4266854,00.html>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

• Egypt demands Hamas surrender top Salafi operatives

Cairo demands extradition of three Army of Islam operatives implicated in Sunday's deadly terror attack in Sinai. Crackdown on peninsula's terror hubs continues; 60 gunmen killed

Cairo has demanded that Hamas extradite three top operatives with the Salafi terror group Army of Islam, who authorities say have been implicated in Sunday's deadly terror attack, the London-based Arab newspaper Al-Sharq Al-Awsat reported Friday.

According to the report, Hamas is inclined to refuse.

Sixteen Egyptian border patrolmen were killed in the attack, prompting an unprecedented military sweep of Sinai by Cairo's military, with aim of purging the area of its terror hubs.

Thus far, Egyptian media reported that 60 gunmen were killed. Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi's forces are said to be hunting over 2,000 terrorists.

Egypt is seeking the arrest of AOI leader Mumtaz Durmush as well as two of his deputies.

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4266937,00.html>

Hamas neither confirmed no denied the demand, but top Politburo delegate in Gaza Mahmoud al-Zahar confirmed that Egypt had "expressed interest in several individuals."

- **Morsy supports new committee to oversee state, private media**

President Mohamed Morsy said Thursday that he supports the idea of forming a national council to oversee state and private media.

Hamas spokesman in the Palestinian Parliament Dr. Salah Bardawil, however, denied any such petition was made.

During the radio program "The people ask and the president answers," Morsy said media figures should be more transparent in how they report on news, and should also be committed to a higher standard of ethics in journalism.

Al-Sharq Al-Awsat's sources said that Gaza's rulers are unlikely to meet the demand, as Hamas believes that even if Gaza-based Salafi gunmen participated in the attack, it is likely that it was a "private initiative" rather than a sanctioned AOI operation.

"I know that media figures support what's in the best interests of the nation," Morsy said, adding that he is sure the Egyptian media will attain a higher level of quality in the coming period, while still leaving room for different view points.

Hamas also wishes to distance itself from Egypt's latest "anti-Gaza" campaign.

The demand to turn over the three Salafist militants followed a similar demand made by Egypt on Thursday this time to turn over three senior members of Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades – the group's military wing.

Figures in the Muslim Brotherhood have complained on several occasions about media bias against Islamists, particularly as the Brotherhood became prominent in the political arena after the January 2011 revolution.

Concerns regarding a Brotherhood stranglehold over media have risen after Brotherhood-member Salah Abdel Maqsooud was named the new information and telecommunications minister last Thursday. The Brotherhood-dominated Shura Council was also responsible for selecting the new editors-in-chief of state-run newspapers, despite objections from journalists and activists over the potential for bias in the selection process.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/morsy-supports-new-committee-oversee-state-private-media>

- **Pro-Islamist elected to head Libya assembly**

Prominent member of Libyan National Salvation Front Mohamed Al-Megaryef is elected president of new legislative assembly that is assigned task of drafting new constitution

Mohammed Magarief (C) poses for a picture with members of congress, after winning the presidency in the National Congress, at a hotel in Tripoli, August 9, 2012. (Photo: Reuters)

Libya's newly empowered top legislative body elected as its president late on Thursday a veteran opponent of Muammar Gaddafi's ousted regime who is seen as pro-Islamist.



Mohamed al-Megaryef, a founding member of the Libyan National Salvation Front, which grouped exiled opponents of the now slain dictator, defeated liberal independent Ali Zidane in a run-off by 113 votes to 85 in the 200-member General National Congress.

The vote in the assembly, elected in landmark polls on July 7, came after the National Transitional Council handed over power on Wednesday, in a symbolic move marking the first peaceful transition in Libya's modern history after four decades of Gaddafi's iron-fisted rule.

The assembly is tasked with choosing an interim government that will steer the country until fresh elections can be held

under a new constitution to be drafted by a panel of 60 members.

Its new president is an economist with a doctorate from Britain, who held leading posts in the Gaddafi regime in the 1970s before defecting in 1980 to join the opposition in exile.

Hounded by Gaddafi's intelligence service, Megaryef survived assassination attempts in Rome in 1981, in Casablanca in 1984 and in Madrid in 1985, his daughter Asma said.

The Gaddafi regime also took reprisals against family members who stayed in Libya, jailing several of his brothers.

Regarded as a moderate Islamist close to the Muslim Brotherhood, Megaryef was elected to the assembly on the ticket of his former exiled grouping, now renamed the National Front Party.

A member of the Brotherhood's Justice and Construction Party (JCP), who asked not to be identified, said Megaryef's election was "a victory for the Islamists."

But an independent assembly member said several members voted for him on geographical and not religious or political grounds.

Megaryef was born in 1940 in Libya's second city Benghazi, which was the cradle of last year's uprising but many of whose residents have complained their role has not been sufficiently rewarded in the post-Gaddafi Libya.

At the session, which was broadcast live on state television and ran on into the early hours of Friday, the assembly also elected the first of two vice presidents.

Jommaa Atiga, an independent from Libya's third-largest city Misrata, which resisted a devastating siege by Gaddafi's forces during last year's uprising, defeated JCP candidate Salah al-Makhzum.

The assembly adjourned its session at 3:30 am (0130 GMT) without electing a second vice president.

Under the interim constitution, decisions in the assembly require a two-thirds majority to pass, making cooperation necessary to avoid gridlock in the delicate transition.

The majority of the assembly's 200 seats were set aside for independent candidates, many of whose loyalties and ideologies remain unclear but who are being wooed by various blocs.

Political parties were allowed to contest just 80 of the seats.

The liberal National Forces Alliance of Mahmud Jibril, who served as premier during last year's conflict, won 39 on its own. It can also count on the support of a centrist party led by Ali Tarhuni, who held several key posts during last year's revolt, and which won two seats.

The Brotherhood's JCP took 17 seats but its leader, Mohammed Sawan, has said it can match the support of Jibril's party in the assembly with the backing of independents.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/50072/World/Region/ProIslamist-elected-to-head-Libya-assembly.aspx>

- **Egypt military source claims six 'terrorists' arrested in Sinai: State TV**

Egyptian state TV cites a military source, saying six 'terrorists' have been arrested in Sinai Friday morning

An Egyptian military source stated on Friday that the Armed Forces had arrested six "terrorists" in Sinai after an attack on a police station in the area earlier this week which killed 16 border guards, state television reported.

Since Tuesday, Egypt has poured troops into North Sinai to clamp down on 'militants' in the Israeli border region. Army commanders said as many as 20 people it considered terrorists were killed in the offensive.

Lawlessness has been growing in North Sinai, a region awash with guns and bristling with resentment against Cairo, since the ouster of former president Hosni Mubarak in February last year.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/50071/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-military-source-claims-six-terrorists-arrest.aspx>

- **'Egypt general' claims Hamas offshoot behind Sinai attack: CNN**

US network CNN cites anonymous 'Egyptian general' who attributed Sunday's Sinai border attack to the Hamas breakaway group 'Al-Galgala Army'

Egyptian jihadist groups: A threat to domestic, regional security?

According to US cable network CNN, an unnamed "general" who allegedly works in the Egyptian intelligence apparatus, claimed on Thursday that Sunday's Sinai border attack might have been the work of the "Al-Galgala Army," which, he alleged, consists of former Hamas members who broke away from the Gaza-based group due to their "extreme ideologies."

The general, who spoke anonymously, asserted that the organisation boasts "hundreds" of militants in the region. Its leader, Abdul-Latif Moussa, was killed by Hamas in 2009.

The general cited by CNN also claimed the attackers had entered Egypt's Sinai Peninsula through tunnels from the besieged Gaza Strip. He added that the

attack had required the help of Bedouin tribesmen, who, he alleged, had been recruited through financial incentives.

The general went on to say Israel had provided Egypt with the names of "nine terrorists" involved in the attack, stating they were part of a group dubbed "Tawheed wal Jihad," based in Gaza and parts of the Sinai Peninsula.

CNN's unnamed source also said the Egyptian military had sent reinforcements to Sinai on Thursday based on information provided by Israel.

So-called "jihadists" were accused last year of launching an attack on a police station in the city of Al-Arish in northern Sinai in which five Egyptian security personnel were killed.

Some "Salafist jihadists" were also jailed on charges of participating in attacks on Sinai tourist destinations in 2004 and 2005 that killed some 125 people at the Red Sea beach resorts of Sharm Al-Sheikh, Dahab and Taba. No evidence of their involvement in the attacks, however, was ever produced.

On Sunday evening, an attack by unknown assailants near Egypt's border with the Gaza Strip left 16 border guards dead and several others injured. Islamist groups, including Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Gaza Strip-based Hamas, unanimously condemned the attack.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/50063/Egypt/Politics/-Egypt-general-claims-Hamas-offshoot-behind-Sinai-.aspx>

- **Egypt's Morsi to appoint Brotherhood figure as deputy chief-of-staff: Sources**

Leading Muslim Brotherhood member Asaad El-Sheikha set to become president's deputy chief-of-staff, say sources close to Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi

Sources close to Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi on Thursday said that leading Muslim Brotherhood member Asaad El-Sheikha was set to take up the post of the president's deputy chief-of-staff.

This comes one day after former diplomat Mohamed Fathi Refaa El-Tahtawi was appointed presidential chief-of-staff.

In another appointment Thursday, Essam El-Haddad, member of the Brotherhood's guidance bureau, was named presidential advisor for foreign affairs.

The same sources added that the presidential advisory team was still in the process of being drawn up. They went on to say that advisory team members were being selected based on their respective qualifications and not on their political orientations.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/50060/Egypt/Politics-/Egypts-Morsi-to-appoint-Brotherhood-figure-as-depu.aspx>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **MP hits back at Hezbollah's Raad, defends Information Branch**

Future bloc MP Ghazi Youssef retorted Friday to Hezbollah MP Mohammad Raad's remarks on the detention of former Information Minister Michel Samaha.

“The [ongoing] investigation will reveal that Samaha’s arrest is not a security fabrication,” Youssef told Voice of Lebanon (100.5) radio.

Raad on Thursday rebuffed the arrest operation, saying: “We will not remain silent on Samaha’s detention and some judges are associated with suspicious security agencies.”

“These are security fabrications which we have experienced for a long time,” Raad added in a statement.

However, Youssef said he “trusted the security agency that is in charge of the probe, since it thwarted all attempts that sought to generate strife in [Lebanon].”

“Why didn’t this security agency [i.e. Internal Security Agency Information Branch] create fabrications when it arrested a number of Israeli [spies], including agents affiliated with Hezbollah?” Youssef inquired during the interview with VOL.

The Future bloc is affiliated with the Western-backed March 14 alliance, a vociferous critic of the Syrian regime.

The arrest of Samaha, information minister under slain former Premier Rafiq Hariri, was made on the order of Lebanon's attorney general at his residence in Khenshara, 30 kilometers north of Beirut.

According to a local television station, Samaha confessed under interrogation that he had transferred explosives from Syria to Lebanon with Damascus’ knowledge.

Samaha is considered close to the embattled Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

Lebanon’s Shiite group Hezbollah is mainly backed by Iran and Syria. The group heads the pro-Syrian regime March 8 alliance in Lebanon.

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=426649>

- **Lebanese ally of Syria’s Assad detained**

Lebanese police officers stand guard at the entrance of a residential building where former government minister

Michel Samaha resides in Beirut on Thursday (AFP photo)

BEIRUT — A former Lebanese government minister with close ties to Syrian President Bashar Assad was detained near Beirut on Thursday for questioning over what the Lebanese prime minister described as security-related matters.

Michel Samaha was taken into custody in the early hours. There were no official details of what he was being questioned about. His supporters said his detention was political, asking why he had been detained in the middle of the night.

Elias Aoun, head of the Lebanese journalists' union, said Prime Minister Najib Mikati had told him Samaha had been held following an order from the acting public prosecutor.

Investigators had confiscated “three or four telephones, a laptop and two or three films” while searching his house in the town of Metn northeast of Beirut, Malek Sayed, a lawyer for Samaha, told Al Manar TV.

Samaha has been an outspoken supporter of Assad during the 17-month-old uprising against his rule, echoing an official Syrian narrative that portrays the anti-Assad opposition as terrorists.

He served as a minister in three Lebanese governments between 1992 and 2004 — a period when Syria dominated politics and security in its smaller neighbour. Samaha is also a former member of parliament.

In 2007, he was named on a White House-issued list of Lebanese and Syrian figures suspected of working to undermine Lebanon's stability and the Western-backed Beirut government in office at the time.

The list included Assef Shawkat, a senior Syrian security official and Assad's brother-in-law, who was killed in a bomb blast in Damascus last month.

Further details on Samaha's detention were not immediately available. Live television footage showed members of the security forces searching his house.

<http://jordantimes.com/lebanese-ally-of-syrias-assad-detained>

- **Syrians flee Aleppo, rebels plan new push**

A Syrian gunman shoots on the air during the funeral of 29 year-old Free Syrian Army fighter, Husain Al-Ali, who was killed during clashes in Aleppo, in the town of Marea on the outskirts of Aleppo city, Syria, Thursday, Aug. 9, 2012 (AP Photo/Khalil Hamra)

ALEPPO - Rebels fighting Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces in Aleppo promised a counter-attack on Friday after losing ground earlier and residents fled in cars crammed with belongings during a lull in fighting.

The rebels were pushed back from the Salaheddin district on Thursday by troops seeking to reestablish control over Syria's largest city and its economic hub - a crucial arena in a struggle which the United Nations said would have no winner.

"I have about 60 men positioned strategically at the frontline and we are preparing a new attack today," said Abu Jamil, a rebel commander, saying sniper fire in Salaheddine had prevented his men

from retrieving a comrade's body for two days.

Reuters journalists saw residents streaming out of Aleppo, seizing on a calm spell to pack vehicles with mattresses, fridges and toys. At least two air force planes flew overhead.

Random shooting echoed from inside Salaheddine, a former rebel stronghold that controls access to Aleppo from the south, and an unmanned drone aircraft buzzed directly overhead.

Some residents of the shattered neighbourhood slipped back to try to salvage possessions, despite army snipers lurking there. Two civilians were hit by gunfire in nearby streets.

One, apparently shot in the buttocks, was dragged off the street by rebels and treated by medics before being taken to a field clinic. A second man was wounded in the back and arm. Blood soaked through the sleeve of his yellow jacket and his face was contorted in pain as rescuers put him in a vehicle.

Assad is fighting to crush a rebellion that aims to end his family's four decades in charge of Syria. A member of the country's Alawite minority, Assad is engaged in an all-consuming fight with mostly Sunni Muslim foes who Damascus says are backed by Sunni-led states such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey.

Though sympathetic to the rebels, neither these countries nor Western powers have intervened militarily. Russia and China have blocked any UN Security Council action against Syria.

Iran, Syria's closest foreign ally, called for "serious and inclusive" talks between the government and opposition at a meeting of states sympathetic to Assad in Tehran on Thursday.

"There will be no winner in Syria," UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said in a message to the conference. "Now, we face the grim possibility of long-term civil war destroying Syria's rich tapestry of interwoven communities."

Diplomats said veteran Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi could be named next week to replace the UN-Arab League

envoy to Syria, Kofi Annan, who quit in frustration at the deadlock among veto-wielding powers at the United Nations.

Britain said on Friday it would increase non-lethal aid to Syria's opposition, including the rebel Free Syrian Army.

Foreign Secretary William Hague wrote in the Times newspaper that he had also instructed a senior diplomat to give Assad's foes "a tough message that they must observe human rights standards, whatever horrors are perpetrated by the regime".

Hague said the extra money for non-lethal aid totalled 5 million pounds (\$7.8 million) and was separate from Britain's existing humanitarian programmes in Syria.

"This is not taking sides in a civil war," Hague wrote of the contacts with the opposition. "The risk of total disorder and a power vacuum is so great that we must build relationships now with those who may govern Syria in the future."

Assad's offensive in Aleppo follows a successful drive to expel rebels from parts of Damascus they had seized after a bomb

blast killed four of his senior aides on July 18.

His grip on the country has been eroded and his authority was further shaken by his prime minister's defection this week.

Assad on Thursday appointed Wael Al Halki, a Sunni, to replace Riyad Hijab who had spent only two months in the job before making a dramatic escape across the border to Jordan.

But the Syrian leader appears determined to fight on, whatever the cost in human lives and destruction.

Assad's forces have been using heavy artillery and air power to subdue rebel-held areas. Reuters journalists saw a fighter jet diving and firing rockets over Tel Rifaat, 35 km north of Aleppo on Thursday, causing villagers to flee in panic. But large areas of Syria have fallen out of Assad's control.

Aleppo has been pounded by artillery for days. A rebel commander said on Thursday that 250 people had been killed in recent days in the Salaheddine district.

But as yet, there has been no sign of the infantry advance required for Assad to take full control of the city.

Rebel commander Abu Furat Al Garabolsy told Reuters one reason could be faltering morale among Assad's troops, but said the military might also be delaying a full-scale ground assault to tire rebels with bombardment and deplete their ammunition.

Growing numbers of civilians are fleeing the fighting in Aleppo and elsewhere. Nearly 150,000 Syrian refugees have been registered in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq since the conflict began 17 months ago, the United Nations said on Friday.

The total includes 50,227 recorded in Turkey, where more than 6,000 Syrians arrived this week alone, it said.

"There certainly in the past week has been a sharp increase in the numbers arriving in Turkey, and there many of the people are coming from Aleppo and surrounding villages," said Adrian Edwards, spokesman of the UNHCR refugee agency.

<http://jordantimes.com/syrians-leave-aleppo-rebels-plan-new-push>

- **Tunisia revolution birthplace rises again**

Journalists and a resident run for cover as clouds of tear gas rise down a street in Sidi Bouzid, during clashes between riot police and local residents protesting against the current Islamist-led government and their alleged inaction in improving the lives of those in the region, on Thursday (AFP photo by Mokhtar Kahouli)

SIDI BOUZID, Tunisia — Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets on Thursday to disperse a protest in the central Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, birthplace of last year's revolution, an AFP journalist reported.

Hundreds of demonstrators, demanding the resignation of the Islamist-led government, tried to force their way into the provincial government headquarters, before the police fired tear gas and warning shots into the air.

The protesters broke through the entrance to the compound, but when the shots and tear gas were fired, the

panicked crowd scattered, the journalist said.

One person wounded by a rubber bullet and four others affected by the tear gas were taken to hospital, an official there said, adding that none of them was seriously hurt.

The demonstrators had been chanting anti-government slogans such as "The people want the regime to fall!" accusing the ruling elite of "hypocrisy" and demanding the right to work.

Several opposition groups took part in the protest, including the Republican Party, the Tunisian Workers Party and Al Watan, as well as political independents.

"The people's demands for an improvement in their quality of life are becoming more and more insistent, but unfortunately the government is not there to serve the people," Mohammed Ghadri, a member of the Republican Party, told AFP.

A similar incident took place at the end of June, when protesters angered over their living conditions attacked the same

building, hurling rocks and burning tyres, with police firing tear gas to disperse them.

The Tunisian Workers Party denounced the forceful tactics used by the police on Thursday and reiterated its support for the protesters' demands, including the dismissal of the provincial governor, the head of the national guard and the public prosecutor.

It also called for the freeing of four protesters it said were arrested.

Sidi Bouzid is where the uprising began that eventually toppled former dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and touched off the Arab Spring, when a street vendor immolated himself in December 2010 in protest over his own precarious livelihood.

The town is located in a particularly marginalised region, and little has improved since the revolution, according to analysts.

"The residents of Sidi Bouzid live in very difficult conditions, especially with the water and electricity cuts seen recently," said political expert Ahmed Manai.

"These protests were to be expected."

Poor living conditions, including high youth unemployment, were a driving factor behind the revolution.

Despite signs of an economic recovery this year, many people remain frustrated by the government's failure to improve their social circumstances, which has led to strikes and confrontations with the police.

The forceful disruption of Thursday's protest comes amid heightened criticism of the government by opposition and civil society groups, which accuse it of increasingly authoritarian and Islamist tendencies.

Several NGOs have accused Ennahda, which leads the ruling tripartite coalition, of seeking to curtail freedom of expression, most recently with a draft law to criminalise offences against "sacred values" that could carry a two-year jail term.

Another controversy has flared up over a proposed article in the new constitution that refers to the "complementarity" of men to women rather than their equality.

Around 200 protesters from different opposition groups gathered outside the National Constituent Assembly in Tunis on Thursday to denounce the proposal.

Some of them tried to force open the entrance to the parliament but were stopped by the police.

One of those present, Jawher Ben Mbarek, who heads the Doustourna (Our Constitution) network, said it was the first protest that had brought all the different opposition groups together.

Ennahda has rejected the criticisms levelled against it, with historic party leader Rached Ghannouchi saying earlier this week the hostile language of the media and strike calls threatened “the unity of the country”.

<http://jordantimes.com/tunisia-revolution-birthplace-rises-again>

6. SYRIA

- **Syria's Assad names new prime minister after predecessor's defection**

Days after PM Riyad Hijab defected, Syria's president Al-Assad appoint Health Minister Wael al-Halki as a new premier
Reuters , Thursday 9 Aug 2012

'Retired' Guards among Syria hostages: Iran

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad appointed Health Minister Wael al-Halki as prime minister on Thursday, after the defection earlier this week of Prime Minister Riyad Hijab.

Halki, born in 1964, is from the southern province of Deraa where the uprising against four decades of Assad family rule erupted. He replaces caretaker premier Omar Ghalawanji who was appointed hours after Hijab's defection.

Like Hijab, Halki is from Syria's Sunni Muslim majority. Sunnis have been the driving force of the 17-month-old uprising.

Assad's Alawite minority, an offshoot of Shi'ite Islam, dominates political and military power circles.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/50024/World/Region/Syrias-Assad->

[names-new-prime-minister-after-predec.aspx](#)

- **Iran Warns of Global Repercussions of Syrian Crisis**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Tehran warned that the ongoing crisis in Syria could have dire consequences for the region and the world if it remains unresolved.

"If the Syria crisis is not managed, its repercussions will affect the region and the world," Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said at the end of an international conference on Syria here in Tehran on Thursday evening.

Addressing the closing ceremony, the Iranian minister said over 15 world countries presented their views about the current unrests in Syria, and further praised the active participation of all the 30 states participating in the conference.

He reiterated the vital importance of the Syrian issue, and said its aftermaths are not confined to Syria.

Elaborating on the contents of talks at the Tehran conference, Salehi said participants based their discussions on three axes, which included "rejecting violence, paving the ground for facilitating national dialogue and dispatching humanitarian aids to the Syrian people".

He said the results of the Tehran meeting was mentioned in the final statement.

The international consultative conference on the developments in Syria started in Tehran this afternoon and wrapped up work after several hours of discussions in the evening.

Foreign ministers and envoys of a large number of countries, including Russia, China, Belarus, Mauritania, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Benin, Sri Lanka, Ecuador, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria, Iraq, Zimbabwe, Oman, Venezuela, Tajikistan, India, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Nicaragua, Cuba, Sudan, Jordan, Tunisia and Palestine as well as the UN envoy to Tehran are present at the conference.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9104253539>

- **Military strike on Syria highly unlikely: Iran deputy FM**

As Syria stands in the frontline of resistance, in case of any possible military attack, the country's army can defend the Syrian land."

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian casts doubt on the likelihood of a military aggression against Syria due to the Arab country's strong resistance front and standing army.

"As Syria stands on the frontline of resistance, in case of any possible military attack, the country's army can defend the Syrian land," Amir-Abdollahian told reporters on Thursday.

The Iranian official, who was speaking following a day-long international consultative meeting on Syria in Tehran, emphasized that the Syrian unrest should be settled through political approaches.

He noted that certain countries were after the downfall of the Syrian government but stability and peace would be restored in all Syrian cities in the near future.

Syria has been experiencing unrest since mid-March 2011.

Damascus says 'outlaws, saboteurs, and armed terrorists' are behind the unrest while the West and the opposition accuse the security forces of killing protesters.

The anti-Syria Western regimes have been calling for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to step down, but Russia and China remain strongly opposed to the Western drive to oust the Syrian president.

On August 3, the UN General Assembly passed a non-binding resolution on Syria, proposed by Saudi Arabia, which criticized the Security Council and the Syrian government.

Addressing the consultative meeting in Tehran, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi rejected foreign military intervention as a solution to the Syrian unrest, saying dialogue is the only key to the ongoing crisis in the Arab country.

“Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Iran has highlighted the priority of political and peaceful measures and strategies for the restoration of peace to this country (Syria),” Salehi said.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/08/10/255441/military-attack-on-syria-highly-unlikely/>

- **U.K. to give millions of dollars to Syria rebels, says won't supply weapons**

Foreign Secretary William Hague says London fears Syria could become a haven for al-Qaida and other extremists if world fails to help rebels prepare for Assad's ouster.

A Syrian gunman shooti on the air during the funeral of a Free Syrian Army fighter in the town of Marea on the outskirts of Aleppo city, Syria, Thursday, Aug. 9, 2012.

Arab Spring

Britain's government offered 5 million pounds (US\$7.8 million) to Syria's rebel forces Friday to pay for communications equipment and medical supplies in an

effort to bolster ties to the country's opposition.

Foreign Secretary William Hague insisted that the U.K. would not supply any weapons, but confirmed the funds would pay for items including satellite phones, power generators and medical kits. He said diplomats would also intensify contacts with the political wing of the Free Syrian Army as concern grows over the country's possible fate if President Bashar Assad's regime is deposed.

Assad's crackdown on popular uprising that began in March 2011 has evolved into a full-blown civil war in Syria. Human rights activists estimate at least 19,000 people have died in the conflict.

Britain, which had previously been cautious over direct talks with Syria's rebels, fears the country could become a haven for al-Qaida and other extremists if the international community fails to help them prepare for Assad's ouster, Hague said.

"This is not taking sides in a civil war," he wrote in an op-ed article for the Times of London published Friday. "The risk of total

disorder and a power vacuum is so great that we must build relationships now with those who may govern Syria in the future."

"If we do not work with those Syrians who want to see a democratic and open country, we leave a void to be exploited by al-Qaida and others with extremist agendas who wish to hijack the conflict," he added.

Hague said that discussions with Syria's opposition would stress that they must adhere to international standards on human rights "whatever horrors are perpetrated by the regime."

Britain had previously offered 1.4 million pounds (US\$2.2 million) in non-lethal support to Syria's opposition, and about 27.5 million pounds (US\$43 million) in humanitarian aid.

Hague said in his op-ed that he was using the spotlight focused on London during the Olympics to draw attention to international divisions over the response to Syria.

Russia and China have vetoed attempts to pass tough UN Security Council resolutions aimed at Assad's regime. Last week, the UN and Arab League envoy to Syria, Kofi Annan, announced his resignation, following a frustrating six-month effort that failed to achieve even a temporary cease-fire.

"The people of Syria cannot wait while the wheels of diplomacy turn. Many more people will die without urgent help," Hague warned.

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/u-k-to-give-millions-of-dollars-to-syria-rebels-says-won-t-supply-weapons-1.457417>

- **Lebanon concerned by Hezbollah money-laundering**

Officials worried by US group's allegations that Hezbollah, Iran using Lebanese banks for a money-laundering scheme.

Banking officials and residents in Beirut are concerned about a US pressure group's report that Hezbollah and Iran are using Lebanon's banks in a large money-

laundering scheme, a leading Lebanese daily reported on Thursday.

New York-based United Against a Nuclear Iran (UANI) made public last month the results of a three-month, confidential investigation into the influence of Iran and Hezbollah on Lebanon’s banking system and sovereign bond market.

Related:

'Jalili visited Beirut to support proxy, Hezbollah'

'Lebanon-Burgas calls increased days before attack'

The group says Lebanon’s financial system – including Banque du Liban, the country’s central bank – is being used to funnel massive amounts of illicit cash for Hezbollah and its state sponsor, Iran.

“The Lebanese banking system provides the means by which Iran transacts funds transfers to evade the effects of sanctions and the growing international banking blockade against Iran, and allows the money transfers that support illicit weapons and other transactions, including with Syria,” UANI said.

Lebanese concerns about the report come after several groups – Austria’s Erste Sparinvest, Eaton Vance Investment Managers, Nord Est Asset Management, Ameriprise and Aktia Fund Management – divested from Lebanese sovereign debt securities.

Last week, UANI also called on Advanced Series Trust and its investment adviser Prudential Investments LLC to divest from Lebanese debt securities.

As-Safir noted that UANI’s campaign has also singled out Riad Salameh, governor of Banque du Liban.

In February, Salameh denied that there is any relationship between Banque du Liban and Iran’s central bank.

According to As-Safir, unnamed banking officials in Beirut said the report was “invective, insults, defamation and a pack of false allegations,” and showed a “partial understanding of the nature of the Lebanese economy.”

Lebanese officials are working to respond to the report, the paper said, including by preparing a detailed list of answers to

questions raised in the report and explanations about Lebanon's fiscal policies and public finance sector.

The paper noted that in June, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called Prime Minister Najib Mikati to stress her support for Lebanon's stability and express confidence in the country's financial institutions.

Citing unnamed financial sector sources, As-Safir said that Lebanon's banks and financial institutions had pledged not to deal with any individuals named on US sanctions lists.

The same sources said that Lebanon's ability to avoid any repercussions from the global economic turndown lies in its credibility as a financially stable sovereign.

As-Safir challenged UANI's conclusions that one of the indicators that Hezbollah and Iran are using Lebanese banking system in a wide-scale money=laundersing scheme is the discrepancy between the volume of financial transactions in Lebanon and the size of its economy.

The pressure group argue that despite Lebanon's devastated economy, its currency and banking system operate as if they belonged within a more successful state.

Lebanese sovereign debt to GDP ratio is the fourth highest in the world, yet the country's sovereign bonds and credit default swaps trade at low yields, UANI found, noting that the cost of Lebanese debt has decreased considerably since 2006, which the group said coincides with increased sanctions pressure against Iran.

As-Safir argues that these figures are not unusual and that the Lebanese banking sector has relied disproportionately on the outside world since World War I.

Regarding the impact of the campaign, As-Safir said the Lebanese banking system has always been vulnerable to US influence, but that vulnerability grew after the events of September 11, 2001, with the advent of new technological advances and tools to fight terrorism.

The campaign against Lebanon's banking sector has received increased attention in Beirut following a recent report filed by

the New York State Department of Financial Services, which alleged that the UK's Standard Chartered bank schemed with the Iranian regime – and by extension its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah – to conceal more than \$250 billion in illegal transactions.

On Wednesday, Beirut-based newspaper Al-Akhbar cited an unnamed Lebanese politician as saying that Washington was trying to increase pressure on major European banks to comply with US international sanctions against Iran.

“It is no secret among Lebanese bankers that Americans have become more aggressive in this area lately,” Al-Akhbar said, adding that banking sector officials believe the US believes the sanctions authorize Washington to use the tools it deems appropriate to address terrorist and security risks.

In response, UANI spokesman Nathan Carleton said that Lebanese banking officials should be concerned about the campaign, noting that several bondholders had divested from Lebanese sovereign debt.

“Lebanon’s Central Bank Governor Riad Salame has said absolutely nothing in response to UANI, and his silence has been deafening,” Carleton added. “He has notably been unable to answer even basic questions about Iran’s role in Lebanon’s banking system, including whether he agrees with Hezbollah’s leadership that its funding comes entirely from Iran.”

Regarding criticisms of UANI’s explanations over the Lebanese sovereign debt to GDP ratio, Carleton said there was “no innocent explanation as to why Lebanon’s numbers are so off-kilter.”

“While we are not privy to private conversations between US and Lebanese officials, we doubt that the US has truly been giving the Lebanese banking system a 100-percent clean bill of health. After all, the idea that Iran funnels money to terrorists through Lebanon is not new, and has been acknowledged by the US before,” Carleton said.

<http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=280782>

- **US bars business with four in Hezbollah laundering link**

The US Treasury Department on Wednesday banned Americans from doing business with three Lebanese-Venezuelans and a Lebanese man it accused of helping to launder drug money to the benefit of the Lebanon-based Hezbollah militant group.

It also designated one Colombian-Lebanese man, Ali Mohamad Saleh, as a global terrorist for his involvement with Hezbollah fund-raising. The action freezes any assets Saleh may have in the United States and also bars Americans from doing business with him.

The Treasury Department identified the three men with dual Lebanese-Venezuelan citizenship as Abbas Hussein Harb, Ali Houssein Harb and Kassem Mohamad Saleh. The Lebanese citizen is Ibrahim Chibli.

<http://www.jpost.com/headlines/article.aspx?id=275515>

- **Syria rebels forced from key Aleppo district**

Rebels admit tactical retreat from southern Salaheddin neighbourhood, as UK announces \$7.8m aid boost for opposition.

Syrian rebels have been pushed out of a strategic district in the commercial capital of Aleppo, but sporadic fighting has continued in other parts of the city.

Diplomats at the United Nations, meanwhile, indicated on Thursday that Lakhdar Brahimi, a veteran Algerian diplomat, could be named next week to replace Kofi Annan as the joint UN-Arab League envoy to Syria.

Also on Thursday, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad appointed Wael al-Halki, the country's health minister, as Syria's new prime minister. Halki replaces Riad Hijab, who fled to Jordan and defected to the opposition earlier his week.

In Syria, rebels in the Aleppo district of Salaheddin, a southern gateway to the city, said that they were forced to retreat under heavy fire.

"There have been some withdrawals of Free Syrian Army fighters from Salaheddin," rebel commander Abu Ali said. Others said the main frontlines in the area, which had been held by rebels for more than a week, were now deserted.

Rebels said clashes continued in the district and that, while the government had at least 80 tanks stationed in various parts of Aleppo, the military appeared reluctant to engage in close combat, preferring to use helicopters and fighter jets.

Sheikh Tawfiq, commander of the Nur al-Din Zinky brigade based on 15th street in Salaheddin, said the army's formidable weaponry was offset by apparently faltering morale.

"At the 10th street front line we are face-to-face with the army and can hear them make orders on their radios. We hear their commanders give orders to soldiers to advance and they keep urging them to, but the soldiers don't and are hesitant."

State television said: "Our special forces have cleansed Salaheddin district of terrorists."

State media reported that the government offensive in Aleppo had taken place on several fronts, including a neighbourhood near the airport in southeast Aleppo, several eastern districts, and a town on Aleppo's northwestern outskirts, state media said.

Despite the violence, the Red Cross delivered food and medical supplies to Aleppo, the first time one of its aid convoys managed to enter the city in several weeks.

Kassem Saadeddine, a spokesperson for the Free Syrian Army, said that the rebel withdrawal "does not mean we are leaving Aleppo. We have military plans to fight in the city, but we cannot reveal them".

'No winner in Syria'

As the battle for Aleppo raged, Iran called on Thursday for "serious and inclusive" negotiations between the Syrian government and opposition. Iran made the appeal after a gathering of diplomats from like-minded states in Tehran for talks on the conflict.

In-depth coverage of escalating violence across Syria

"There will be no winner in Syria," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a statement read by a UN representative to the conference in Tehran.

"Now, we face the grim possibility of long-term civil war destroying Syria's rich tapestry of interwoven communities."

On Friday, the United Nations said that the number of registered Syrian refugees had topped 150,000 since the conflict began in March 2011. The total includes 50,227 in Turkey, where more than 6,000 Syrians arrived this week alone.

There are also 45,869 refugees registered in Jordan, with 36,841 more in Lebanon and 13,587 in Iraq. The number of refugees in Iraq does not include the return of 23,228 Iraqis, who had fled the US invasion in 2003, from Syria.

Smaller numbers of refugees have also fled to Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Greece, the UN says.

UK increases opposition support

William Hague, the British foreign minister, on Friday announced that his country was offering \$7.8 million in aid to the Syrian rebels. He said that none of the money would be used for weapons.

The UK will also be intensifying its contacts with Syrian opposition political figures as well as with the Free Syrian Army, he said.

The aid was likely to include mobile phones, satellite phones and radios to warn civilians of government assaults and "overcome the regime's communications blockade and ensure their message gets to the outside world", Hague said.

"I have also agreed in principle that our assistance should include lifesaving protective equipment for civilians to help those carrying out vital work in the crossfire, and this could for instance include body armour," he said.

Britain would also supply medical equipment including paramedic trauma kits, surgical equipment, field dressings, antibiotics, painkillers and water purification kits, the foreign minister said.

Diplomats at the UN, meanwhile, indicated on Thursday that the official announcement regarding the appointment of Brahimi as the UN-Arab League envoy would be made early next week.

Brahimi was the UN envoy in Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001 attacks and in Iraq after the 2003 US-led invasion.

Kofi Annan, a former UN secretary-general, said he was leaving the post because of the lack of international support for his efforts to end the 17-month Syria conflict, in which rebels say more than 20,000 people have been killed.

Annan is staying in his post until August 31.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/08/201281051654976892.html>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Bahrain says opposition must reject violence**

Bahraini children play in an alley spray-painted with anti-government graffiti in Malkiya, Bahrain, on Monday (AP photo)
DUBAI — Bahraini opposition parties should denounce violence to demonstrate their desire for political progress, a government minister said on Thursday after rare meetings with opponents linked to more than a year of street protests.

Justice Minister Sheikh Khaled Bin Ali Al Khalifa has met several opposition leaders recently, according to state news agency BNA.

Among the groups represented was the leftist party Waad, whose leader is among 13 men held for leading last year's uprising by demonstrators demanding more democracy.

"They must take clear and definitive positions, without giving any political cover to criminal acts," BNA said, citing Sheikh Khaled, a ruling family member, who called the meeting.

"A clear position would reflect an honest desire for readying the ground for constructive political action."

The justice minister also urged political groups to play a role in “calming the air to realise common understandings on political action”.

Bahrain has been in turmoil since protests erupted in February 2011.

Although the authorities have prevented further mass protests in the capital, unrest has continued as majority Shiite Muslims often clash with police in Shiite districts.

The royal court minister, seen as a powerful player within the Sunni monarchy, held talks with Wefaq, the main Shiite party, earlier this year on ending the conflict, but Wefaq says contacts ended in March.

The government says some 700 policemen have been hurt by youths who attack them with petrol bombs and block roads.

Opposition groups say more than 45 people have died due to clashes since a period of martial law ended in June last year, often after inhaling tear gas. The government says many of those deaths were due to previous medical conditions.

<http://jordantimes.com/bahrain-says-opposition-must-reject-violence>

- **Oren's Iran article gets thumbs up from Bahraini**

Tweet shows Tehran’s nuclear program not solely an Israeli concern, ambassador to US tells ‘Post.’ PHOTO: JP

WASHINGTON – When Bahrain’s foreign minister tweeted an article about Iran by Israeli’s US envoy, it underscored the shared nature of the Iranian threat, according to the envoy.

“It shows that the Iranian nuclear program is not solely an Israel concern but one of the entire Middle East,” Ambassador Michael Oren told The Jerusalem Post Thursday.

Bahraini Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa tweeted a link to a piece Oren posted in The Wall Street Journal, which appeared on the website on Monday, titled “Time is short for Iran diplomacy.”

In the piece, Oren warned that Iran’s progress in its nuclear program demonstrated that diplomacy and

sanctions have failed to end Tehran's nuclear threat.

"A combination of truly crippling sanctions and a credible military threat — a threat that the ayatollahs still do not believe today — may yet convince Iran to relinquish its nuclear dreams," Oren wrote.

But he went on to caution that "time is dwindling and, with each passing day, the lives of eight million Israelis grow increasingly imperiled."

Oren stressed that Israel wants to see the issue resolved diplomatically. But he noted that US President Barack Obama has "affirmed Israel's right 'to defend itself, by itself, against any threat.'" The ambassador continued, "Historically, Israel has exercised that right only after exhausting all reasonable diplomatic means. But as the repeated attempts to negotiate with Iran have demonstrated, neither diplomacy nor sanctions has removed the threat."

Gulf states such as Bahrain have long been understood to fear a nuclear-armed Iran, and US diplomatic cables made available

through WikiLeaks revealed Gulf leaders in some cases calling for military action to prevent an Iranian bomb.

However, it is extremely rare for an Arab official to take a public position that seems to endorse that view or to back an Israeli perspective.

<http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=280759>

- **Saudi protesters call for prisoners' release**

Demonstrators gather in Qatif following the arrest of cleric Sheikh Nemr al-Nemr on July 8, 2012.

Saudi protesters have staged a demonstration in the city of Taif, calling for the release of political prisoners in the kingdom.

People in Taif in the southwest of the country demonstrated on Thursday to express solidarity with political prisoners.

The protesters also demanded an end to rights violations in the monarchy.

Saudi Arabia has arrested scores of anti-government protesters since the beginning of the uprising in the country. Prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nemr Baqir al-Nemr is among the detainees.

Sheikh Nemr was injured and arrested by Saudi security forces of the Al Saud regime while driving from a farm to his house in Qatif on July 8.

Since February 2011, protesters have held demonstrations on an almost regular basis in the Kingdom's east, mainly in Qatif and Awamiyah.

The demonstrators called for the release of all political prisoners, freedom of expression and assembly, and an end to widespread discrimination.

However, the demonstrations have turned into protests against the repressive Al Saud regime, especially since November 2011, when Saudi security forces killed five protesters and injured many others in the oil-rich region.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/08/10/255462/saudis-call-for-prisoners-release/>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

• Three US soldiers killed by man in Afghan police uniform

Three American soldiers have been killed by a man in an Afghan police uniform in yet another so-called 'green-on-blue' attack, the US military says.

The incident occurred in the southern province of Helmand on Friday.

Afghan officials said the three were all Special Forces members attending a meeting in the Sangin District late on Thursday.

On Thursday, the US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said an Afghan National Army soldier fired on ISAF members in the Laghman Province.

The ISAF spokesman said that no ISAF soldiers were killed in the attack in Laghman. Yet, keeping in line with policy he would not confirm whether any had been injured.

The shootings are reflective of the increase in 'green-on-blue' attacks in Afghanistan.

Another such attack happened three days ago, when two men in Afghan army uniforms opened fire on their allies, killing an American soldier.

According to an AFP count, the American soldier's death took this year's green-on-blue death toll to around 30 US-led forces' personnel, who have died in some 22 such incidents.

Some 130,000 NATO troops, due to withdraw from Afghanistan in 2014, are still in the country under the pretext of 'training and working alongside Afghan soldiers' for the anti-insurgency campaign.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/08/10/255484/afghan-in-uniform-kills-3-us-soldiers/>

- **Afghan soldier fires at NATO troops**

KABUL: An Afghan soldier turned his weapon on NATO allies on Thursday in the latest in a series of so-called green-on-blue attacks, the US-led International Security Assistance Force said.

"We can confirm that an ANA soldier fired on ISAF members in Laghman province. They returned fire, killing the attacker," an ISAF spokesman told media.

No ISAF soldiers were killed in the attack in the eastern province, he said, but in line with policy would not confirm whether any had been wounded.

The shooting is the latest in an increasing number of incidents in which Afghan soldiers have turned their weapons against NATO troops helping Kabul fight a decade-long insurgency by Taliban Islamists.

Just two days ago, an American soldier was killed in the east when two men in Afghan army uniforms opened fire on their allies.

A US defence official said the two suspected shooters were in custody and an investigation was under way to determine whether they were Taliban infiltrators.

The death took the green-on-blue toll this year to around 30, in some 22 such incidents.

Some of the attacks are claimed by the Taliban, who say they have infiltrated Afghan army ranks, but many are attributed to cultural differences and antagonism between local and US-led allied forces.

Some 130,000 NATO troops in Afghanistan are preparing to withdraw in 2014 and are training and working alongside Afghan soldiers as they take increasing responsibility for the anti-insurgency campaign.

<http://paktribune.com/news/Afghan-soldier-fires-at-NATO-troops-252305.html>

- **Six Taliban, two cops killed in Farah clash**

Can Pakistan and Afghanistan be successful in combating terror together?

HERAT: Six Taliban fighters and two police personnel were killed in a clash between the two sides in Bala Baluk district in Farah province last night, an official said Thursday.

The clash erupted between the Taliban and police when the former attacked a checkpoint of the later in Daristan area in

Bala Baluk district last night, the western zone 606 Ansar zone deputy commander, Colonel Toryalai Abdyani told the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP).

Six Taliban fighters and two police personnel were killed while two Taliban fighters sustained injuries in the gunfight, he added.

The Taliban also left behind some weapons in the battlefield, he maintained.

The Taliban have not said anything in this regard till filling of this report.

It's pertinent to mention here that three Taliban fighters were reportedly killed in a clash with police in Bala Baluk district yesterday.

Four Taliban killed in Logar operation: Four Taliban fighters were killed in the operation of combined force in Logar's capital Pul-i-Alam last night, the Taliban said Thursday.

The Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid told the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) the foreign forces conducted bombardment on their fighters in

Dadokhel area in Pul-i-Alam last night, killing four Taliban.

"After the bombardment, on-foot foreign forces tied explosives with bodies of the Taliban. Resultantly, their bodies littered into pieces," he alleged.

"We condemn such treatment with dead bodies. We remember the foreign forces that such actions could not deter the Afghan Mujahid nation from jihad," he said.

The Logar police chief Ghulam Sakhi Rogh Liwani, when contacted by the AIP, confirmed four Taliban were killed in ground and air offensive of combined force in the aforesaid area last night.

He, however, rejected the claim of Taliban that bodies of the deceased were exploded with explosives.

"There were ground and air operation in the area. Some bodies may have damaged with airstrike. But they have not been disrespected. They are not exploded with explosives," he added.

The police chief said the Taliban fighters killed in Dadokhel area had been identified.

Three civilians shot dead in Gosfandi: Three civilians were shot dead by armed persons in Gosfandi district in Sar-i-Pul province late yesterday, an official said Thursday.

The Taliban opened fire on three civilians in the limits of Gosfandi district late yesterday, leaving them dead on the spot, the Gosfandi district chief, Syed Habibullah told the AIP.

However, residents of the area told the AIP the dead included chairman of the Gosfandi district local shura.

The Taliban have not said anything in this regard till filling of this report.

<http://paktribune.com/news/Six-Taliban-two-cops-killed-in-Farah-clash-252306.html>

**This media summary is prepared by ORSAM Middle East Research Assistants Nebahat Tanrıverdi O and Selen Tonkuş. 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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