



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procces of Iraq

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27 AUGUST 2012

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ORSAM

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STRATEGIC INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
AND INDEPENDENT THOUGHT PRODUCTION

1. IRAQ

- **Maliki, Nujaifi stress cooperation and reforms**

BAGHDAD, Aug 26 / Aswat al-Iraq: Premier Nouri al-Maliki stressed today, during his meeting with Parliament Speaker Usama Nujaifi, the importance of cooperation between the executive and legislative authorities, necessity to deal with the issues according to the constitution and end all disputes on oil contracts.

In a statement by the Premiership presidency, copy received by Aswat al-Iraq, both sides confirmed that the constitution should be the base in dealing with different issues.

Maliki stressed "necessity of dialogue to end crises, particularly Oil and Gas Law, General Amnesty Law, Questioning and Justice issues and re-building the state.

Both sides agreed to end the disputes on oil contracts and investments, pointing necessity to enhance Iraqi military abilities, including the F16 fighters, due to be received next March.

Nujaifi elaborated necessity of enhancing the internal situation, terminating all pending questions and complete the reforms according to the constitution, as reported by the statement.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **During his meeting with Nujaifi, Maliki confirms the need to make progress on the reform in accordance with the Constitution**

BAGHDAD, Aug 26 / NINA / the Office of the Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki announced that the meeting between al-Maliki and the President of the House of Representatives Osama Nujaifi stressed "the importance of cooperation between the executive and legislative branches to serve the interests of the people, and the Constitution is the authority in dealing with all things."

A statement of the Office quoting the Prime Minister as reaffirming "the need to make progress on the reforms and address the issues in accordance with the Constitution, especially the oil and gas law and the general amnesty as well as the accountability and justice, and move towards the state-building."

He stressed "the need to end all differences over the oil contracts and investments in the field of oil," adding that "Iraq's seek to develop its military capabilities and defense, including F-16 aircraft, which Iraq is supposed to receive first portion in March next year."

For his part, President of the House of Representatives confirmed "the importance of the internal situation, and resolve all outstanding problems, as well as conduct the reforms in accordance with the Constitution and to serve all parties, and in the interest of the Iraqi people".

NINA

- **Iraqiya MP confirms that the meeting between Maliki and Nujaifi was" positive and transparent"**

Baghdad, Aug 26 / NINA/ MP, of the Iraqiya List, Mohammed al-Khalidi confirmed that the meeting between Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and parliament speaker Osama al-Nujaifi was "positive and transparent."

He said in a statement to the National Iraqi News agency / NINA / that "The two sides agreed, during the meeting today, to

unite the political discourse towards regional and international issues, especially the Syrian crisis, in addition to addressing the relationship between the legislative and executive branches."

He added "The meeting lasted for two hours and it was agreed to wait in the subject of those who were covered by the law of accountability and justice in Baiji refinery and the two sides also agreed to form a committee to implement the decision of the amnesty in addition to discuss the political situation in general."

NINA

- **Alwani urges for comprehensive reforms**

Baghdad, Aug 26 (AIN) –The Iraqiya Slate’s MP Khalid al-Alwani assured that “Iraqis need comprehensive reforms on different aspects of life rather than special reforms to suit certain bloc of figure,” describing the reforms submitted by the Iraqi National Alliance as worthless.”

In a statement to All Iraq News Agency, he said “The investigation issue, whether connected to Premier Maliki or others, is necessary to discuss the pending issues

which hurdle the political process as well as security situation,” holding “The premier Nouri al-Maliki responsible for the recent security deterioration since he is the Commanding General of the Iraqi Security Forces.”

Alwani of Anbar province clarified that “The investigation issue is postponed to wait for reforms promised by the INA,” stressing that “Investigation process is constitutional right.”

alliraqnews

- **Karbala calls to host next Cabinet's session**

Karbala, Aug 26 (AIN) -The Provincial Council of Karbala province submitted a request to hold the next session of the Council of Ministers in Karbala to discuss the situation in the province.

The Deputy Chairman of Karbala PC, Nusayf Jasim, stated to AIN "The Provincial Council of Karbala plans to submit a request on early September to demand for holding the next session of the CoM in Karbala to discuss a number of issues, most notably, the financial allocations for the province and the topic

of approving Karbala as a Cultural Capital for Iraq in 2015."

"It is also scheduled to tackle the project of establishing the electronic security system in the province in order to secure the millions of pilgrims who arrive in the province every year," Jasim added.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17145:karbala-calls-to-be-next-province-in-holding-next-cabinets-session&catid=39:genral-news&Itemid=48

- **Minister of Telecommunications denies submitting his resignation to Maliki**

Baghdad, Aug 26 (AIN) –The Minister of Telecommunications, Mohamed Tawfiq Allawi, denied the reports over "submitting his resignation to the Premier, Nouri al-Maliki."

He assured in a press statement that "These reports mentioned by the media outlets in this regard are groundless."

"I have submitted a request for Maliki a month ago in which there were specific

demands," he added without clarifying these demands.

"The Ministry of Telecommunications is a technical ministry that could not be involved in the political disputes," he stressed.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17168:minister-of-telecommunications-denies-submitting-his-resignation-to-maliki&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

- **Parliament to resume sessions next Tuesday**

Baghdad, Aug 26 (AIN) –The Parliament will hold its first session within the current legislative term after the end of the Eid al-Fitr vacation.

A statement by the media office of the Parliament received by AIN cited "The schedule of the session includes the first and second readings for several law drafts."

The schedule of the session is empty of the law drafts which were not settled before the recess, such as the General

Amnesty law draft, Supreme Human Rights Commission as well as extending the term of the Independent High Electoral Commission.

alliraqnews

- **Iraq's Kurdistan Regions denies reports about imminent return Al-Hashimi**

26 Aug 2012

The Kurdistan Regional Government has denied reports on the imminent return of Tariq al-Hashimi to the region. Falah Mustafa, head of the KRG's Foreign Relations Department, told the IMN's news centre that his government has not received yet any request from Al-Hashimi to come to the Kurdistan Region.

Al-Iraqiyah TV

- **Warning against terrorists' penetration into security organs, Ahrar bloc**

BAGHDAD, Aug 26 / Aswat al-Iraq: Ahrar bloc MP Jalial al-Sa'idi warned against terrorists' penetration into the security organs, pointing that "no mistakes should occur".

In a statement by her office, she denounced the Friday's terrorist actions.

On the other hand, she advised the security organs for more vigilance.

Friday's explosion resulted in three killings and wounding 11 in an attempt against the offices of the Sadrist Trend during the prayers time.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **Detainee passed away in Nineveh Anti-Terrorism Department**

Nineveh, Mosul, Aug 26 (AIN) –A detainee in the prison of Anti-Terrorism Department died for natural reasons in Nineveh province.

A medical source in Nineveh Health Department reported to AIN that "The morgue department received a corpse belongs to a detainee who has died inside the prison of Nineveh Anti-Terrorism Department."

The source added "After examining the corpse, we discovered that the detainee died for natural reasons."

The source pointed out that "The medical and forensic examinations did not discover any torture signs on the corpse," attributing the cause of death to diseases.

alliraqnews

- **Integrity Committee: Maliki's advisors involved in corruption issues**

Baghdad, Aug 26 (AIN) –The Member of the Parliamentary Integrity Committee MPAziz al-Eqaili, of the Citizen bloc, expected the increase of the administrative and financial corruption in the governmental institutions in the next period, attributing that to the "Wrong governmental method of fighting corruption in addition to the involvement of close officials to the Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, in corruption issues."

Speaking to All Iraq News Agency (AIN), he stated "There is a defect in the procedures of fighting corruption in Maliki's office and by not giving complete authorities to the observatory committees in addition to the involvement of Maliki's advisors in the corruption issues."

"Maliki's advisor, Ahmed al-Sa'adawi, purchased Canadian airplanes and he is involved in corruption issues due to the high prices that are more than the real prices in millions of USD where he received four of them and two are not delivered yet," he added, noting that "The price of each airplane is more than the real price in 10 -15 Millions USD where some other officials such as Ahmed Eiz and Ezzat al-Shabandar, who is involved in forming faked companies in the Ministry of Electricity."

"When the Parliamentary Integrity Committee set a certain law, the Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers postponed it where there is an intention to assign the head of the Integrity Committee by Maliki which means that this is not neutral issue," he pointed out.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17143:integrity-committee-malikis-advisors-involved-in-corruption-issues-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

- **Iraqi premier's attendance at NAM summit in Tehran to be confirmed**

Source: Mehr news agency, Tehran, in Persian 26 Aug 12

President Ahmadinezhad's advisor, Hojjat ol-Eslam Seyyed Ahmad Musavi, has travelled to Iraq to deliver Ahmadinezhad's formal invitation to the Iraqi premier to attend the NAM summit, Hasan Dana'ifar, the Iranian envoy in Iraq told Mehr News Agency.

The definite attendance of Nuri al-Maliki, the Iraqi premier, at the NAM summit will be confirmed tomorrow (27 August), Mehr reported.

Mehr news agency

- **Nijad invites Maliki to attend NAS Summit**

Aug 26 (AIN) –Iranian media sources confirmed that the Advisor of the Iranian President for Hajj Affairs, Sayed Ahmed Musawi, visited Iraq on Sunday to deliver an official invitation for the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, to attend the Non-Aligned States' Summit.

The Iranian Mehr News Agency quoted the Iranian Ambassador to Iraq, Hasan Danaefer as saying "Sayed Ahmed Musawi arrived in Baghdad on Sunday to deliver

the invitation of Nijad for Maliki to attend the Summit to be held in Tehran.”

Danaefer added “Participation of the Iraqi PM in the Summit will be decided on Monday.”

alliraqnews

- **Call to regional countries to benefit from Iraqi experience, Mutlaq**

BAGHDAD, Aug 26 / Aswat al-Iraq: Deputy Premier Saleh al-Mutlaq called neighboring countries not to follow denominational ideas and the division of the peoples on national, religious and sectarian bases, advising them to benefit from the Iraqi experiment in these fields.

In a statement issued by his office, today, he pointed out that the region is passing through acute conditions due to the changes that occurred.

"There are some people who try to incite tensions and denominational wars in the region", he confirmed.

He warned internal element not to ignite denominational conflicts, stressing that security and peace cannot be achieved with real dialogues.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **Iraqis returning from Syria exceeds 26,000**

ERBİL, Aug. 26 (AKnews) - The Iraqi Immigration Ministry stated Sunday that the number of Iraqis who have returned from Syria after the escalation of violence has reached more than 26,000 people.

Iraq formed an emergency cell in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Iraqi Red Cross Society to receive and facilitate the return of Iraqis from Syria.

The cell is also responsible for facilitating the reception of Syrian refugees.

The ministry quoted on its website the Immigration Minister Dindar Dosky as saying that during the meeting with the special representative of the United Nations in Iraq, Martin Kobler, the country witnessed the return of more than 26,000 Iraqis from Syria.

He added that Iraq intends to construct a third camp for the Syrian refugees with accommodate 500 tents.

Kobler called on the international community to help Iraq in providing for the needs of Syrian refugees through payments to the Iraqi Immigration Ministry.

AKnews

- **Al-Hakim calls for more efforts and measures to help the Syrian refugees in Iraq**

BAGHDAD, Aug 26 / NINA / the head of the Islamic Supreme Council, Ammar al-Hakim called to make more efforts and actions to help the Syrian refugees in Iraq.

He stressed, during a meeting with a number of academics and the Iraqi elite yesterday, the need to deal in humanitarian and brotherly manner with the Syrian refugees, pointing to the importance of applying security measures that provide the safety of the Iraqi people from the dangers that may threaten the security and stability, according to a statement of the Supreme Council today.

Al-Hakim called on the international community to hold its responsibilities in helping the Syrian people and provide the

necessary services to them, asserting the "cohesion and the national unity in front of all potential future dangers."

NINA

- **Iraqi official says army entrusted with securing Syria border crossing**

Source: Al-Hayat website, London, in Arabic 26 Aug 12

[Report by Umar Sattar, from Baghdad: "The Iraqi army takes over the border crossing points with Syria"]

The Iraqi Interior Ministry has announced that the border crossing points with Syria are now entrusted to the army rather than the police. The Interior Ministry considers this to "a temporary precautionary measure because of the extraordinary situation witnessed at the Syrian side of the borders."

The Ministry of Defence ordered the deployment of army brigades to the borders two months ago.

Lt-Gen Ahmad al-Khafaji, Interior Ministry undersecretary for federal security affairs, in a statement to Al-Hayat stresses: "The

borders with Syria have been brought under the control of the army forces since two months ago, and not just now, as a temporary precautionary measure because of the clashes and major displacement situation witnessed at these borders."

Al-Khafaji adds: "The command at these borders is undertaken by the Defence Ministry, the same as in all the regions of the country in which there is a joint command of the operations. The role of the Interior Ministry will be restricted to the protection of the security of the Syrian refugees when they enter the Iraqi territories, and the coordination with the Ministry of Migration and Migrants."

Al-Khafaji explains that the Ministry of Defence has established a "command centre" at the borders, which extend for approximately 605 km; the command centre is similar to the commands of the joint operations in the governorates."

Al-Khafaji points out: "The security forces have reopened the Al-Qa'im crossing points to receive the Syrian refugees."

Al-Khafaji continues: "The border situation on the Iraqi side is completely calm, and the crossing points are operating well, except the Abu-Kamal border crossing, which has been closed for a few days."

Al-Hayat website

- **Iraq keen on bolstering military capabilities with US - PM**

BAGHDAD, Aug 26 (KUNA) -- Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki said on Sunday that his country was keen to develop its military defensive capabilities, including to purchase the US-made (F-16) fighter jets, calling at the same time an end all internal disputes over oil investments.

According to Iraqi government statement, the remarks by Al-Maliki came during his meeting with Iraqi Parliament Speaker Osama Al-Nujaifi, noting that the Prime Minister also denied that the government was planning to bring foreign forces into the country, but only keen on boosting its military capabilities.

The Iraqi premier added that he called on all parties to end all disputes concerning oil contracts and investment, and the importance of speeding up the process in

the parliament to approve laws needed which would not undermine security of Iraq.

<http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2259224&language=en>

- **Advisor of Iranian President arrives in Baghdad**

Baghdad, Aug 26 (NINA) – Advisor of Iran's President and Chairman of Haj Organization, Ahmed Mosawi, arrived in Baghdad to deliver an official invitation to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, to attend the Non-Allied Summit.

Iranian Mehr News Agency quoted Iran's Ambassador to Iraq, Hassan Danaei Far, saying on Sunday, Aug. 26, that Mosawi arrived in Baghdad to deliver the invitation of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to attend the Non-Allied Summit to be held in Tehran.

Official sources said that it is probably that Vice President Khudayer al-Khuza'e will head Iraq's delegation to the Non-Allied Summit due to be held in Tehran at the end of the current month.

The source expects that Maliki will head Iraq's delegation to the UN General Assembly scheduled for early next month.

NINA

- **Turks demand balanced policy with Iraq**

BAGHDAD, Aug 26 / Aswat al-Iraq: Turkish analysts warned against pro-policies for internal conflicts in Iraq, advised a balanced policy with all parties and minimize tensions with central government of Baghdad.

Turkish Sunday Zaman published results of opinions on the reasons of Iraqi-Turkish disputes related to Syria, Kurdish region and the visit of Turkish foreign minister to Kirkuk.

Analysts described Turkish policy was due to the stands adopted by Premier Nouri al-Maliki on unilateral rule of the country and neglecting the Sunni sect and the Kurds, as well as Turkish support to Iraqi vice-president Tariq al-Hashimi.

They advised the Turkish government to have balanced stands with all Iraqi political parties.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **Istanbul to host conference on Iraq's energy sector**

ISTANBUL, Aug 27: Returning for its third annual meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, 'Iraq Future Energy 2012' will bring together Government officials and representatives from International Oil Companies (IOCs), to collaborate on how to build a successful and lucrative energy sector in Iraq.

Organised by the Energy Exchange, Iraq Future Energy 2012 will be held from 17 - 20 September 2012. Day one of the conference will commence with a focus on the growing need for electricity in Iraq. At present, an estimated 8,000 Mega Watts (MW) of electricity is being produced, when in fact an estimated 14,000 MW is needed.

In 2011, Iraq announced its electricity master plan of spending \$27 billion from 2012 to 2017. The latest update on the implementation progress of the short term plan to rehabilitate and expand the

national grid by 2015 will be unveiled at this Electricity Summit. Additionally, infrastructure challenges with regards to power generation as well as imports and exports with neighbouring countries will be discussed, along with feasible alternatives and solutions.

The main oil and gas conference begins on day two of Iraq Future Energy 2012 and will open detailing further E&P plans and upcoming bid round and its impact on the Iraqi oil, gas and power sub-sectors. Furthermore the outcome of the fourth bid round for 12 exploration blocks in April 2012 along with the implications for pre-qualified IOCs and future projects will be discussed.

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/1e995590-9d5b-4c5f-b213-95e64a5f533d.aspx>

- **Iraqi energy forum in Istanbul next month**

ISTANBUL, Aug 26 / Aswat al-Iraq: Turkish company announced that an Iraqi energy forum shall be held to discuss the energy question in Iraq.

The forum shall be attended by local and international experts from different major oil and electricity companies.

This is the third annual forum to be held in Istanbul, Turkey (17-20 September, 2012).

The first day will tackle the increasing need for electricity in Iraq, which produces now 8000 megawatts, while the real need, for time being, is 14,000 megawatts,

It was announced in 2011 that Iraq allocated \$27 billion during 2012-2017.

The oil and gas questions shall be tackled in the second day of the forum to discuss all details on excavation and production and their effects on Iraqi economic branches.

Iraq made a target to reach 12 million b/d productions by 2017, but the lack of the infrastructure will impede such target.

http://en.aswatliraq.info/%28S%28yh0eafhoqefo4ntlen0q0nj%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150157&l=1

- **PKK will not leave lands waiting for the "Great Revolution", spokesman**

ARBIL, Aug 26/ Aswat al-Iraq: Anti-Turkish PKK party announced today that the Turkish tactics depend on air and artillery strikes, thus its fighters will not leave their lands waiting for the "Great Revolution".

PKK spokesman Ahmet Deniz told Aswat al-Iraq that the clashes with the Turkish army continued, but they are "unable for land combat, but depended on air and artillery bombardments".

He added that the PKK strategy "has changed by not leaving the controlled land, as they did before".

Deniz confirmed that the PKK got mss support particularly in bigger cities with Kurdish majority, waiting for "the Great Revolution of the Masses", as he described it.

He denied any Iranian support and did not extend any to the Syrian, stressing that his party "fights for freedom, democracy and independence".

"We will not stop this war, because the Turkish government rejected the dialogue with us", he elaborated.

PKK administrative source revealed that clashes took place in near Kurdistan areas that resulted in 20 Turkish casualties, while two PKK fighters were killed.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28yhn0eafhoqefo4ntlen0q0nj%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150164&l=1

- **400 Iraqi refugees deported to remote islands in Australia and Thailand**

ERBIL, Aug. 26 (AKnews) - An official at the Iraqi Refugees Union office in the Kurdistan Region stated Sunday that authorities in Australia and Thailand decided to deport about 2,000 refugees, including about 400 Iraqis, to remote areas, adding that the motives behind the decision by the two countries are still unknown.

Amanj Abdullah said: "The steps taken by Australia and Thailand may have been taken to avoid criticism against the countries that forcibly deport refugees by active international organizations in defending the refugees in the world."

According to the Iraqi Refugees Union, about 100,000 Iraqi refugees are living in several European countries. Some 95 percent of them are Kurdish citizens and face the threat of being deported forcibly to their countries.

AKnews

- **Nujaifi leaves for London to support Iraqi Para-Olympiad team**

BAGHDAD, Aug 26 / Aswat al-Iraq: Parliament speaker Usama Nujaifi will leave for London to attend the opening ceremony of Para-Olympiad games and to support Iraqi handicapped sports delegation.

In a statement by his office, today, Nujaifi wants to support Iraqi sports, particularly national Para-Olympiad teams.

Today, the Iraqi flag will be raised in the Para-Olympiad village, which expected to host 4200 participants, representing 170 countries.

The games shall be held from 27 August to 10 September next.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **Iraq attacks kill 10 people**

BAGHDAD, Aug 26 — A series of attacks in and around Baghdad and in north Iraq on Sunday killed 10 people, including three soldiers and two policemen, security and medical officials said.

The gun and bomb attacks took to 256 the number of people killed nationwide so far this month, according to an AFP tally, already equal to the comparable figure from July.

In Baghdad, five people were shot dead and two wounded in three separate attacks, officials said.

Gunmen armed with silencer-equipped pistols shot dead three security guards in Baghdad's eastern district of Zayouna, an interior ministry official and a medic at the capital's Al-Kindi Hospital said.

Another shooting in Urr, a neighbourhood in north Baghdad, left two policemen dead and another wounded, the interior ministry official and a doctor at nearby Imam Ali Hospital said.

A gun attack at Al-Wathak intersection in the centre of the capital, meanwhile, left a sheikh wounded, medical sources said.

Just west of the capital, three soldiers were killed and two others were wounded by two roadside bombs that detonated as they patrolled nearby, Lieutenant Colonel Mohammed Jerefi said.

Doctor Hamed Tafesh from Fallujah hospital confirmed the toll from the attack in the town of Garma in Anbar province.

http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hUI_WB65AHZBeEpXatH-9A8UaA2Q?docId=CNG.8c8ef080333bd39d9be84f7ee366b0ea.8e1

- **Nine Iraqis killed, 12 injured in violent attacks in Baghdad**

KUWAIT, Aug 26 (KUNA) -- Nine Iraqis were killed and 12 others were injured in separate violent clashes that took place in various districts of the Iraqi capital, a police source said on Sunday.

The source told KUNA that unknown armed men attacked a building, owned by a security service company, in Zeytouna district in east Baghdad by using silencers

weapons killing as a result three security guards.

In Orr district, north Baghdad, three policemen were shot dead by unknown insurgents who drove a civilian vehicle and used silencers in their attack, the source said, adding that four other policemen were injured in the attack by the insurgents, who fled to an unknown site.

In Fallujah, east Iraq, four policemen were injured by a roadside bomb that targeted their patrol, the source pointed out, noting that three Iraqi military personnel were killed while another two were injured in a double roadside bomb blast that targeted their patrol in Korma district, east Fallujah.

KUNA

- **3 soldiers killed, 2 wounded by bomb blast east Fallujah**

ANBAR, Aug 26 / Aswat al-Iraq: Police sources said here today that three soldiers were killed and two wounded by a bomb blast against their patrol east of Fallujah.

The source told Aswat al-Iraq that the bomb was laid on the side of the road.

Precautionary measures were taken, but no extra details were given.

Fallujah lies 60 km west of Ramadi city, center of Anbar province, 110 km west of the capital, Baghdad.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **Three guards of Security Company killed in Baghdad**

BAGHDAD, Aug 26 / NINA / three guards for a security company were killed by gunmen in eastern Baghdad today.

A source in the police told / NINA / that "unidentified gunmen, with silencers weapons, attacked the security company - based in Zayouna area east of Baghdad.

He explained that the attack led to the death of three guards of the company and the gunmen fled.

The source added that "other gunmen attacked; with silencers a man dressed clergy named Fadel Abdul Zahra, in Wathiq Square of Karrada in central Baghdad, wounding him.

In a third incident the source noted that " an adhesive bomb went off on a civilian car in the district of Mahmudiya / 30/ km south of Baghdad, injuring the driver and damaging his car.

NINA

- **Cleric gravely injured in Baghdad**

BAGHDAD, Aug 26 / Aswat al-Iraq: A cleric was gravely injured by silencer weapons mid of Baghdad, according to police sources.

The source told Aswat al-Iraq that "unknown gunmen shot Sheikh Fadhil Abdul Zahra before fleeing the crime scene".

Prompt investigations were made, but no further details were given.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **Night curfew resumed in Karbala**

Karbala, Aug 26 (AIN) –The Police Department of Karbala province declared that it will resume imposing the night

curfew which will start from one o'clock after midnight until five o'clock at dawn.

Media Director of Karbala Police Department, Colonel Ahmed Mohamed, stated to AIN that "The police department in Karbala province decided to resume imposing night curfew all over Karbala province which will start from one o'clock after midnight until five o'clock at dawn," noting that "The curfew was lifted during the holy month of Ramadan."

Karbala Provincial Council declared, on last July 20, to left the night curfew to enable people perform their rituals and prayers during the holy month of Ramadan.

alliraqnews

- **Iraq pipeline delays threaten Shell's Majnoon output**

LONDON, Aug 26: Delays in Iraq's pipeline construction threaten to stall production at Royal Dutch Shell's Majnoon oilfield for at least three months, forcing the field to miss a 2012 target of 175,000 barrels per day, oil ministry documents showed.

Wary of losses, Shell has asked Iraq for a waiver to start recovering costs if Majnoon does not meet its first commercial production target by year-end - a contract requirement before costs can be retrieved, according to documents seen by Reuters.

Shell's troubles illustrate infrastructure hurdles facing oil operators in the OPEC nation. Some oil majors have begun signing deals with Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, which they say offers more attractive conditions than the country's federal government in southern oilfields.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/International/2012/Aug-26/185719-iraq-pipeline-delays-threaten-shells-majnoon-output.ashx#axzz24gli10DM>

- **Baghdad Mayorship launches bid to conduct cleaning works for 3 Municipalities**

Baghdad, Aug 26 (AIN) -The Commission tasked to choose the companies which will be entrusted by Baghdad Mayorship to launch cleaning works for three municipalities, started activities, on

Sunday, as first implementation for privatization in Iraq.

A statement by Mayorship quoted the Municipal Deputy Mayor in the BM, Naem Abaub, as saying "We declared our intention to launch a bid for cleaning three Municipalities where 12 companies offered to apply for cleaning Rusafa Municipality, 13 companies for Karada Municipality and 12 others for Karkh municipality."

"The Commission was formed to choose the best (4-6) offers for each municipality submitted to the Cabinet and after gaining approvals we will invite them to present their detailed bids and offers in order to select one company for every municipal Directorate," Abaub added.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17157:baghdad-mayorship-launches-bid-to-conduct-cleaning-works-for-3-municipalities&catid=39:genral-news&Itemid=48

- **We accepted 17% of Iraqi budget as a sign of leniency until election, says Falah Mustafa**

ERBİL, August 26 (AKnews) – The head of the Kurdistan Regional Government's department of foreign relations stated that the region has accepted 17 percent of the budget as a sign of gentleness until the general election will be held in the country.

In a press conference Falah Mustafa said: "What we see in Baghdad is procrastination in finding solutions for problems. It is just like throwing soil into the eyes of the people in order to hide the truth and tell people that Iraq doesn't have any problems and only the Kurdistan Region is a problem in a time when the Iraqi issue is by far bigger than that.

"The Kurdistan Region deserves more than 17 percent of the Iraqi budget, we accepted that just to show gentleness until holding the general election. Despite his dictatorship mentality, Saddam Hussein gave between 13 percent to 15 percent of the budget to the region but in that time the region's population was less than today.

"Iraqi officials' statement in Baghdad is like the population in other parts of Iraq

has been increasing but the population in the region has gone backwards."

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/2/323150/>

- **Ministry of Oil denies rumours of distributing dates as Eid al-Fitr rewards in South Gas Co**

Baghdad, Aug 26 (AIN) -The Ministry of Oil denied the news which reported that "The Director General of Southern Gas Company in Basra province deprived the employees of the Company from the financial grants of Eid al-Fitr."

A source in the Ministry cited to AIN "These reports are groundless and the Director of the Company granted according to his authorities IQD 50,000 to each employee within the Company."

"As for accusing the Director General of the Company of substituting the financial reward by dates, we confirm that these rumours are untrue and the distribution of dates was just a gift granted along with the financial bonus," the source added.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17165:moo-

2. IRAN

- **Iran opposes foreign meddling in regional affairs, calls for dialog**

Foreign intervention and taking advantage of the wave of instability that has hit our region is unacceptable.”

Iran’s Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi says Tehran opposes foreign interference in regional affairs, calling for the resolution of the existing crises through dialog, Press TV reports.

Speaking at the two-day-long expert-level meeting of the 16th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the Iranian capital on Sunday, Salehi stressed that human rights should not become an excuse for such interference in the hands of certain powers, which have a long record of violating human rights.

“It’s been over a year now that we’re observing the developments in the Middle East and North Africa. No power can ignore the legitimate demands of the

people...we believe that dialog, respecting human rights, and acknowledging the basic needs of people is the only way to overcome challenges that have been caused by dictatorial regimes,” he said.

“Valid and independent political entities should enter dialog to pave the way for national reconciliation in a secure environment, away from foreign threats and interference,” the Iranian foreign minister added.

“Foreign intervention and taking advantage of the wave of instability that has hit our region is unacceptable,” Salehi noted.

During the meeting, senior international experts are scheduled to hold special sessions, addressing economic, cultural, and social issues in order to prepare a draft document, comprising three chapters and 688 points. The document is then to be endorsed by NAM foreign ministers, who are slated to meet over Tuesday and Wednesday.

The 16th summit of NAM member states is held in Tehran from August 26 to 31. Representatives from more than 100

countries have gathered in the Iranian capital for the event.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will also participate in the event, during which the Islamic Republic will assume the rotating presidency of NAM for three years.

NAM is an international organization with 120 member states that is not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc.

Nearly two-thirds of the United Nations member states are also NAM members, making the body the biggest international organization after the UN General Assembly.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/08/26/258305/iran-urges-dialog-on-regional-affairs/>

- **Global peace, security must be NAM priorities: Namibia**

Namibia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Utoni Nujoma says the promotion of global peace and security must top the Non-Aligned Movement's (NAM) priorities.



Upon arriving in Iran's capital, Tehran, to attend the NAM summit on Monday, Nujoma said the member states should support the movement in order to protect the independence and security of independent states.

More than 100 countries are partaking in the NAM summit that kicked off in Tehran on Sunday and is scheduled to end on August 31.

At the opening ceremony of the NAM expert-level meeting, Iran assumed the rotating presidency of the movement for three years. Egypt's Ambassador to the United Nations Moataz Khalil formally handed over the presidency to Iran.

NAM, an international organization with 120 member states, is considered as not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc.

Referring to Iran's regional and international position, Nujoma said the Islamic Republic has had a great influence on the quest of various nations for independence.

Meanwhile, Bhutan's Foreign Minister Ugyen Tshering, who also arrived in Tehran on Monday, described NAM as one of the most important international bodies, whose influence on global affairs is only second to the UN.

Tshering said the NAM summit is a good opportunity to resolve the political and economic problems of the world.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/08/27/258378/global-peace-must-be-nam-priority/>

- **Iran FM meets with N Korean counterpart**

Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi has met with his North Korean counterpart, Pak Ui-chun on the sidelines of the 16th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Tehran.



Meeting with the North Korean official on Sunday, Salehi referred to Iran's competence and experience in the fields of economy, industry, commerce, and agriculture, and expressed Tehran's readiness for the expansion of the bilateral relations in the areas.

Pointing to the sensitivity, characterizing the international affairs and the situation in the region, Pak underlined NAM's role in resolving the international issues.

The Iranian foreign minister had earlier met with his counterparts from Myanmar and the Comoros.

The 16th summit of NAM member states is held in the Iranian capital from August 26 to 31. Representatives from more than 100 countries have gathered in Tehran for the meeting.

NAM is an international organization with 120 member states that is not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc. Nearly two-thirds of the United Nations member states are also NAM members.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/08/26/258311/iran-fm-meets-with-n-korean-counterpart/>

- **Senior MP Downplays Impacts of Oil Sanctions on Iran's Forex Revenues**

TEHRAN (FNA)- A senior Iranian legislator played down the effects of sanctions on the country's foreign currency revenues, and said the Islamic Republic has found different ways to increase its revenues, including boosting its non-oil exports.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has many solutions for (boosting) foreign currency revenues, including an increase in non-oil exports," member of the parliament's Budget Planning Commission Mousarreza Servati told FNA on Monday.

He, meantime, said that Iran still continues its oil sales through different ways despite sanctions, and mentioned

that the oil revenues predicted in this year's budget have been materialized.

Many Iranian officials believe that the West's ban on Iranian oil supplies will help Iranian economy end its dependence on oil revenues.

"The sanctions imposed on us have created an opportunity to prepare the ground for cutting the connection between the (country's) budget and oil (revenues)," Vice-Speaker of the Iranian Parliament Hassan Aboutorabi-Fard said at an economic conference here in Tehran in March.



At the same time, Iran's First Vice-President Mohammad Reza Rahimi said that the country plans to boost its non-oil exports to \$70bln in the next Iranian year (starts on March 20).

"The government targets \$70 billion of non-oil exports in 1391 (March 20, 2012-March 20, 2013)," Rahimi said.

In March 2011, a senior Iranian economic official announced that the country plans to boost its non-oil exports to \$301 billion within the next five years.

Iranian Deputy Commerce Minister Hamid Safdel stated at the time that Iran's non-oil exports, excluding gas condensates, will reach \$301 billion in a five-year period.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106040390>

- **Iran's Non-Oil Trade Exceeds \$37.6bln in 5 Months**

TEHRAN (FNA)- The volume of Iran's non-oil trade with other countries amounted to \$37.6bln during the first five months of the current Iranian year (March 20 - August 21), a senior Iranian official announced on Monday.



"The volume of Iran's non-oil trade, or in other words the overall non-oil imports and exports, in the first five months of the current year surpassed \$37.6bln," Head of Iran's Customs Office Abbas Me'marnejad told FNA.

Noting that Iran has trade relations with 140 world states, he said that the country imported 15.7mln tons of non-oil goods worth of \$21.9bln in the first five months of the current year and exported 30mln tons of commodities worth of \$15.7bln in the same period.

Iranian officials have underlined that the country plans to increase its non-oil exports to over \$70bln in the current Iranian year.

Late in December, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad lauded the country's growing non-oil exports, and said Iran's non-oil exports would equal its imports in the current Iranian year.

"God willing, non-oil exports will equal (Iran's) imports by the end of 1391 (march 19, 2013)," he said, adding, "That would be a great revolution in the country's economy."

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106040388>

- **EC Secretary: NAM Summit to Defuse Sanctions against Iran**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Expediency Council Secretary Mohsen Rezayee said members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and their summit in Tehran can render the West's economic sanctions against Iran inefficient as the bloc enjoys a vast array of potentials and capacities in area of economy.



"The NAM summit enjoys the capacity to undermine sanctions, create joint markets, insurances and banks and

strengthen public diplomacy," Rezayee told FNA on Monday.

Despite the rules enshrined in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) entitling every member state, including Iran, to the right of uranium enrichment, Tehran is now under four rounds of UN Security Council sanctions and western embargos for turning down West's calls to give up its right of uranium enrichment.

Tehran has dismissed the West's demand as politically tainted and illogical, stressing that sanctions and pressures merely consolidate Iranians' national resolve to continue the path.

Rezayee further pointed to Iran's active presence in NAM since the formation of the movement and after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, and noted, "The West is seeking to prove that Iran has been left alone, but we will prove through the holding of the summit that Iran is not alone and has vast contacts and those who impose sanctions against Iran are actually in minority, and therefore, this political confrontation is in the interests of the Iranian nation."

NAM is a group of states considering themselves not aligned formally with or against any major power bloc. The movement had 120 members and 17 observer countries.

The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement represent nearly two-thirds of the United Nations' members and contain 55% of the world population. Membership is particularly concentrated in countries considered to be developing or part of the Third World.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106040382>

- **UN Chief to Visit Iran's Enrichment Facility This Week**

TEHRAN (FNA)- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will visit Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment facility on the sidelines of his presence at a summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Tehran, sources said on Monday.



Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for International Affairs Mehdi Akhounzadeh told FNA that "the UN secretary-general will visit Isfahan province during his stay in Iran", while other sources said his presence in Isfahan will be aimed at a visit to the Natanz facility.

Ban is due to arrive in Iran later this week to attend the 16th NAM Summit in Tehran on Thursday and Friday.

Deputy foreign ministers and experts from the NAM member states started a meeting here in the Iranian capital on Sunday. The two-day experts meeting which ends this evening and will be followed by the NAM's foreign ministerial meeting on August 28 and 29 is drawing up the agenda for the 16th heads-of-state summit meeting of the bloc to be held in Tehran on Thursday and Friday.

Iran assumed the rotating presidency of the movement from Egypt for three years during the Sunday meeting.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106040362>

- **Iran, India to hold meeting on access to landlocked Afghanistan**

TEHRAN, Aug. 25 (MNA) - India, Iran and Afghanistan will hold talks on giving India greater access to landlocked Afghanistan, Indian Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai said on Saturday.

The three countries will meet Sunday to discuss how best to use the southeastern Iranian port of Chahbahar and develop road and rail links from there to Afghanistan, the Wall Street Journal quoted Mathai as telling reporters.

India has been one of the largest contributors of development aid to Afghanistan. Over the past decade, it has spent more than \$2 billion to help build infrastructure, including roads, power projects and hospitals.

For India the shortest and most economical route for sending supplies to

Afghanistan would be by road through Pakistan, but its decades-long rival has denied New Delhi road access to Kabul, making the route through Iran all the more significant.

Iran also hopes to develop an industrial zone near Chahbahar and wants to attract foreign investment to set up industries there, Mathai said.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who will be in Tehran to attend the Non-Aligned Movement summit, is to meet with Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the WSJ reported.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1680388>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Israel closes key Jerusalem checkpoint, limiting Palestinian residents' access to city**

Refugee camp residents will only be able to cross into Israel via central checkpoint now; plan contravenes 2008 High Court ruling construction must be undertaken to

Shoafat crossing before Ras Khamis checkpoint closed.

The Defense Ministry is planning to seal up the Ras Khamis checkpoint, one of the only two exits into Israel for the 65,000 Palestinian residents of the Shoafat refugee camp in northeast Jerusalem.

The Palestinian, who are considered residents of Jerusalem, can now enter Israel only through the Shoafat central checkpoint, severely limiting their access to the city.

The plan in its current format contravenes a ruling by the High Court of Justice passed in 2008, which determined that the Shoafat central checkpoint would need eight pedestrian crossings and four crossings for vehicles before the smaller checkpoint could be closed.

This would mean that some 16,000 people who had been using the Ras Khamis crossing daily will now have cross into Israel only via the central checkpoint. Moreover, although the two checkpoints are only 350 meters from each other, in actuality residents who used to pass

through Ras Khamis will have to travel two kilometers to get to the central crossing.

Over the past few days, the Defense Ministry dismantled the security cameras at the crossing, with police sources saying these were first steps toward sealing the checkpoint by next week.

“They were meant to build additional lanes for cars and a few for pedestrians,” says Jamil Sanduqa, head of the refugee camp’s residents’ committee. “But they haven’t even done any groundwork for this. Now our children are starting school. You know what kind of crowding there’s going to be here? As it is they’re choking us.”

The Shoafat refugee camp includes four villages crowded one next to the other: Shoafat, Ras Shehada, Dahiyat al-Salaam and Ras Khamis. All these are in northeastern Jerusalem, within the city’s municipal boundaries, but in practice, they are cut off from the city, because the separation barrier surrounds them on three sides. On the eastern side, the refugee camp is open toward the village of Anata, which is in the Palestinian Authority-controlled areas.

To get into Jerusalem, the tens of thousands of refugee camp residents have had two options: The central checkpoint, which was upgraded recently, and the Ras Khamis checkpoint, a small border crossing serving only pedestrians, but through which thousands of people pass.

About four years ago, residents in and near Ras Khamis were told that the Defense Ministry was planning to close the Ras Khamis checkpoint in order to complete the separation barrier in the area. From then, they were told, they would have to use the main checkpoint, along with 50,000 other refugee camp residents.

With the help of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the residents petitioned the High Court, which set down clear conditions for closing down Ras Khamis; this included expanding the main checkpoint to include four lanes for vehicles, to be manned and open 24 hours a day, and eight paths for pedestrians.

Today, Sanduqa says, there's only one pedestrian crossing. "They have to build

another seven, like the court said," he said.

Aside from all this, the court ruled that the Defense Ministry must, as part of the expanded crossing, build a special lane for checking suspicious vehicles, parking lots so that residents could "park and ride" public transportation, and a plaza for examining vehicles bringing goods from the Shoafat area to Israel.



About half a year ago the Defense Ministry erected large signs throughout the refugee camp announcing the planned closure of the Ras Khamis crossing. The residents' committee and ACRI contacted several relevant officials demanding that the closure not be implemented.

"An in fact, nothing happened, until now," explained Sanduqa, when the dismantling of the security cameras raised residents'

suspicious, and they discovered the crossing was to be closed.

As a result, on Sunday, ACRI wrote a sharply worded letter to Public Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch, to Defense Minister Ehud Barak, to the Civil Administration officers responsible for the area and other officials, demanding that the move not be made without meeting the High Court's requirements.

"Closing the Ras Khamis checkpoint at this time, before you have met your obligations with regarding to the [central] Shoafat refugee camp checkpoint, will constitute a serious, disproportionate blow to the population's freedom of movement, which is dependent on crossing that checkpoint," wrote Nasrin Alian, an attorney for ACRI.

"As a result, their rights to earn a living, receive medical care, learn, teach, visit the holy places and their relatives, will be undermined," she wrote.

The Defense Ministry said: "The Ras Khamis crossing was a very small checkpoint that was a temporary checkpoint from the start. Ras Khamis

residents will soon be moving to use the Shoafat crossing, which has been rebuilt to a high standard so it can handle thousands of residents.

"At the Shoafat crossing, which is only 350 meters from the Ras Khamis crossing, more than 5,000 people pass through during peak hours [between 6-8 A.M.] and [the central crossing] will be able to absorb more without unusual pressure. The issue meets the guidelines of the High Court of Justice and has been implemented in coordination with ACRI and the courts."

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/israel-closes-key-jerusalem-checkpoint-limiting-palestinian-residents-access-to-city-1.460992>

- **C'tee okays PM portfolio changes amid war rumors**

Netanyahu backtracks on request to alter investments to avoid Iran commentary; Mofaz: Move betrays PM's intent to strike Iran.

PM Netanyahu at the President's Residence Photo: Amos Ben-Gershon/GPO

A special committee has given its initial approval for Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to make changes to his foreign and domestic investment portfolio, amid increased speculation in recent weeks that Israel is considering a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, a move that would certainly send shockwaves throughout the global economy.

Netanyahu quickly backtracked on his decision, saying he wanted to avoid fueling rumors about a potential strike on Iranian nuclear facilities, but not before drawing sharp rebuke by opposition leader Shaul Mofaz and Labor party head Shelly Yechimovich, both of whom accused the prime minister of improprieties.

The committee, functioning under the auspices of the State Comptroller's Office, was formed following the Second Lebanon War when then-IDF chief of staff Dan Halutz was accused of insider trading for liquidating his investment portfolio just two hours after Hezbollah gunmen kidnapped two soldiers along the northern border. Halutz's portfolio was valued at approximately NIS 120,000. It would have suffered losses with the rest of the Tel

Aviv 25 index, which dropped 8.3 percent during the week following the outbreak of hostilities.

Ministers and their immediate family members are required to place their assets in a blind trust for the duration of their term in government in order to prevent conflicts of interest.

In approving Netanyahu's request, the committee stated: "It appears that, in light of the drastic and frequent macro-economic changes, there seems to be a clear need to allow the trustee to make changes with the faith of the government," according to Globes. The committee added that it would meet again on October 10 to finalize its decision.

In response to the report, the Prime Minister's Office released a statement saying that Netanyahu has decided to avoid making changes to his investment portfolio for fear that such a move would mistakenly be interpreted as connected to an Israeli military strike on Iran.

Opposition leader Shaul Mofaz said that Netanyahu's financial move betrayed his

intention to attack Iran. "The prime minister's request to adjust his investment portfolio is a strange step that betrays more than a small hint about his intentions," Mofaz said. "His actions prove that he is well aware of the massive risks to state security from a hasty, uncoordinated and unnecessary decision to attack Iran unilaterally."

Labor party leader Shelly Yechimovich tied Netanyahu's move to the Halutz scandal. "If [Netanyahu] has important information, he should share it with the public," Yechimovich said. "We have already been witness to improprieties by [former IDF] chief of staff Halutz, who sent IDF soldiers into combat, during which many of them lost their lives, but found time to call the bank and to sell his shares. The public is disgusted, and rightly so," she said.

The Jerusalem Post has learned that Netanyahu has been saying in private meetings that a strike on Iran's nuclear facilities would be worthwhile, even if Israel cannot completely destroy Iran's nuclear program.

<http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=282728>

- **Police nab 3 youths for firebombing Palestinian taxi**

Two weeks after 6 Palestinians were injured by a Molotov cocktail, police arrest three 12, 13-year-old suspects from Bat Ayin.

Two suspects in firebomb attack in J'lem court Photo: Yonatan Sindel/Flash 90

Nearly 10 days after the firebombing of a Palestinian taxi that wounded six family members, police on Sunday announced the arrest of three suspects in the attack.

They are boys between 12 and 13 years old, and from the Bat Ayin settlement in Gush Etzion, south of the capital.

At the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court on Sunday night, all three suspects were diminutive and looked every bit their young age. They appeared to be in good spirits and were taken out of the courtroom to the cheers of two friends waiting for them.

Two of the suspects are 12 years old and one is 13. Police detained them Sunday

afternoon and continued to question them Sunday night. If investigators are not able to turn up more information by Monday morning, the boys will be released to house arrest.

The youths' lawyer, David Halevi, said the fact that the suspects may be released on Monday is proof that "the police have no meaningful evidence against his clients."

He said that the weakness of the case is illustrated by the fact that the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) already questioned them following the crime along with a number of additional suspects, but did not arrest them.

Halevi represents the suspects on behalf of the Honenu organization, which defends Jewish suspects accused of crimes against Arabs. Halevi also represents a 15-year-old girl who is one of the main suspects in the brutal mob beating of an Arab boy, 17, in Jerusalem's Zion Square on August 17, the same night the Palestinian taxi was attacked.

Gush Etzion Regional Council head Davidi Perl said he strongly condemns the firebombing, but that it was important not

to race to judge the three teens before they were charged.

"They are still just suspects," he said.

The settlement of Bat Ayin also condemned violence against what it termed innocents, but rejected any connection to the attack.

"We are certain that none of our residents had a hand in this grave incident, which goes against all human and Jewish values," a statement said.

<http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=282699>

- **'Welcome to Palestine' group denied entry into West Bank**

Activists pictured during a protest at Brussels national airport in April.

Some 1,200 people throughout Europe had bought plane tickets for an April 15 visit to the West Bank as part of a campaign called "Welcome to Palestine".

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- Dozens of foreign peace activists were denied entry into the West Bank by Israeli authorities at the

Allenby Bridge crossing on Sunday evening, organizers of the third 'Welcome to Palestine' initiative said.

"The Welcome to Palestine Campaign decries the Israeli denial of entry via the Allenby Bridge to over 100 internationals who wanted to visit us in the occupied Palestinian Territories," organizers said in a statement.

The group of around 100 activists had finished passport checks at the Jordanian side of the Allenby crossing but were denied entry at the first Israeli checkpoint and told to return to where they had come from, a spokesman for WTP told Ma'an.

No explanation was provided by Israeli crossing authorities as to why the group was denied entry, but the delegation will try to enter the West Bank again on Monday, the spokesman added.

"The denial of entry today at the Allenby Bridge border crossing from Jordan shows that the previous policies of siege and isolation continue," organizers said.

"We thus will continue to initiate more Welcome to Palestine campaigns. We insist on the freedom of entry. As Israel persists in these unjust policies, it is only fair to ask all countries to reciprocate by denying Israelis entry to these countries."

Since Friday, around 100 activists have arrived in Jordan, with the intention of crossing the Israeli-controlled border with the West Bank on Sunday.

Pro-Palestinian international activists smile in Amman, as they head towards King Hussein Bridge at the border between Jordan and Israel, August 26, 2012.(Reuters/Ali Jarekji)

The group included French, British, German and American supporters, campaigners told Ma'an.

Political figures were due to greet the delegation in Bethlehem and the group was then scheduled to spend five days visiting Jerusalem, refugee camps, the Negev and villages in Hebron that are struggling against Israel's separation wall.

Welcome to Palestine had previously organized two "flytillas," when foreigners

stated their intention to visit Palestine on entry to Israeli airport Ben Gurion, drawing Israel to deny entry to many of the passengers and distribute blacklists to airlines.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=514694>

- **Report: Fayyad seeks advice from Bank of Israel governor**

TEL AVIV, Israel (Ma'an) -- Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad met with the Governor of the Bank of Israel Stanley Fischer last Friday in Jerusalem, Israeli media reported on Monday.

Hebrew-language news site Maariv said that the meeting came at Fayyad's request, and he was seeking advice on future economic steps.

The officials, who worked together at the International Monetary Fund in the 1990s, met at the American Colony Hotel in East Jerusalem, the report said.

Fischer's office confirmed that he met with Fayyad, but they gave no further details.

Fayyad's Ramallah-based government has descended into a worsening financial crisis during 2012, citing large debts and the failure of donors to deliver aid.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=514746>

- **Water Authority Condemns Israeli Demolition of Wells**

RAMALLAH, August 27, 2012 (WAFA) – Head of the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) Shaddad Attili condemned Israel's destruction of Palestinian agricultural wells in the Kufr Dan area, near Jenin, according to a statement by PWA on Monday.

The statement came following the Israeli military threat to destroy more wells in Jenin area if Palestinian farmers refuse to close down and destroy more on their own.

Attili described Israel's demolition of Palestinian water infrastructure as a grave violation of basic Palestinian water rights, and said that it formed part of a broader campaign being waged by Israel to forcibly displace Palestinians from their land to

facilitate ongoing illegal Israeli settlement expansion.

“Israel’s demolition of essential Palestinian water infrastructure is particularly concentrated in Area C and other areas of the West Bank that are under threat of confiscation for the purposes of illegal settlement expansion and the construction of Israel’s Wall. This is where some of the most vulnerable Palestinian communities live, and where the viability of the two-state solution is now being called into doubt,” Attili added.

He slammed the Israeli excuse of permits and ‘authorization’ as a way to veto and block essential Palestinian water projects and to stunt Palestinian development, stressing that Palestinians are not even close to being able to abstract the volumes of water allocated to them under previous agreements, largely because of Israel’s punitive permit regime.

Israel’s refusal to permit the construction of new Palestinian wells that are urgently needed, as well as its refusal to allow for the rehabilitation of old wells leaves some Palestinians with no choice but to drill

wells without a permit, said the statement.

It estimated that water losses incurred as a result of Israeli restrictions on the rehabilitation of licensed Palestinian wells amounted to approximately 4 MCM/y.

Attili appealed to the international community to intervene to end Israel’s policy of deliberately targeting and destroying essential Palestinian water infrastructure, as well as he called on the U.S State Department, as chair of the Trilateral Water Committee, to act swiftly.

He further denied claims made by the Israeli Civil Administration that its latest destruction of agricultural wells in the Jenin area was carried out in coordination with PWA

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20522>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **First crack in Libya National Congress: Interior minister resigns**

Abdelali resigns after coming under fire for performance of security forces during surge of violence that has rocked Libya.

TRIPOLI - Interior Minister Fawzi Abdelali resigned on Sunday after coming under fire for the performance of security forces during a surge of violence that has rocked Libya, an official from his office said.

"He submitted his resignation to protest against congressmen criticising the government and to defend the revolutionaries," the official said, referring to former rebels who now form part of Libya's security services.



Libyan security services have come in for censure following double car bombings that killed two people on the day Muslims celebrated the feast of Eid al-Fitr a week ago in Tripoli and attacks on several Sufi shrines in the past few days.

The criticism has been led by the newly-elected General National Congress, which on Sunday accused the interior ministry's High Security Committee of being lax or even implicated in the destruction of the Sufi shrines.

Islamist hardliners on Saturday bulldozed part of the mausoleum of Al-Shaab Al-Dahman, close to the centre of the Libyan capital.

The demolition came a day after hardliners blew up the mausoleum of Sheikh Abdessalem al-Asmar in Zliten, 160 kilometres (100 miles) east of the capital.

According to witnesses another mausoleum that of Sheikh Ahmed al-Zarruq, had been destroyed in the port of Misrata, 200 kilometres (125 miles) east of Tripoli.

Hardline Sunni Islamists are implacably opposed to the veneration of tombs of revered Muslim figures, saying that such devotion should be reserved for God alone.

The Sufi sect, which practices a mystical form of Islam and has played a historic role in the affairs of Libya, has increasingly found itself in conflict with Qatari- and Saudi-trained Salafist preachers who consider it heretical.

The High Security Committee comprises ex-rebels who fought Moamer Gathafi's forces last year in a conflict that ended in the dictator's death.

The rebels had taken over security in the country after the fall of Gathafi's regime before they were integrated into the ministry of interior's forces.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54045>

- **Morsi's Egypt: 'Revolution' fails to break wave of self-immolations**



Egyptian man sets fire to himself outside presidential palace in Cairo to protest against losing his job.

CAIRO - An Egyptian man was reported to be in stable condition after he set fire to himself on Saturday outside the presidential palace in Cairo to protest against losing his job, police officials said.

The employee at a state-owned electricity company had won a court ruling to get back his job, but the company ignored the verdict. He doused himself in petrol and set himself alight as a last resort, the officials said.

The protest did not appear related to a sit-in outside the palace in northern Cairo by activists who oppose President Mohamed Morsi, the country's first Islamist and civilian president.

In a statement, the presidency expressed its "regret" at the man's self-immolation, the official MENA news agency reported.

Such acts had been rare in Egypt before several men set fire to themselves in January and February 2011 in protest against then President Hosni Mubarak,

after a Tunisian street vendor's self-immolation prompted a revolution in Tunisia.

Mubarak was overthrown in a popular uprising that ushered in military rule and Morsi's election last June.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54038>

- **Salafists continue march on Libya religious monuments: Government condemns**

Radicals use excavator to demolish part of mausoleum of Al-Shaab Al-Dahman, close to centre of Libyan capital, in second such attack in two days.

TRIPOLI - Islamist hardliners bulldozed part of a revered mausoleum in Tripoli on Saturday in the second such attack in Libya in two days, a correspondent reported.

Deputy Prime Minister Mustafa Abu Shagur, in remarks on Twitter, condemned the actions as "crimes" for which the culprits should be held responsible.

He had asked the defence and interior ministries on Friday to intervene "but they have not carried out their duty in protecting these sites."

The radicals used an excavator to demolish part of the mausoleum of Al-Shaab Al-Dahman, close to the centre of the Libyan capital, the correspondent said.

It was the second such assault on a Muslim pilgrimage site in as many days.

On Friday, hardliners blew up the mausoleum of Sheikh Abdessalem al-Asmar in Zliten, 160 kilometres (100 miles) east of Tripoli, a town which was rocked by deadly clashes earlier this week.

A video posted on social networking sites purported to show the building being blown up to cries of "Allahu Akbar (God is greatest)."

Witnesses said on Saturday that another mausoleum, that of Sheikh Ahmed al-Zarruq, had been destroyed in the port of Misrata 200 kilometres (125 miles) east of Tripoli.

Hardline Sunni Islamists are implacably opposed to the veneration of tombs of revered Muslim figures, saying that such devotion should be reserved for God alone.

There are conflicting reports as to what triggered this week's clashes in Zliten, with some saying they were the result of a tribal vendetta and others that they pitted Islamists bent on destroying the shrine against other residents seeking to protect it.

The violence, which left at least three people dead and scores wounded, is on the agenda of the ruling national congress, which has requested a security briefing from the interior minister.

The national assembly's speaker, Mohamed al-Megarief, in a televised speech on Saturday, denounced "the destruction and pillage of several buildings" and historic manuscripts.

He also said it was "regrettable and suspect" that members of the security forces and former rebels may have taken part in the attacks.

"Such acts are rejected and illegal under the law and sharia (Islamic law)," Megarief said.

He added that the prime minister and defence and interior ministers, along with the intelligence chief and security service officials, have been called to appear before the assembly on Sunday to answer deputies' questions.



On Thursday, the national assembly, which was elected in July, met in closed session to discuss security problems across the country, with Interior Minister Fawzi Abdelali reportedly coming in for heavy criticism.

The session followed a double car bombing in Tripoli on August 19 that killed two people. Tribal clashes in the western region of Zliten have since left at least two dead and several wounded.

Rumours have been circulating in Tripoli for days that Abdelali and Defence Minister Osama Juili could both face the sack.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54036>

- **Tunisian Minister Launches National Dialogue on Transitional Justice**

Yesterday, August 25, Spokesperson of the Tunisian government and Minister of Human Rights and Transitional Justice Samir Dilou launched an open day of discussions with local associations concerning the path of transitional justice in Tunisia.

The Tunisian state-owned news agency TAP reported that Dilou called all participants in the process of transitional justice to forget their differing ideologies and backgrounds, and to instead focus on serving the country during such a sensitive period. According to the same source, Dilou stated that he understands public concerns about the slow progress in the realm of transitional justice. However, he insisted that transitional justice is

different from justice served during a period of stability.

Mohsen Sahbani, the coordinator of the committee that organized the national dialogue, told TAP that this gathering aims at giving associations and non-profit organizations the opportunity to present their suggestions, visions, and projects concerning transitional justice procedures in Tunisia. Such topics include fighting corruption and compensating the families of the martyrs and the wounded of the revolution.

Some attendees of the conference expressed their dissatisfaction with the current situation of transitional justice through voicing critical comments. Zouhair Makhoulf, representative of the Tunisian branch of Amnesty International, accused the ruling three-power coalition government of manipulating transitional justice, as many important documents and evidence of corruption have been destroyed since the revolution. Makhoulf called for setting up independent and constant mechanisms to prevent former regime deeds from resurfacing.

The national dialogue addressing transitional justice has started recently in different regions of the country. A final draft of the law concerning transitional justice is to be implemented by the end of this dialogue. According to Tunisia's Mosaique FM radio station, Dilou stated that his ministry will officially propose the project law of transitional justice in the upcoming weeks. The same radio station reported that Jamel Gharsalli, president of the Association of Martyrs and Wounded of the Revolution in Kasserine, suggested creating a separate tribunal for transitional justice.

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/08/26/tunisian-minister-launches-national-dialogue-on-transitional-justice/>

- **Tunisia draft constitution marred by setbacks**

Legal experts shed a critical light on Tunisia's draft constitution and call for a better protection of civil liberties.

While Tunisia is in the midst of drafting a new constitution, many legal experts are concerned that the process is not on the right track.

The Association of Constitutional Law and the International Institute for Democracy on Wednesday (August 22nd) held a round-table seminar in Tunis, intended to serve as a preliminary reading of the general principles of the anticipated constitution.

"If this draft is not amended in the plenary sessions of the Constituent Assembly, the new constitution would assassinate freedoms in Tunisia and threaten the freedoms gained with the revolution," said Tunisian lawyer and former Dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science Iyadh Ben Achour.

He considered the new draft constitution to be inconsistent with the demands of the revolution for a civilian state. For example, Ben Achour claimed that repeated expressions of religiosity and holy sites in Article 1 of Chapter IV pave the way for the establishment of dictatorship through a religious state.

This Article indicates, "The state is the sponsor of religion, ensuring the freedom of belief and religious practices, and the protector of holy sites, ensuring the

neutrality of houses of worship from partisan propaganda."

There is confusion between general provisions and freedoms in the draft constitution, he pointed out. Some articles inserted under general provisions could have been incorporated under freedoms. According to the lawyer, this represents a systematic error that must be overcome.

Ben Achour elaborated that the method envisaged by the committees in writing some of the articles is not a legal one and does not solidify rights in a practical way but opens doors for dangerous anti-freedom interpretations.

He attributed these gaps to the lack of legal experience and constitutional knowledge of the members of the Constituent Assembly.

In this context, Ben Achour stressed the importance of precision in the choice of words.

The Constituent Assembly proposed three weeks ago an initial project of the constitution draft though the committees had not resolved debate on a number of

contentious issues, particularly concerning the nature of the political system and the general principles of freedom.

For his part, member of the International Academy of Constitutional Law Ghazi Ghairi criticised the preamble of the draft constitution, considering it long and stuffed with numerous vague concepts. He urged the members of the Constituent Assembly to formulate a constitution better than the one from 1959 and to ensure that human rights are clearly spelled out.

Regarding freedom of belief, international law expert Slim Loghmani called for prioritising international treaties over the new constitution. He called for adopting Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which was ratified by Tunisia and protects freedoms.

Loghmani commented that Article 1 of the draft constitution was vague with regard to religion and the state. It would, according to him, close doors to all attempts to establish secularism.

The Article reads, "Tunisia is a free, independent and sovereign state. Its

religion is Islam, its language is Arabic and its type of government is republic."

Professor of constitutional law Salwa Hamrouni opposed the chapter specifying the religion of the president as well as the one about excluding holders of a second nationality from running for the presidency.

"The candidate for the Presidency of the Republic must be a voter, of exclusively Tunisian nationality, Muslim, born to a Tunisian father and mother, and be at least 40 years of age," according to Article 46 of the draft law.

The requirement is incompatible with the principle of non-discrimination advocated by the constitution, Hamrouni argued.

http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2012/08/24/feature-01

- **Algerian imams engage militants in dialogue**

Religious leaders in Algeria say youths drawn to extremist ideology are basing their views on a misguided interpretation of Islam.

Imams in Algerian mosques are holding talks with militants, repentant terrorists and extremist youths to convince them to renounce their ideology, give up armed action and opt for peace.

Many preachers have said that combating extremism cannot be achieved through weapons and force alone. They believe that talking to militants may have a positive impact and may convince many of them to put down arms and renounce violence after intellectually arguing with them and proving the incorrectness of the fatwas they use to justify their extremist positions.

Some imams have organised meetings attended by some jihadist salafists and repentant terrorists who gave up armed action. Moreover, other initiatives have been launched by a group of imams and preachers through debates with former terrorists both inside and outside prisons to convince them to renounce violence and extremism.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs said that such initiatives are at the core of imams' mission. Adda Fellahi, an advisor to the

religious affairs minister, told El Khabar August 21st that the ministry did not give any instructions to the imams holding the talks.

"The ministry blesses these steps which stem from a sense of responsibility in imams, and confirmed that some debates and discussions were conducted through some programmes such as Radio Qur'an and led to very positive results," Fellahi added, stressing that the role of clerics in this issue was pivotal and needs to be supported by all.

Sheikh Ahmed, an imam at a mosque in Algiers, says, "Curbing the spread of armed groups or their recruitment of new elements is dependent on drying up the sources of takfirist ideology which these extremist groups embrace."

He added that he has often met with a number of young people who embrace this extremist ideology, and talked with them about some ideological and Sharia issues.

"Most of the meetings were dedicated for responding to the ideas and fatwas that they use to justify taking up arms in

Algeria," he added in a statement to Magharebia. "Most of these fatwas were weak in argument and weren't recommended by top Islamic scholars. We tried to show this to those young people who were victims of brainwashing due to their poor religious and intellectual levels."

However, Sheikh Ahmed acknowledged the difficulty of the mission, especially in talking to militants in the mountains because of a lack of means of communication that would allow them to get in touch and respond to takfirist fatwas.

In his turn, Larbi Lemdani, a researcher in armed groups, believes that "previous experiences in Algeria and other Arab countries, such as Egypt, have led to an ideological output that would help confront the ideology of al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other armed groups."

"Many of these ideas involve many jurisprudential errors, especially regarding rules and controls of jihad. Such defects have prompted some of its elements to

leave and give up armed action," according to Lemdani.

In recent years, official entities and civil society organisations have organised several forums related to extremism.

Two years ago, Algeria hosted preachers and religious scholars in seminars attended by repentant terrorists and young people from the extremist current. Dialogues were held on the religious ideas embraced by salafist young people and scholars' response. Radio Qur'an also broadcast programmes on extremism and intolerance. The testimonies of some repentant terrorists showed that such activities affected many militants who gave up armed action.

In 2009, Algeria witnessed the birth of the first revision issued by a group of prisoners involved in terrorism cases. The revision was in the form of a message sent to the president in which they explained their position on armed action in Algeria. They said that the acts that were done in the name of religion lost their legitimate cover after they carefully considered what scholars said.

http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2012/08/24/feature-02

- **Brotherhood official hopes new bill will legitimize group**

A senior Muslim Brotherhood leader expressed his hope Monday that a new bill on civil society organizations will be passed, allowing the group to legalize its status and ending controversy over the issue.

Saad al-Husseiny, former chairman of the now-dissolved People's Assembly Budget and Planning Committee, voiced his opinion about the bill in a Twitter message.

"Had [it not] been to save embarrassment, I would have asked the president to consult political forces before passing the law on civil society that the People's Assembly had prepared," Husseiny wrote. "I believe the Brotherhood will immediately seek to legalize its position based on the new law."

Last month, Insurance and Social Affairs Minister Nagwa Khalil told Al-Masry Al-Youm that a number of Brotherhood

leaders had verbally approached her to legalize the group's status through the new bill. She said, however, that they did not submit formal requests, fearing that "the number of its members, sources of funding and unlawful objectives would be exposed."

The Brotherhood had been banned under former President Hosni Mubarak. After the 25 January revolution, many called for the Brotherhood to seek legal status.

Former MP Mohamed Abou Hamed led protests Friday demanding that the group be dissolved, but the demonstrations drew a low turnout.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/brotherhood-official-hopes-new-bill-will-legitimize-group>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **By order of Israel: Jordan bars activists from crossing into West Bank**

Israel, Jordan bar pro-Palestinian activists from trying to cross into West Bank to deliver aid to students.

Israel and Jordan on Sunday barred pro-Palestinian US and European activists from trying to cross into the West Bank to deliver aid to students, a number of sources said.

Olivia Zemor, spokeswoman for the "Welcome to Palestine" group spearheading the mission, said that one bus of activists was allowed through the Allenby Bridge border crossing by the Jordanian authorities but the Israelis turned them back.

"The (Israeli) authorities took all their passports and stamped 'entry denied' on all of them and told them to return," she said.

"The second bus was prevented (from crossing) by the Jordanians at the request of the Israeli authorities. They obeyed the orders of the Israelis," she said.

"One police officer told us that 'we got orders from Israel. We cannot let you leave'. We demanded explanation and nobody gave us any explanation. Then some of us demonstrated," she said.

An Israeli defence ministry official in Jerusalem confirmed that Israeli authorities had stopped the activists from entering the West Bank after a group of them arrived at the Allenby Bridge crossing.

"A small group of provocateurs, rioters and known troublemakers arrived at the Allenby crossing earlier today," the official said.

"The state of Israel exercised its right to refuse their entry, and they returned to Jordan."

Earlier Sunday, Walid Attalah, a spokesman for the "Welcome to Palestine" campaign in Jordan said that the two buses had been prevented from crossing by the Jordanians.

"Two buses carrying 100 activists were not allowed to leave the Jordanian side" of Allenby Bridge Crossing, also known as King Hussein Bridge between the West Bank and Jordan, Attalah said.

Atallah said the "activists left the buses and started to demonstrate near the

checkpoint. One of them fainted and was taken to hospital."

As part of the campaign, aimed at highlighting Israel's control over entry to the occupied territories, the activists sought to provide Palestinian students with a tonne of toys, pens, notebooks and other supplies.

"This is our fourth initiative to enter Palestine," Zemor told a news conference before leaving for the crossing, around 35 kilometres (20 miles) southeast of Amman.



"We have around 100 participants, from France, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, the United States, aged between 10 and 50. All kinds of people, from all backgrounds and religions. They are all motivated to visit Palestine."

Five school buses drove the activists to the crossing as they chanted "Free Palestine!" and sang Palestinian traditional songs. Some wore T-shirts with "I have a dream" printed on them, while others flashed V-for-victory sign.

The campaigners tried to enter the occupied West Bank through Israel in July 2011 and April 2012, but the authorities at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport denied them entry.

The activists, who had planned to stay for a week in the West Bank, say their mission comes at the invitation of Bethlehem governor Abdel-Fatah Hamayel.

Some activists had been sceptical in advance they would be allowed in.

"I tried in July last year and April, but the Israelis put me in prison for one day. I expect they will reject us again just like they did before. It is ridiculous and a shame," American volunteer Michael Rabb said.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54048>

● Berri's desperate attempts

Whether opponents or allies, it is hard for anyone to deny the fact that the Syrian regime has been hit hard, and that the question is no longer if, but when, it will fall. Everyone is preparing for what will happen in Syria post-Assad and how that will impact Lebanon, and some have already started to move away from Assad's regime. For example, President Michel Suleiman seems to have recently shifted stances, and Speaker Nabih Berri could follow.

One cannot but notice Berri's sudden burst of concern for stability and the reinforcement of state institutions. The man whose armed thugs invaded Beirut during the May events of 2008 under the leadership of Hezbollah, and who closed the parliament for 18 months and participated in the occupation of downtown Beirut, now believes that "The state is the sole authority despite dereliction," as he said last Tuesday.

Former Minister Michel Samaha's arrest was a big blow to Berri, as it showed that Syria's lackeys are not protected in Lebanon anymore. If Samaha was taken

in, then anyone, no matter how close they are to Assad, could face the same destiny. Berri is desperate to save his seat as speaker in the 2013 elections. Without it, he will lose his power within the Shiite community, which mostly relies on funds and services hijacked from state institutions.

He also knows that his partners in Hezbollah detest him and are willing to dump him whenever the opportunity presents itself. When Assad goes, Hezbollah will try its best to hold on to Lebanon, under full Iranian influence this time. Without Assad, what is Berri going to do?

Berri and Hezbollah have long been considered “frenemies” by the Lebanese. After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Berri’s party, Amal, enjoyed generous Iranian support. But in 1982, Ruhallah Khomeini decided to form his own party on Lebanese soil. Amal Deputy Secretary General Hussein al-Musawi formed an organization called Islamic Amal, a group fully funded by Iran. Many prominent Amal members subsequently left mainstream Amal and joined several

smaller militias that would later come to be known as Hezbollah.

By the late 1980s, the two parties were completely separate.

The only factor that forced Hezbollah and Amal to form an alliance in the 1990s was Syria’s desire that the Lebanese Shiites remain united. (Although the Syrians withdrew from Lebanon in 2005, this factor is still behind the present Hezbollah-Amal coalition.)

The liberation of the South in 2000 was a watershed moment for Hezbollah, whose popularity skyrocketed. The death of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad and the ascension of his son Bashar just months later also helped strengthen the relationship between the Syrian regime and the Party of God, as the younger Assad recognized Hezbollah as a rising power and beefed up ties.

Syrian support for Amal changed dramatically after the Syrian withdrawal of 2005, and all the privileges that Amal had previously enjoyed from Damascus shifted to Hezbollah. For a while, many political observers actually thought that Berri

might rebel against his party and critics, and join the growing anti-Syrian camp. Instead, he stepped aside, holding onto his speaker post but allowing Hezbollah to become the main Shiite party.

Berri is the only pro-Syrian Lebanese politician who has not been stripped of his authority. He had to remain dependent on the Syrian regime and thus had to accept the status quo.

Berri's dissatisfaction with this arrangement was made clear last year when a leaked cable dating from the beginning of the July War in 2006 showed that Berri suggested the conflict was an opportunity to deal a serious blow to his ersatz ally.

"Berri condemned the ferocity of Israel's military response but admitted that a successful Israeli campaign against Hezbollah would be an excellent way to destroy Hezbollah's military aspirations and discredit their political ambitions," read the cable, filed by then-US Ambassador to Lebanon Jeffrey Feltman.

But now he must be scared. He hasn't said a word about the Syrian uprising since it

started in early 2011. This doesn't mean that he hasn't been working behind the scenes to support the regime whenever he is needed. Yet all of Assad's other Lebanese allies have gone out of their way to publically support the embattled regime.

Berri has always thought of himself as a man for all seasons, and no matter what, he always eventually finds a spot for himself. Now, he has hopes that if he keeps on walking the thin line between Hezbollah and its opponents in Lebanon, he will inherit a major part of the Shiite community from Hezbollah.

Hezbollah is very much aware of its ally's loathing, and the party is still pretending their alliance is strong because it is still needed. However, the fall of the Assad regime and the breakdown of the alliance between Iran and Syria might mean that Berri will find he has no real friends. He cannot switch sides because everybody knows that Berri came with the Syrian regime, has always relied on it, and will eventually go with it. He never tried to cement his support base by championing a cause or ideology, and now if he loses his state position from which he has been

siphoning money and services, he will lose his followers. In the best-case scenario, Berri will at least feel liberated.

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/Sub.aspx?D=125478>

- **Netanyahu: Israel will strike Lebanon in case of Hezbollah provocation**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned the Lebanese government that Israel would strike Lebanon if the Shiite party Hezbollah attempted any provocation against his country, Israeli daily Haartez reported on Monday.

The daily added that the premier conveyed the message to the Lebanese government through a Western diplomat he met in Jerusalem several weeks ago.

The daily quoted a “well-informed” senior official as saying that Netanyahu “sees Hezbollah as part of the Lebanese administration.”

“The prime minister therefore clarified to the government that if Hezbollah attacks Israel, the Israel Defense Forces will strike back forcefully – without differentiating

between Hezbollah and the state of Lebanon,” the official said.

“As far as we're concerned, the Lebanese government is responsible for whatever happens in its jurisdiction,” Netanyahu told the Western diplomat.

Haartez added that the premier’s office declined to comment on the matter.

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/Sub.aspx?D=125478>

6. SYRIA

- **Helicopter crashes in Damascus amid reports of fierce fighting**

Syrian President Assad says foreign ‘conspiracy’ will be defeated amid reports of bloody rampage in town near Damascus.

DAMASCUS - A Syrian helicopter crashed in eastern Damascus on Monday, state television said, amid reports of shelling and fierce fighting in the area.

The television said it came down near a mosque in the district of Qaboon, but gave no further information.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights meanwhile said it believed the helicopter "was hit while it was being used in fighting nearby."

It reported clashes between troops and the rebel Free Syrian Army in several areas of Damascus, including the neighbourhood of Jubar -- where anti-regime sentiment is strong -- and several nearby towns east of the city.

The violence flared a day after the Observatory reported the discovery of hundreds of bodies in the town of the Daraya southwest of the capital after what opposition militants said was a "massacre" by government troops.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said on Sunday the foreign "conspiracy" against his country would be defeated.

"The Syrian people will not allow this conspiracy to achieve its objectives" and will defeat it "at any price," Assad said during a meeting in Damascus with a top official from Iran, Syria's chief regional ally.

The Syrian leader has since March last year been trying through force to smother a popular uprising that has turned into a brutal civil war which has left thousands dead, seen more than 200,000 refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries and 2.5 million in need inside Syria.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 320 people were killed in a five-day onslaught on Daraya, a satellite town southwest of the capital, by troops battling to crush insurgents.

Grisly videos issued by opposition militants showed dozens of charred and bloodied bodies lined up in broad daylight in a graveyard, and others lying wall-to-wall in rooms in a mosque in Daraya.

The Local Coordination Committees, a network of activists on the ground, described it as a "massacre" by Assad's regime and said many victims had been summarily executed and their bodies burnt.

"The shabiha (pro-regime) militias... have been transformed into a killing machine that threatens the Syrian people and our future," it said.

Human rights groups have accused the regime of committing many atrocities in its attempts to crush the uprising, and a UN panel said earlier this month it was guilty of crimes against humanity.

"Bodies were found in fields, basements and shelters and in the streets," Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said.

He said 200 bodies had been identified so far, including 15 women and 14 children, and that many of the victims had died in shelling or were summarily executed.

In the first reaction by a world power, Britain said that if confirmed, the Daraya massacre "would be an atrocity on a new scale."

Activists issued graphic videos of the scenes in Daraya, one showing dozens of bodies in dimly lit rooms, with a commentary referring to "an odious massacre committed by the gangs of the Assad regime in the Abu Sleiman Addarani Mosque."

In another LCC video, Daraya's dead, among them at least two children, were shown being prepared for burial, their bodies lying in a hastily dug trench covered with blankets and strewn with palm fronds.

State media said Daraya, a conservative Sunni Muslim town of some 200,000 people, was "purified of terrorist remnants."

Pro-government television Al-Dunia said "terrorists" carried out the attacks, as it interviewed residents including traumatised children and showed a number of bloodied bodies lying in the streets.

"Our valiant armed forces cleared Daraya of the remnants of armed terrorist groups which committed crimes that traumatised the citizens of the town and destroyed public and private property," government newspaper Ath-Thawra said.

Meanwhile, the head of the Iranian parliament's foreign policy committee, Aladin Borujerdi, vowed that Tehran will "stick by our Syrian brothers."

"We see Syria's security as our security," he said in Damascus, where he met both Assad and Vice President Faruq al-Shara, Iran's state-owned IRNA news agency said.

Shara -- the regime's top Sunni Muslim official -- made his first public appearance in over a month when he was seen walking and talking with Borujerdi, following opposition claims he had tried to defect and was under house arrest.

Borujerdi also said that Assad had told him that Syrian Prime Minister Wael al-Halqi and Foreign Minister Walid Muallem would attend the August 30-31 Non-Aligned summit which Tehran is hosting.

Iran is a staunch ally of Assad's regime but is being excluded from most international efforts aimed at ending the conflict in Syria.

Assad, in his talks with the visiting Iranian official, said Syria is continuing "its strategy of resistance."

"What is happening now is not only directed at Syria but the whole region. Because Syria is the cornerstone, foreign

powers are targeting it so their conspiracy succeeds across the entire region."

Assad has long characterised the brutal conflict as a fight against foreign "terrorists" aided by the West and Syria's Sunni Muslim foes in the region, including Saudi Arabia.

Tehran has said it will submit a plan for ending the conflict to the Non-Aligned Movement summit.

The Iranian initiative comes as its foes in the West ramp up the pressure on Damascus, with Washington and London threatening action if it uses its chemical weapons and Paris voicing support for a partial no-fly zone.

The Observatory also reported shelling or air strikes in other parts of the country on Sunday including the battered northern city of Aleppo and Daraa in the far south, the cradle of the anti-Assad uprising.

The Britain-based Observatory reported a total of at least 91 people killed countrywide on Sunday -- 61 civilians, 13 rebels and 17 loyalist soldiers.

August is already the deadliest single month of the conflict with at least 4,000 people killed, according to the Observatory, while around 25,000 have died since March 2011. The United Nations puts the death toll at more than 17,000.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54046>

- **Syrian VP's appearance in public ends defection rumours**

Vice President Faruq al-Shara makes his first public appearance in over one month on, following rumours that he had tried to defect.

DAMASCUS - Syrian Vice President Faruq al-Shara made his first public appearance in over a month on Sunday, a journalist said, following rumours that he had tried to defect.

Shara, who was expected to meet the visiting head of the Iranian parliament's foreign policy committee, Aladin Borujerdi, was last seen in public at a state funeral for top security officials who were killed in a bomb blast on July 18.

Speculation has swirled since last week over the fate of Shara, the highest-ranking Sunni Muslim official in President Bashar al-Assad's minority Alawite-led regime, since the opposition claimed he had tried to defect.

Assad's regime has been rattled by several high-profile defections as the Syrian conflict has escalated, including former Prime Minister Riad Hijab and prominent General Manaf Tlass, one of Assad's childhood friends.



Syria's state news agency SANA said on Saturday that a fake email had been sent out in its name claiming that the vice president had been sacked, adding that the "information is completely wrong."

After the opposition claims, state television on August 19 quoted a statement from Shara's office saying that

"Mr Shara has never thought about leaving the country or going anywhere."

A former minister who defected this year also said earlier this month that it was "well-known" that Shara had tried to leave the country and was under house arrest.

Syria was also forced to deny that Foreign Minister Walid Muallem had announced on Twitter he had replaced Shara, with SANA saying this month that the information was "wrong" and that Muallem did not have a Twitter account.

Shara, 73, has served in senior posts for almost 30 years under both Assad and his father and predecessor Hafez al-Assad.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54040>

- **More bodies found in Syria "massacre" site, watchdog says**

At least 14 more bodies have been found in the town of Daraya near Damascus after activists reported a gruesome "massacre" there in a five-day assault by regime forces, a watchdog said on Monday.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights had reported on Sunday the discovery of 320 bodies in Daraya after what opposition militants said was a brutal onslaught of shelling, summary executions and house-to-house raids by government troops.

The Observatory said another 14 bodies had been found on Sunday, and that it had so far identified 220 of the dead.

The Local Coordination Committees – a network of activists on the ground – described the killings as a "massacre" by the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

The Britain-based Observatory said at least 149 people were killed across the strife-torn country on Sunday, among them 105 civilians, 26 rebel fighters and 18 soldiers.

Regime forces shelled Basra al-Sham in the province of Daraa, cradle of the 17-month uprising, killing at least 17 civilians on Sunday, it said.

"Among them were women and children," said the Observatory, which has a network

of sources on the ground including doctors and activists.

New shelling on Monday killed three men, three children and two women in Kafr Batna in the province of Damascus, the Observatory added.

Around 25,000 people – most of them civilians – have been killed in Syria since the outbreak of a revolt in March last year turned into a bloody insurgency after the regime launched a massive crackdown on dissent, according to Observatory figures.

It is impossible to independently verify death tolls reported in Syria because of severe restrictions on media operating there.

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/Sub.aspx?D=125478>

- **Syria top officials to attend NAM summit in Iran**

Syrian Prime Minister Wael al-Halqi and Foreign Minister Walid Muallem will attend the August 30-31 Non-Aligned summit in Tehran, a top Iranian official announced in Damascus on Sunday.

Aladin Borujerdi, the head of the Iranian parliament's foreign policy committee, on a visit to Damascus, said that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad informed him at a meeting that Halqi and Muallem would attend the NAM summit.

Halqi was appointed on August 9 as prime minister after his predecessor Riad Hijab defected.

Iran is a staunch ally of Assad's regime but is being excluded from most international efforts aimed at ending the conflict in Syria.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon is attending the NAM summit despite reservations from the United States and Israel, along with 36 other heads of state or governments and 40 ministers or senior officials.

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/Sub.aspx?D=125478>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Bahrain Shiites respond to talks offer with petrol bombs**

Large crowd attacks police station outside Bahraini capital with petrol bombs as sporadic protests intensify in Sunni-ruled Gulf state.

DUBAI - A large crowd attacked a police station outside the Bahraini capital with petrol bombs, police said late Saturday, as sporadic protests intensify in the Sunni-ruled Shiite-majority Gulf state.

"Some 150 people attacked with Molotov cocktails" in the Shiite village of Sitra, provincial police said in a statement carried by the official BNA news agency.



Security forces "managed to repel the attack by a group of terrorists," and arrested the driver of a car "carrying a large number of petrol bombs ready for use," the police statement said.

One police officer was lightly injured in the attack, it said, adding that security forces were searching for the culprits.

It was not immediately clear if the attack on the police station followed an anti-government demonstration in Sitra, a common occurrence in Shiite villages since the Al-Khalifa ruling family bloodily crushed Shiite-led pro-democracy protests in March last year.

Shi'ite-led unrest has persisted since a period of martial law last year that put down the uprising. The two sides accuse each other of responsibility for almost daily street violence.

Opposition parties led by the Shiite group Wefaq are demanding full powers for the elected parliament to legislate and form governments. Many Shiites complain of political and economic marginalisation, a charge the government denies.

Bahraini opposition refuses any reconciliation attempts or dialogue offers made by the authorities.

Justice Minister, Sheikh Khaled bin Ali al-Khalifa, held talks earlier in August with

representatives of political associations during which he "stressed the national responsibility of all parties to renounce violence."

In response to the unrest, the Al Khalifas have increased parliament's powers of scrutiny over ministers and say policing is being revamped to conform with international standards.

Bahrain has been caught in a regional competition for dominance between Iran and U.S.-backed Saudi Arabia. Riyadh sent troops to shore up the Bahrain government last year, and Iran has championed the opposition cause while denying accusations it is orchestrating the unrest.

www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54041

- **Saudi authorities foil 'terror' plot: Two extremist cells busted**

Interior ministry says suspects are 'in contact with the deviant organisation abroad', term usually used to refer to Qaeda.

RIYADH - Saudi authorities announced on Sunday they had foiled a "terror" plot by elements suspected of links to Al-Qaeda, mostly Yemenis, and busted two extremist cells in Riyadh and Jeddah.



The interior ministry said in a statement the suspects were "in contact with the deviant organisation abroad," a term usually used to refer to Al-Qaeda jihadist network.

The suspects were working on "recruiting elements to execute criminal attacks targeting security forces, citizens and foreign residents, as well as public installations," it said in a statement carried by the official SPA news agency.

The ministry said two Saudis and six Yemenis were arrested, and it also named two nationals as wanted for questioning.

"Investigations revealed that those elements were at an advanced stage... including preparing explosives and testing them outside Riyadh," the ministry said, adding that one suspect accidentally lost a finger during the tests.

The first Saudi suspect turned out to be the head of the cell in Riyadh, and he gave "detailed information" that led to the arrest of the six Yemenis, who also confessed to taking part in the plot, it said.

Police found "chemicals used for explosives as well as mobile phones wired to detonate explosive devices remotely," at an annex of a mosque in the capital, the ministry said.

Investigations also led to a link with the other cell in the western city of Jeddah, the kingdom's second largest city.

The ministry said that a Saudi member of that cell "who worked on preparing explosive chemicals" was arrested.

Saudi Arabia witnessed a wave of deadly attacks by Al-Qaeda between 2003 and 2006, which prompted the authorities to launch a crackdown on the local branch of

the group founded by slain Saudi-born Osama bin Laden.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54044>

- **Concern as UAE "halts" Bangladesh recruitment**

The United Arab Emirates has stopped issuing visas to workers from Bangladesh, recruiting companies said Monday, in a move that threatens to strangle vital remittances for the impoverished South Asian country.

The UAE has emerged as the biggest recruiter of Bangladeshi laborers in recent years, accounting for about 50 percent of all overseas employment opportunities after jobs dwindled in Saudi Arabia.

"Since last week we haven't had any working visas issued from the UAE," said Shahjalal Majumdar, president of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA).

There has been no official confirmation from the UAE, but Bangladesh's Overseas Employment Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain told reporters Sunday

that the UAE government had "scaled down" manpower imports from several nations.

Money sent by Bangladesh's more than eight million migrants has been the key driver of its economy ever since the country started sending workers to oil-rich Middle Eastern nations in 1976.

Migrant workers sent home a record \$12.85 billion in the fiscal year ended in June this year, accounting for 12 percent of Bangladesh's gross domestic product, according to official figures.

"We warned the government that too much dependence on a single market could be a big source of vulnerability," said Tasneem Siddiqui, who heads local think-tank the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit.

"Now that they have stopped recruiting from us it would be disastrous for our economy unless we can find alternative markets as quickly as possible," she told AFP.

The numbers of Bangladeshis heading to Saudi Arabia slowed sharply after 2009

when the kingdom hired only 14,666 Bangladeshis compared with 258,348 by the UAE, according to government figures.

Saudi officials never explained the reasons but local media alleged that growing replacement of migrant workers with Saudi citizens and souring diplomatic ties with the country's secular government played key roles.

Migration from Bangladesh fell sharply during the 2008-9 global economic downturn as jobs dried up in the Gulf nations and export-oriented Southeast Asia.

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/Sub.aspx?ID=125478>

- **Saudi oil giant fixes network after cyber-attack**

Oil giant Saudi Aramco said on Monday it has restored its main internal network after a cyber-attack nearly two weeks ago which failed to impact its oil production.

The company "restored all its main internal network services that were impacted on August 15, 2012, by a malicious virus that originated from

external sources," said a statement on its website.

The world's largest oil company said the attack affected about 30,000 workstations, but they have since been cleaned and restored to service, while remote Internet access to online resources was restricted "as a precaution."

The state-owned group which runs all Saudi Arabia's oil production said that "hydrocarbon exploration and production were unaffected as they operate on isolated network systems."

It said production plants also remained "fully operational" thanks to isolated control systems.

Saudi Aramco president and CEO Khalid al-Falih said "this was not the first nor will it be the last illegal attempt to intrude into our systems," pledging to further reinforce against possible future cyber-attacks.

Saudi Arabia in March became the world's largest oil producer after increasing its production to 9.923 million barrels per

day, topping Russia's output of 9.920 million.

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/Sub.aspx?ID=125478>

- **Saudi foils "terror" plot, busts two cells**

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If any of those plots had succeeded, it would have been the first since the suicide bombing against assistant Defense

Minister Prince Mohammed bin Nayef in August 2009.

The prince suffered only superficial injuries after the bomber got close to him and detonated his explosives.

Saudi Arabia witnessed a wave of deadly attacks by Al-Qaeda between 2003 and 2006, which prompted the authorities to launch a crackdown on the local branch of the group founded by slain Saudi-born Osama bin Laden.

Following the crackdown, Saudi Al-Qaeda militants fled to neighboring Yemen, joining ranks with their comrades there under the banner of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, taking advantage of Sanaa's state's loose grip on power.

Saudi Arabia is a key US ally in the war against Al-Qaeda.

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/Sub.aspx?ID=125478>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **US-led tanker attacked in Northern Afghanistan**

Press TV

August 26, 2012

A convoy of tankers carrying fuel for the US-led foreign forces has been attacked in Afghanistan's northern province of Baghlan, Press TV reports.

According to local officials, the incident took place on Sunday and led to the destruction of one US-led NATO tanker.

Meanwhile, the opposition party led by the former Afghan Prime Minister Golbodin Hekmatyar, which has claimed responsibility for the attack, says six tankers were destroyed.

The attack comes two days after another convoy of trucks carrying supplies to US-led NATO forces in Afghanistan came under a fiery attack in the country's western province of Farah.

Militants ambushed the convoy on Thursday and set fire to at least 12 vehicles. Three Afghan security guards, who were escorting the trucks, were killed in the attack.

The United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan in 2001 as part of Washington's so-called war on terror.

The offensive removed the Taliban from power, but years into the invasion, insecurity continues to rise across the country despite the presence of thousands of foreign troops in the war-weary nation.

<http://www.aopnews.com/today.html>

- **Afghan lawmakers urge an end to US assassination drone strikes**

Press TV

August 26, 2012

Afghan lawmakers have urged the government of President Hamid Karzai to put an end to the United States assassination drone strikes against the Afghan civilians, Press TV reports.

Local sources told Press TV's correspondent in Afghanistan that the MPs, infuriated by the strikes, strongly urged President Karzai to hold a 'Loya Jirga' or 'Grand Assembly' in order to discuss the issue and find an effective

solution to stop the occupying forces' assaults against civilians.

"I want the parliament and the President himself to launch an emergency meeting to discuss the escalation of security problems in the country," Mohammad Sharif Balkhabi, a member of parliament from Sar-e-Pul District was quoted as saying.

Another Afghan MP, Munawar Shah Bahaduri representing the western province of Herat noted, "Who will take responsibility for the bloodshed in Afghanistan? Why are we, the parliament and the government careless?"

Angry with the inaction of the government, Bahaduri added, "We must find a final solution for these issues through a Loya Jirga. The government holds Loya Jirgas for its personal benefits but when national interests are raised, it keeps quiet."

The aerial attacks were initiated by former US President George W. Bush but have been escalated under current President Barack Obama.

The US military has also used terror drones in Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, Libya, and Iraq.

Though Washington claims that its drone strikes target militants, local sources say that civilians have been the main victims of the attacks. The UN has called the US drone attacks targeted killings that flout international law.

The Afghan lawmakers also expressed their grave concerns over the latest intensification of militancy in the country which has so far led to even more loss of lives.

The MP's argue that a large number of people are getting killed on a daily basis by the Taliban militants in spite of the heavy presence of more than 130,000 US-led occupying forces who justify their occupation of the country by the so-called 'war on terror' slogan.

<http://www.aopnews.com/today.html>

- **Afghan political leaders stress transparency in elections process**

UNAMA

26 August 2012 – Afghan parliamentarians and political party leaders, who met in Kabul today to discuss the challenges faced by the Afghan parliament, stressed transparency in the elections process for strengthening democracy and preventing any political crisis.

Speaking at a meeting organized by the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan Organization (FEFA), which is the largest election observer group in the country, the speakers also called for a “stronger political opposition” in the Afghan parliament.

They also said the parliament lacks a standard mechanism to monitor performance of the Government.

A member of the National Coalition, Mahmood Saiqal, said a “stronger legitimate political opposition” in the Afghan parliament is needed to better monitor the Government performance. The Coalition makes the largest political opposition in Afghanistan.

While emphasizing transparency in elections processes, Mr Saiqal said, “There is need for a nationwide public

mobilization campaigns to acquaint people about the elections process and the importance of their active participation for effective institutionalization of democracy.”

FEFA Director Jandad Spinghar said the civil society wants to help the Afghan parliament carry out its fundamental duty to monitor the performance of the Government by collecting comments and suggestions of political parties and civil society organizations.

A Member of Parliament, Sayed Alimi Balkhi, said the parliament lacks a process to document corruption cases of Government authorities and the monitoring so far has been carried out on based on rumours and gossips.

“Since we don’t have documented evidence, we can’t hold the authorities in question accountable,” said Mr Balkhi, adding that ethnic and regional biases are hampering the monitoring role of the Afghan parliament.

Speaking on the occasion, a representative of the Rights and Justice Party called for increased support of the

civil society to political parties and vice versa to better advocate along with parliamentarians for better monitoring and promoting accountability.

Representatives of some other political parties demanded an election system based on political parties for better accountability and performance monitoring.

FEFA is organizing another similar discussion on Wednesday to discuss the issues relating to the elections in Afghanistan.

<http://www.aopnews.com/today.html>

- **US, allies play dirty tricks to avoid defeat in Afghan war: Analyst**

Press TV
August 26, 2012

The US military has been conducting cyber-attacks against its perceived opponents in Afghanistan, according to one of its generals.

Marine Corps Lieutenant General Richard Mills made the unusually explicit acknowledgment at a conference in

Baltimore last week, The Associated Press reported on Friday.

At the conference, he explained how US commanders regard cyber weapons as an important part of their arsenal.

Mills was in command of US-led foreign forces in southwestern Afghanistan between 2010 and 2011.

There's been no immediate comment so far from the Pentagon on Mills' speech.

The US has been accused of conducting cyber warfare in many countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

Press TV has conducted an interview with Richard Becker, from the A.N.S.W.E.R Coalition, to further discuss the issue. What follows is an approximate transcript of the interview.

Press TV: How can "hacking" become a legitimate warfare tactic for the Pentagon in your opinion?

Becker: Well I think that if we look at the war in Afghanistan the United States and its allies are definitely not winning. In fact

that is clear that they are losing the war and that their strategy that they have designed to Afghanize the war so to speak that is to put the Afghan army and national police in their role as time passes is failing and we see the number of what are called 'green and blue' attacks escalating very, very sharply.

So they are going to try every means of warfare that they have at their disposal to try to prevent a defeat in Afghanistan which they see as endangering the empire as a whole.

And of course at the same time we see the cyber warfare attacks going on, other illegal attacks going on against Iran in particular. This is certainly a violation of US law and international law as the attacks that are going on, cyber attacks and other attacks that are going on and the occupation of Afghanistan which very soon will reach its 11th year.

Press TV: Now another thing that is important is misinformation seems to be another tactic being used by the Pentagon Cyber command particularly in Afghanistan. Why has it become a viable tactic for the US?

Becker: Well I think it is very difficult for us to know that, I mean it is difficult to know as you say, whether or not you suggested that whether the information, when they release this information that the purpose of it is psychological warfare, what is really going on is very hard for us to tell from the outside but we know for certain that the intention of United States and its reached agreement with the Karzai government made this very clear to stay in Afghanistan not till 2014 but for another 12 years to at least 2024.

And so they are using every tactic that they can, every tactic that they can imagine to make it possible for them to hold on to Afghanistan and to prevent defeat in this war that is going to end up for so many years.

Press TV: Now there is another aspect that comes to mind is quite important. We sometimes come across some fake personalities who actually do not exist at all-- one of them could be "Zabihullah Mujahid" a so-called spokesman for the Taliban in Afghanistan. There could be more of these fake personalities. What is

your take on these personal characteristics?

Becker: Well again this is something that we have to be constantly suspicious of, we have to be constantly suspicious of all of the reports that come from the US government. They have to be sorted through very carefully and with an examinee eye because the level of disinformation that is coming out is so high.

I mean when we see what is going on right now with Bradley Manning the soldier who is taking life imprisonment for the WikiLeaks releases and Julian Assange, we know that what the US government is trying to do and the Pentagon is trying to do is hide the real story not from the people who are the recipients of this violence, the direct recipients in Afghanistan or in Iraq or anywhere else but they are trying to hide it from the people of the United States and instead to present to the people of the United States of false explanation, of false rendition of what is taking place inside these warzones.

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