



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procees of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

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28 AUGUST 2012

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1. IRAQ

- **We are "close" to solving all problems - Premier Maliki**

BAGHDAD, Aug 27 / Aswat al-Iraq: Premier Nouri al-Maliki today stressed that the Iraqi problems are "close" to being resolved according to the constitution and dialogue.

"Iraq will accept no denominational incitement," Maliki stressed expressing readiness to "release any Iraqi whose hands are not stained with Iraqi blood."

During his meeting with Bani Kaab tribal delegation, according to his media office statement, he confirmed "the necessity to protect and preserve the Iraqi achievements, away from denominational or national inclinations."

MP: Meeting between Maliki, Nijaifi creates good base for holding national meeting (alliraqnews)

Baghdad, Aug 27 (AIN) –MP, Hadi al-Yasiri, of the State of Law Coalition, considered the meeting between the Premier, Nouri al-Maliki, and the parliament Speaker,

Osama al-Nijaifi, as "The important step to settle all the previous crises."

In a press statement received by AIN, on Monday, Yasiri said "The meeting between two important figures of the political process in Iraq will have a big affect over settling the pending issues in addition to the important results that will highly affect the parliament performance in endorsing the law drafts."

"This meeting created the suitable base for holding the national meeting and gave a big power to provide the good atmosphere for the political leaders," he added.

He called the political blocs to "Deal with this issue in a big flexibility and in the same understanding that was presented in the meeting between Maliki and Nijaifi in order to serve the Iraqi students."

Aswat al-Iraq

- **New Communications Minister appointed**

BAGHDAD, Aug 27 / Aswat al-Iraq: The Iraqi State Minister for Provinces' Affairs Torurhan Mudhir Hassan al-Mufti was

appointed today as Acting Communications Minister.

The new appointment is to replace Communication Minister Mohammed Alawi, who resigned today due "to political interventions that hinder the work of the ministry," according to a statement issued by Alawi.

Alawi is a member of Iraqiya bloc, headed by Dr. Iyad Alawi.

No other details were given.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **Iraqi minister steps down after row with PM**

BAGHDAD, Aug 27 (Reuters) - Iraq's communications minister resigned on Monday, blaming meddling by the Shi'ite prime minister, whose spokesman said he was the first minister to quit since the government was formed in December 2010.

Mohammed Allawi, a member of the Sunni-backed Iraqiya bloc in a fragile, fractious, power-sharing government, said he stepped down because of repeated

clashes with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's office over what he called interference.

"I present my resignation because I have become incapable of working in such an infested environment," he said in his resignation letter, which Maliki accepted.

Infighting among Iraq's Shi'ite, Sunni and Kurdish political blocs deepened after U.S. troops left the country in December, and the Shi'ite-led government sought the arrest of vice-president Tareq al-Hashemi, an Iraqiya member.

Hashemi fled to Turkey, where he remains, denying Iraqi authorities' accusations that he ran a death squad.

The delicate cross-sectarian agreement has been crippled by crisis since it was constituted after inconclusive elections.

The Iraqiya bloc and other opponents of Maliki in government regularly accuse him of being a dictator and say the power-sharing agreement is a pretence. They recently failed in an attempt to organize a vote of no-confidence against him.

<http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/iraqi-minister-steps-down-after-row-with-pm/>

- **Newroztel behind communications minister resignation, sources**

BAGHDAD, Aug 27/ Aswat al-Iraq: News reports said that a "full of doubts" contract with Newroztel was the reason for the resignation of Iraqi communications minister Mohammed Alawi.

The main reason was the possibility of the company to have full access to governmental information.

Iraqi Media Network added that the main reason was "halting" the contract.

Premier Nouri al-Maliki ordered the ministry to halt the contract with the company for security apprehensions of using communication gates to get the vital information of the government.

Sources said here today that Alawi left for London, for unknown duration, after the approval of his resignation.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **IHEC denies authority to re-grant Harbi's membership right in Parliament**

Baghdad, Aug 27 (AIN) -The Independent Higher Electoral Commission confirmed that "The issue of returning authorities for the leader within the National Dialogue Front, Najim al-Harbi, is not within the Commission's authorities but rather it is the Parliament prerogative."

The Chairman of the IHEC, Faraj al-Haidari, stated to AIN "The task of the Commission is to declare the names of the winners in the elections to be approved then by the Federal Court."

"The power of replacing or dismissing MPs or members of the Provincial Councils is limited by the Parliament or the Provincial Councils," Haidari clarified.

Earlier, the MP, Najim al-Harbi within the National Dialogue Front, who has been released from prison recently, has called "The Parliament to bring him back to the Parliament as an MP after proving his innocence from the accusations against him."

alliraqnews

- **Parliament to vote on Infrastructure Law**

Baghdad, Aug 27 (NINA) – Chairman of Parliament's Education Committee, Adel Shirshab, said that Parliament is scheduled to vote on Thursday on the Infrastructure Law.

In a statement to NINA on Monday, Aug. 27, Shirshab said that voting on the law will open the way for treating large shortcoming in school buildings that exceed 6000 buildings.

It is noteworthy that the budget assigned for the Infrastructure Law is 37 Trillion Iraq Dinars; it is to deal with the services sector, mainly housing, health and education.

On July 12, Parliament hosted the ministers of Finance, Rafi' al-Essawi, and Planning, Ali Shukry, to discuss the draft Infrastructure Law.

NINA

- **Kurdish MPs Push for Census before Next Provincial Election**

28/08/2012

By NAWZAD MAHMOUD

SULAIMANI, Kurdistan Region -- During the previous Iraqi election, the number of the parliamentary seats for each province was based on their number of food ration cards.

Dr. Mahmoud Osman, a parliamentarian from the Kurdistan Alliance in Iraqi parliament, warns Kurdish leaders to avoid accepting the same criteria for the upcoming provincial election. Osman says this method “will bring the 2010 scenario back, but on a larger scale.”

“If the number of representation seats is based on food ration cards, the Kurds will lose even more votes this time,” Osman explains. “This is because Kurds, unlike the Iraqi population in the south and middle of Iraq, do not register their children in the ration system.”

According to Osman, Kurds have to push for a census to be carried out in Iraq which is the only way to determine the number of seats each province should have in parliament. If it is not possible to have a census, then the number of the seats should be based on data and information from the Ministry of Planning.

In the March 2010 Iraqi election, the electoral system accounted for the Kurds losing 13 parliamentary seats. While in southern Iraqi cities only 35,000 votes were needed to secure a parliamentary seat, in Kurdistan cities such as Sulaimani, 47,000 votes were required.

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurds/5138.html>

- **Integrity Commission participates in two international meetings on anti-corruption**

BAGHDAD, Aug 27/ Aswat al-Iraq: Integrity Commission participates in the third meeting of the international governmental team on anti-corruption, held in Vienna, Austria.

Iraq will elaborate it is experience in combating corruption in the country.

The meeting will discuss degrees of cooperation and exchange of information by the countries signed World Anti-Corruption Agreement, signed in 2003,

Iraq joined the Agreement in 2007.

On the other hand, the Integrity Commission will participate in the Sixth Meeting for Open Governmental Team, which will start deliberations next Thursday.

Iraqi Integrity Commission established two directorates for extraditing the criminals and illegally stolen Iraq money.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **Mutleg calls to preserve Anbar province from foreign interferences**

Baghdad, Aug 27 (AIN) –The Deputy Premier, Salih al-Mutleg, called "All sides to cooperate for achieving the political and security stability in Anbar province and to preserve the province from the foreign interferences."

A statement by Mutleg's office received by AIN "Mutleg met a delegation from Anbar province headed by the head of Iraqi Sahwa Conference, Ahmed Abu Risha, and the Acting Chairman of Anbar Provincial Council, Sadoun al-Shalaan, in addition to a number of the PC members as well as MPs," noting that "Mutleg discussed the

security, services and social conditions of the province."

The statement quoted Mutleg as saying "All sides know the position of Anbar province to all Iraq due to its resources and the humanitarian heritage as well as its geographical importance."

"Mutleg called to keep the province from the negative foreign interferences which are going to be reflected on the whole country," the statement concluded.

alliraqnews

- **Tensions high between Iraqi forces, Iranian exiles**

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Aug 27 -- A group of Iranian exiles that is resisting leaving their camp in northeast Iraq say they have been attacked by military forces, and 20 of their people have been wounded.

Gorges Bakoos, an adviser to Iraq's premier, said there was a shoving match Monday afternoon between soldiers and the Camp Ashraf residents but denied there was violence or injuries.

The camp residents are members of the People's Mujahedeen Organization of Iran. The Iraqi government calls them a terrorist group and wants to move them out of the country immediately.

Both sides said Monday's scuffle broke out when hundreds Ashraf residents were being searched as they reluctantly prepared to move to a former U.S. military base in Baghdad.

Once there, they will wait for the U.N. to resettle them outside Iraq.

AP

- **Iraqi PM Due in Tehran Wednesday**

TEHRAN, Aug 27 (FNA)- Iraq's Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki is slated to arrived in Iran on Wednesday to attend a heads-of-state summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The Iraqi premier will be accompanied by a senior delegation of officials.

Iran had also invited Iraqi President Jalal Talabani to attend the NAM summit, but

the president sent Prime Minister Maliki as he is in Germany for medical treatment.

A member of the Iraqi Kurdistan Patriotic Union (KPU)'s central office told FNA today that Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari is also due to leave for Tehran Monday night to attend a ministerial meeting of the NAM member states which will precede the heads-of-state summit.

Over 150 world states and global bodies have sent their representatives to the NAM meeting in Tehran.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106060030>

- **Zebari takes part in the Non-Allied Ministerial meeting in Tehran**

Baghdad, Aug 27 (NINA) – Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari, is to take part in the Non-Allied Movement Foreign Ministers' meeting to be held on Tuesday, Aug. 28, in Tehran.

A statement issued on Monday, Aug. 27, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the meeting is to prepare the Agenda of 16th Non-Allied Summit.

The statement added that the Summit will discuss the challenges facing the Movement and its future, especially the world economic crisis, realizing the millennium's goals in development and poverty eradication, improving health and education services, reforming the UN and SC, the Arab-Israeli dispute, Syrian crisis, Iran's nuclear issue, the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and disarmament.

Earlier in the evening, an official source said that Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has accepted the invitation of Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, to attend the Non-Allied Summit in Tehran.

NINA

- **Najafi and adviser to Iranian President discuss bilateral relations**

Baghdad, Aug 27/ NINA /--Parliament Speaker Osama Nujaifi discussed with Iranian President's advisor Ahmed al-Moussawi bilateral relations and means to develop them in different fields.

A statement by Nujaifi press office said today: " Talks during the meeting which

held between the two emphasized the importance of the unity of Muslims and eliminate ideological differences which constitute a threat to the Islamic nation," adding that "the Iranian delegation praised the performance of Iraqi Parliament and the importance of joint cooperation with Iranian parliament to exchange experiences.

Moussawi handed at the end of the meeting an official invitation to Nujaifi to visit Iran.

NINA

- **Unity of Muslims urged - statement**

BAGHDAD, Aug 27 / Aswat al-Iraq: Iraq and Iran today stressed the unity of Muslims and the need to abrogate all denominational differences, pointing to desires to expand mutual cooperation between the two parliaments.

In a meeting between Parliament Speaker Osama Nujaifi and the Iranian President's advisor Ahmed al-Mussawi and his accompanying delegation, a parliamentary statement received by Aswat al-Iraq noted

that both sides discussed bilateral relations and their development.

Both sides stressed the importance of Muslims' unity and discarding all denominational differences because they "represent grave danger on Islamic nation".

The Iranian delegation extended an invitation to Nujaifi to visit Iran.

Mussawi arrived yesterday, Sunday, carrying an invitation to Premier Nouri al-Maliki from Iranian president Ahmadi Najad to attend the Non-Alligned Conference due in Teheran.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%280pn1q045nz4ue455wa2zbo3m%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150178&l=1

- **Iran, Iraq agree to cancel visa requirements**

27 Aug 2012

Iraqi Minister for Tourism and Antiquities Liwaa Sumaisem says his country will lift visa requirements for Iranian nationals in the near future in a bid to facilitate

religious trips for the pilgrims of the holy shrines.

In a meeting on Monday with Director of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization Ahmad Mousavi, Sumaisem said Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has welcomed the idea of visa waiver and is following up on it.

“This is a very good idea which the Iraqi prime minister welcomed when it was proposed to him. Thanks to the follow-up [on this issue] by the prime minister’s office, the idea will be soon realized,” Sumaisem added.

Every year, many Iranian pilgrims travel to Iraq where the holy shrines of a number of Shia Imams and their descendants are located.

<http://presstv.com/detail/2012/08/27/258394/iran-iraq-agree-on-visa-waiver/>

- **Iraqi-Iranian religious tourism discussed - statement**

BAGHDAD, Aug 27 / Aswat al-Iraq: Iraq and Iran discussed today means of enhancing bilateral relations and activating the religious tourism sector.

Premier Nouri al-Maliki received today Iranian Haj delegation headed by Ahmed al-Mussawi, according to an official statement.

In a statement, received by Aswat al-Iraq, both sides discussed lifting obstacles facing tourism relations between the two countries.

Mussawi arrived yesterday, Sunday, carrying an invitation to Premier Nouri al-Maliki from Iranian president Ahmadi Najad to attend the Non-Alligned Conference due in Teheran.

Iraqi government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh announced on 25 August instant that Iraq will participate in the conference with a delegation to be headed by vice-president Khudhair al-Khuza'i.

Earlier, the invitation was extended to President Jalal, but his health conditions will prevent him from attending the conference.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **Parliamentary Committee to visit Syrian refugees' camps, says Wardi**

Baghdad, Aug 27 (AIN) –The head of the Parliamentary Displaced Committee, Liqa Wardi, stated that a parliamentary Committee, comprising members of Human Rights, Displaced, Security and Defense Committee in addition to the MPs of Anbar province, will visit the camps of the Syrian refugees in Qaim district.

She stated to All Iraq News Agency (AIN) "The Committee will make a completed report over the condition of the refugees and the governmental procedures followed in order to submit it to the parliament."

"Closing al-Qaim border inlet to the Syrian refugees is immoral and violates the international pacts that prohibit keeping any refugee on the borders especially for the Syrians who have a special case," calling the government to "Expedite performing the camps and bring the rest of the Syrian families into Iraq."

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17202

- **Qatar-Saudi plot to empty central and southern Iraq from weapons – lawmaker**

BASRA , Aug 27/ Aswat al-Iraq: A lawmaker from the al-Ahrar bloc in Basra unveiled a Saudi-Qatari plot to empty central and southern Iraq from weapons through smuggling them abroad.

"We have accurate information about a Saudi and Qatari plot to buy weapons and smuggle them out of Iraq," Uday Awad told Aswat al-Iraq news agency, noting that the project aims at emptying central and southern Iraq from weapons to weaken them and flare up sectarian strife in these regions.

"They buy weapons with amounts of money more than their real values," he added, pointing out that such operations happen in predominantly Shiite areas.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **Cabinet to discuss Davutoglu's visit to Kurdistan region**

Baghdad, Aug 27 (NINA) – The Cabinet is to discuss on Tuesday, Aug. 28, the report on the recent visit of Turkey's Foreign

Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, to Kurdistan region.

In a statement to the press on Monday, Aug. 27, Minister of State for Provinces, Torhan al-Mofti, said that the cabinet is to discuss on Tuesday, the report prepared by the official investigation committee concerning Davutoglu's visit to Iraq.

Early this month, Turkey's Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, visited Kurdistan region and met with the region's President, Massoud Barazani, then visited Kirkuk province and met with its Governor and the Chairman of its Provincial Council, afterward he held a press conference.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly criticized the visit, considering it a blatant interference in Iraq's affairs.

NINA

- **Iraqi-Armenian cooperation called for - statement**

BAGHDAD, Aug 27/ Aswat al-Iraq: Iraq called Armenia for cooperation in fields of agriculture, industry, electricity, higher education and health.

During a meeting with Deputy Premier for Reconstruction and Services Saleh al-Mutlaq, the Armenian ambassador to Iraq Muradian expressed his country's desire to expand relations with Iraqi universities, expressing readiness to absorb training academic and health personnel.

According to a statement, copy received by Aswat al-Iraq, Mutlaq stressed the importance of cooperation in fields of agriculture, industry, electricity, urban planning, housing, transport and higher education.

Earlier, in a statement, Deputy Premier Roz Nouri Shawees met today with the Armenian ambassador to Baghdad Muradian.

The statement, copy received by Aswat al-Iraq, added that both sides discussed bilateral relations and their development.

Aswat al-Iraq

- **Chinese, Malaysian Firms Win Iraq Water, Sewage Contracts**

By Khalid Al-Ansary - Aug 27, 2012

Iraq signed two contracts with Ho Hup Construction Co. (HO) Bhd of Malaysia and China National Electric Engineering Co. Ltd. valued at a total of 161 billion dinars (\$138 million) for water and sewage projects, Jasim Mohammad Salim, a spokesman of the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, said by phone in Baghdad yesterday.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-08-27/chinese-malaysian-firms-win-iraq-water-sewage-contracts.html>

- **Indonesia to Sell Weapons to Iraq (TEMPO)**

TEMPO Interactive, Jakarta: The Indonesian government reportedly will soon sell weapons to Iraq and Uganda. If realized, this will be the first arms sales from a Southeast Asian country. "We've invited the Iraqi military delegation to come to Jakarta, on October 5," said Deputy Defense Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, Friday, August 24, 2012.

In addition to attending the commemoration of the birth of the Armed Forces, the Iraqi delegation will also visit Indonesia weapons factory. Iraq reportedly needs bullet-proof vests,

helmets, boots and uniforms. Indonesia can easily provide those.

Sjafrie himself has just returned from a visit to Iraq. In Baghdad, the Indonesian delegation exhibited several weapons made in Indonesia, such as the SS-2 rifle and light armored vehicles, Anoa. Both are produced by PT Pindad. Therefore, on this trip Sjafrie was accompanied by Pindad President, Adik Avianto. In addition to Iraq, they will also be offering weapons to Uganda and Congo.

<http://www.tempointeractive.com/hg/nasional/2012/08/27/brk,20120827-425831,uk.html>

2. IRAN

- **Iran to implement 11 plans to raise oil output**

TEHRAN, Aug. 26 (MNA) – Iran has announced that it will implement 11 plans by the Iranian calendar month of Mordad 1392 (July 22-August 22, 2013) with the goal of boosting oil production by 175,000 barrels per day (bpd).

The plans are related to the first phase of the development plans of the Yadavaran,

Sarvestan, Saadatabad, Hengam, Forouzan, Reshadat, Aban, and Paydar oilfields, according to a report published by the National Iranian Oil Company on Sunday.

Once all the phases of the development plans are implemented, the output will be increased by 500,000 bpd.

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

All development plans related to joint oil and gas fields will be finalized by the end of the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (September 21), he added.

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

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

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

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1681414>

• **NAM ministerial meeting begins in Tehran**

The 16th summit of NAM member states kicked off in Tehran on August 26, 2012 with an inaugural speech by Iran

The 16th summit of NAM member states kicked off in Tehran on August 26, 2012 with an inaugural speech by Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi.

The two-day ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has convened in the Iranian capital, Tehran.

At the opening ceremony of the NAM ministerial meeting, Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi hailed Egypt's efforts during the past three years which "have had considerable effect on the progress of NAM's programs."

On Sunday, during 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 Mootaz Khalil formally handed over the presidency to Iran.



More than 100 countries are partaking in the NAM meeting which kicked off at the expert level in Tehran on Sunday.

The foreign ministers of the NAM member states have been arriving in Tehran to attend the summit since Sunday.

The meeting of the heads of state and government will open on Thursday with an inaugural speech by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

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

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/08/28/258558/nam-ministerial-meeting-to-begin-in-tehran/>

- **Iran concerned over conditions of Rohingya Muslims, Salehi tells Myanmar FM**

TEHRAN – During a meeting with Myanmar’s Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin in Tehran, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi expressed concern about the conditions that the Rohingya Muslims are experiencing in Myanmar, it was reported on Monday.

Salehi said that Iran is ready to send humanitarian aid for the Muslims in Myanmar and will welcome a decision to use Iran’s influence to help defuse tensions in the country.

Myanmar’s foreign minister who has visited Iran to participate in the Non-Aligned Movement meeting briefed Salehi on the incidents that have taken place in his country and said that efforts are underway to restore peace.

He also assured Salehi that Myanmar is committed to respecting people of all religions and does not regard discrimination against Muslims as appropriate.

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/100-935-iran-concerned-over-conditions-of-rohingya-muslims-salehi-tells-myanmar-fm>

- **Iran denies plans to show nuclear sites to diplomats**

Tehran's deputy foreign minister had earlier hinted that diplomats in the country for the NAM summit would be given a tour of Parchin facility, something Western diplomats called a "very bad publicity stunt."

DUBAI - Iran said on Tuesday it has no plans to show its nuclear sites to diplomats visiting Tehran for this week's Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit, contradicting an earlier offer by a deputy foreign minister.

"We have no specific plans for a visit to Iran's nuclear installations by foreign guests participating in the summit of NAM member countries," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said, state news agency IRNA reported.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Mehdi Akhoundzadeh hinted

on Monday that Iran might let visiting NAM diplomats tour the Parchin military base, which the UN nuclear watchdog says may have been used for nuclear-related explosives experiments.

Western diplomats had dismissed the tentative offer, made shortly after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) again failed to gain access to Parchin for its inspectors at a meeting with an Iranian delegation in Vienna on Friday.

"Any tour the Iranians conduct for visiting NAM officials would be nothing more than a very, very bad publicity stunt," a senior Western diplomat in Vienna told Reuters. "It is the IAEA that should have been given access to Parchin."

Click here for full Jpost coverage of the Iranian threat

Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's representative to the IAEA, reiterated his country's determination to keep enriching uranium. "We will not suspend enrichment for even one second," the Iranian Students' News Agency quoted him as saying.

Enriched uranium can be used to fuel power stations, or, if processed further, for nuclear weapons.

Akhoundzadeh also said on Monday that UN chief Ban Ki-moon, due in Tehran for the NAM summit, might be able to visit Iran's atom sites. Ban's spokesman denied any such plan.

Iran is hosting the NAM summit, which ends on Friday, at a time when the West is trying to isolate the Islamic Republic over suspicions it is seeking a nuclear weapons capability. Tehran says its atomic program has only peaceful aims.

The IAEA suspects that Iran has conducted explosives tests in a steel chamber at Parchin relevant for the development of nuclear weapons, possibly a decade ago, and that it may have tried to cleanse the site in recent months.

<http://www.ipost.com/IranianThreat/News/Article.aspx?id=282876>

- **President: Iranian medicines should be available worldwide**

Tehran, Aug 28, IRNA – President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Tuesday that

the Iranian manufactured medicines should be available at the world markets.

He made the remarks in a ceremony to unveil eight strategic biological medicines manufactured by the experts of Iran's pharmaceutical industries.

President Ahmadinejad urged Iranian experts to make greater efforts to promote Iran's status regarding manufacturing of pharmaceutical products and win a higher position at the international arena.

The unveiled medicines are to be used for treating breast cancer, prostate cancer, hemophiliac, pediatric meningitis, infertility and orthopedic disorders.

A number of diagnostic kits were also unveiled during the ceremony for testing various diseases at laboratories including the Elisa kits, LH data kits, HGC kits and TLC kits.

<http://www.irna.ir/News/General/President,-Iranian-medicines-should-be-available-worldwide/80296745>

- **Iran Said to Send Troops to Bolster Syria**

Commanders and Hundreds of Elite Soldiers Deployed to Damascus, Members Say, as Deepening Conflict Worries Key Ally

By FARNAZ FASSIHI

BEIRUT—Iran is sending commanders from its elite Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and hundreds of foot soldiers to Syria, according to current and former members of the corps.

The personnel moves come on top of what these people say are Tehran's stepped-up efforts to aid the military of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad with cash and arms. That would indicate that regional capitals are being drawn deeper into Syria's conflict—and undergird a growing perception among Mr. Assad's opponents that the regime's military is increasingly strained.

A commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IRGC, appeared to offer Iran's first open acknowledgment of its military involvement in Syria.

Syrian Speaker Mohammed Jihad al-Laham, left, and Alaeddin Boroujerdi of the Iran parliament's national security committee Saturday in Damascus.

"Today we are involved in fighting every aspect of a war, a military one in Syria and a cultural one as well," Gen. Salar Abnoush, commander of IRGC's Saheb al-Amr unit, told volunteer trainees in a speech Monday. The comments, reported by the Daneshjoo news agency, which is run by regime-aligned students, couldn't be independently verified. Top Iranian officials had previously said the country isn't involved in the conflict.

Iran has long trained members of the Syrian security apparatus in cybersecurity and spying on dissidents, U.S. officials and Syrian opposition members have said. The decision to send Iranian personnel comes after rebel attacks this summer in Syria's biggest cities, Damascus and Aleppo, in particular an explosion in July that killed four members of Mr. Assad's inner circle, according to the people familiar with the IRGC.

Syria's regime is increasingly relying on a core of loyalists to conduct operations, say

Syrian opposition members and rebel fighters. In recent weeks, Mr. Assad's army has been hobbled by defections, losing territory in Kurdish areas as well as near Turkey's border, these people say. On Monday, a Syrian military helicopter crashed in a ball of fire in Damascus, according to the Associated Press, citing activists and video footage.

Syria's uprising has placed Iran in a foreign-policy predicament. As the Arab Spring unfolded in countries including Libya, Egypt and Bahrain, the Islamic Republic cast its own revolution as an inspiration for the uprisings.

But Tehran didn't support the protesters in Syria—its closest ally in the region, the conduit between it and the Lebanese Shiite militant and political group Hezbollah, and a gateway for Iranian influence in the Arab world. Iran's most influential voices, including its supreme leader and the political and military power structures, have steadfastly supported Syria's president and, like Mr. Assad, have blamed the country's violence on foreign meddling and terrorists.

But in continuing to support Mr. Assad, Tehran's popular support in the region appears to have waned. Some elements of the government appear to be hedging bets: In the past few months, Iran's Foreign Ministry has reached out to some Syrian opposition members, offering to mediate between the two sides.

Those efforts appear to be overshadowed now by Iran's support for the Syrian military in its fight against the rebel insurgency, according to analysts and the former and current guard members.

"One of Iran's wings will be broken if Assad falls. They are now using all their contacts from Iraq to Lebanon to keep him power," Mohsen Sazegara, a founding IRGC member who now opposes the Iranian regime and lives in exile in the U.S., said by telephone.

On Thursday, Iran's defense minister publicly signaled a shift. If Syria fails to put down the uprising, Iran would send military help based on a mutual defense agreement between the two countries, two Iranian newspapers quoted Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi as saying. Syria hadn't asked for assistance yet, he added.

"Syria is managing this situation very well on its own," he said. "But if the government can't resolve the crisis on its own, then based on their request we will fulfill our mutual defense-security pact."

Syria's crisis tops the agenda at the summit of Non-Aligned Movement nations this week in Tehran. Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said Thursday that Iran would announce a surprise peace plan for Syria during the five-day conference, which started Sunday.

In Tehran, Syrian National Reconciliation Minister Ali Haidar met Monday with several Iranian officials and expressed Syria's gratitude. "The people of Syria will never forget the support of Iran during these difficult times," Mr. Haidar said, according to Iranian media.

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final word in all state matters, has appointed Qasim Solaimani, the commander of the elite Quds Forces, to spearhead military cooperation with Mr. Assad and his forces, according to an IRGC member in Tehran

with knowledge about deployments to Syria.

The Quds Forces are the IRGC's operatives outside Iran, responsible for training proxy militants and exporting the revolution's ideology. The U.S. blames the Quds Forces for terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"Solaimani has convinced Mr. Khamenei that Iran's borders extend beyond geographic frontiers, and fighting for Syria is an integral part of keeping the Shiite Crescent intact," said the IRGC member in Tehran. The so-called Crescent, which came together after Saddam Hussein's fall, includes Shiites from Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria.

Iran is now sending hundreds of rank-and-file members of the IRGC and the basij—a plainclothes volunteer militia answering to the guards—to Damascus, said two people in the IRGC familiar with the movements.

Many of the Iranian troops hail from IRGC units outside Tehran, these people say, particularly from Iran's Azerbaijan and Kurdistan regions where they have experience dealing with ethnic separatist

movements. They are replacing low-ranking Syrian soldiers who have defected to the Syrian opposition, these people said, and mainly assume non-fighting roles such as guarding weapons caches and helping to run military bases.

Iran is also deploying IRGC commanders to guide Syrian forces in battle strategy and Quds commanders to help with military intelligence, Mr. Sazegara and the current IRGC members said.

A Syrian helicopter hit over Damascus, according to a video account.

On the other side of Syria's conflict, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have funded and armed opposition rebels, while Turkey has allowed them to keep an unofficial base near Syria's border. Foreign Arab fighters, many of them extremist Jihadist, have also flocked to Syria to fight alongside rebels.

Iran has also started moving military aid and cash to Syria through Iranian companies in Iraq, such as a construction company owned by a former IRGC member now living in Iraq and a tour company servicing pilgrims to holy Shiite sites, said Mr. Sazegara and a person in

Iran familiar with the construction company.

The IRGC and Syrian forces are working together to free 48 Iranian hostages kidnapped by a unit of the opposition Free Syrian Army this month, according to two IRGC officials in Tehran as well as comments from an Iranian parliamentarian in Damascus this week.

Iran at first denied the kidnapped Iranians had any link with the IRGC. But Mr. Salehi later said some of the hostages were retired members of the IRGC, calling them Iran's "most dear and beloved." Iranian opposition media, meanwhile, have named four of the men, calling them current IRGC commanders from various Iranian provinces.

Iran's ambassador to Syria said recently that the hostages' whereabouts have been determined and that Iran is negotiation with Syria on how to rescue them, Iranian media reported. The envoy also said Iran and Syria had formed a joint committee, with intelligence, policy and military experts, for the rescue mission. Iranian media said Monday that this committee

sends Mr. Assad regular updates of their findings.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444230504577615393756632230.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **FM: Abbas to seek support for UN bid at Tehran summit**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- President Mahmoud Abbas will canvas for support for the UN bid at a summit of 120 developing nations in Tehran, PA Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki said Tuesday.



The PLO plans to ask the UN General Assembly to upgrade its status to a non-member observer state. A previous bid for full UN membership stalled at the Security Council last year.

Al-Malki told Ma'an he was confident Palestine had the support of the non-aligned states at the summit.

The Palestinian delegation will also discuss the issues of prisoners in Israeli jails and Israel's ongoing confiscation of Palestinian land, the PA minister said.

"Politically and diplomatically, we depend on the non-aligned movement and its support as its countries constitute the largest international gathering in the world," he added.

He said the Palestinian delegation would seek political and not financial support at the summit, as most states participating were developing countries facing their own economic difficulties.

It will ask states to boycott relations with Israel's Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman over his recent statements calling for Palestinian elections to replace Abbas, al-Malki said.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=515033>

- **Medics: Israel shells Gaza Strip, 2 injured**

GAZA CITY (Ma'an) -- Two Palestinians were injured early Tuesday as Israel shelled the Gaza Strip , medical officials said.

The shelling early on Tuesday came from Israeli military aircraft and naval ships and targeted two compounds in Gaza City, Hamas officials said. Two women in nearby homes were injured by flying debris, hospital officials said.



"The shelling targeted the northern Gaza Strip, and an agricultural area in Wadi Gaza," spokesman of the Gaza ministry of health Ashraf al-Qudra said.

Eyewitnesses said at least five missiles struck a Hamas building in Gaza City.

Israel described the targets as weapons manufacturing and storage sites and said they were hit in retaliation for recent short-range rocket salvoes launches from the coastal enclave.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=515010>

- **UN: Gaza not 'liveable' by 2020 barring urgent action**

GAZA CITY (Reuters) -- Gaza will no longer be "liveable" by 2020 unless urgent action is taken to improve water supply, power, health, and schooling, the United Nations' most comprehensive report on the Palestinian enclave said on Monday.

"Action needs to be taken now if Gaza is to be a liveable place in 2020 and it is already difficult now," UN humanitarian coordinator Maxwell Gaylard told journalists when the report was released on Monday.

Five years into an Israeli blockade supported by Egypt, and living under one-party rule, Gaza's population of 1.6 million is set to rise by 500,000 over the next eight years, say the authors of the UN's most wide-ranging report on the territory.

Gaza has one the youngest populations in the world, with 51 percent of people under the age of 18.

"Action needs to be taken right now on fundamental aspects of life: water sanitation, electricity, education, health and other aspects," Gaylard said.

Since 2007, Gaza has been under the control of the Islamist Hamas organization, an armed political movement which rejects permanent peace with Israel. They fought a three-week war in January 2009, and Israel is resisting international pressure to lift its blockade, which it says prevents arms reaching Hamas.

Gaza has no airport and no sea port. The border is tense, with frequent clashes over rocket or mortar fire from Gaza and air strikes by Israel. Gaza rockets hit Israeli land on Sunday, damaging a factory in the town of Sderot, east of the enclave.

Israel partly eased restrictions in mid-2010, and Gaza's crippled economy began to revive from rock bottom. Real GDP is estimated to have risen by 28 percent in

the first half of 2011 as unemployment fell to 28 percent in 2011 from 37 percent.

But the report, involving expertise from more UN agencies and making projections further into the future than before, said growth over the next eight years would be slow, since Gaza's current isolation renders its economy essentially non-viable.

Reconstruction but no peace

The people in the narrow coastal strip live mainly on UN aid, foreign funding and a tunnel economy which brings in food, construction materials, electronics and cars from Egypt.

But the smuggling trade is no solution. Robert Turner, director of operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency , said Gaza by 2020 will need 440 more schools, 800 more hospital beds and over a 1,000 additional doctors.

Gaylard called on international donors to increase their aid to a population which is 80 percent aid dependent.

"Despite their best efforts the Palestinians in Gaza still need help," he said. "They are under blockade. They are under occupation and they need our help both politically and practically on the ground."

Israel in fact withdrew from Gaza in 2005, removing troops and settlers after 38 years of occupation.

A lack of clean drinking water is the greatest immediate concern, said Jean Gough of the UNICEF. The report projects a 60 percent increase in the enclave's water needs, while urgent action is already needed to protect existing water resources.

By 2016, Gaza's aquifer may become unusable, she said. Palestinians are already drilling deeper and deeper to reach groundwater and there is a need for more desalination plants. A seawater plant costing about \$350 million is planned.

The UN says only a quarter of Gaza waste water is treated. The rest, including raw sewage, goes into the Mediterranean Sea.

Gaylard said Gaza needs peace and security to improve the lives of its people. "It will certainly have to mean the end of blockade, the end of isolation and the end of conflict."

There is as yet no sign of an end to the conflict between Hamas and Israel. The Islamist movement is shunned by the West as a terror organization and there is no prospect of diplomatic contacts leading to peace talks as long as Hamas rejects Israel's right to exist.

Analysts say much may depend on the future of relations with the new Egypt, whose Islamist leaders are sympathetic to Hamas but also committed to the 1979 peace treaty with Israel. Hamas is also supported by Iran, which is extremely hostile to Israel.

Aside from its tunnel network, Gaza imports via Israel. UN figures show, for example, that 46,500 tonnes of building materials came into Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing from Israel in September 2011, while 90,000 tonnes came via the tunnels.

It also gets electricity and fuel from Israel.

Rebuilding homes and factories smashed in the winter war of 2009 is Gaza's biggest task, and construction is the source of most of its growth in employment in the past two years.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=514949>

- **Israeli Forces to Demolish 27 Residents near Hebron**

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HEBRON, August 28, 2012 (WAFA) – Israeli forces Tuesday handed Palestinians in Zanota, a village south of Hebron, demolition notices of 27 residences, according to a local activist.

Coordinator of the popular committee in Yatta, a town south of Hebron, Rateb Jbour said members of the Israeli civic administration, accompanied by Israeli soldiers, handed families in Zanota notices to demolish 27 residents that house tens of families.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20539>

- **Israel to Demolish 2 Houses in Jericho**

JERICHO, August 28, 2012 – Israeli forces Tuesday handed two Palestinians from sbaiha area, in Jericho city, notices to demolish their houses, as well as demolished the stone walls surrounding four other houses in the area, according to WAFA correspondent.

The governor of Jericho and the Jordan Valley, Majid al-Fityani, said Israeli forces, ten days ago, notified the residents of their plans to raze about 3000 dunums of land planted with palm trees.

He considered these Israeli measures an escalation of the Israeli occupation policy against the residents of the Jordan Valley in an attempt to force the residents to leave their land in order to seize it.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20538>

- **Newspapers Review: Netanyahu's Legalizing Settlement in Jerusalem Dailies' Focus**

RAMALLAH, August 28, 2012 (WAFA) – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's announcement that Gush

Etzion settlement bloc will belong to Israel forever dominated the three Arabic Palestinian dailies on Tuesday.

Netanyahu said during a visit to an elementary school in Efrat that “Efrat and Gush Etzion are an integral, elementary and evident part of Greater Jerusalem.”

The dailies reported on an elderly Palestinian man who was stabbed by a group of settlers east of Yatta.

They printed photos of 65-years-old Ismail al-Adra, who was transferred to hospital after he was beaten by eight settlers from Mitzpe Yair settlement.

Al-Quds daily featured a UN report stating that Gaza “will not be livable by 2020,” unless urgent action is taken.

Al-Hayat al-Jadida reported on Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas saying that “we will not allow anyone to bypass the PLO.”

It quoted Abbas saying that Israeli Prime Minister Avigdor Lieberman’s statements will only result in the Palestinian

leadership’s strong adherence to national principles.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20536>

- **Israeli court: U.S. activist Rachel Corrie's death was an accident**

Family of Corrie, who was crushed by an IDF bulldozer during a pro-Palestinian protest in Gaza in 2003, filed lawsuit in Haifa accusing Israel of intentionally killing their 23-year-old daughter.

The Haifa District Court rejected on Tuesday accusations that Israel was at fault over the death of American activist Rachel Corrie, who was crushed by an army bulldozer during a 2003 pro-Palestinian demonstration in Gaza.

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/israeli-court-u-s-activist-rachel-corrie-s-death-was-an-accident.premium-1.461156>

- **MKs slam Peres for commuting terrorist sentences**

After Peres shortens sentences of convicted terrorists, Schneller proposes

law limiting the president's ability to do so.

Palestinian prisoners in Israel's Ketziot prison Photo: Ronen Zvulun/Reuters

Several members of Knesset slammed President Shimon Peres on Tuesday for commuting life sentences of high-security prisoners who killed IDF soldiers in the 1980s.

Kadima MK Otneil Schneller proposed that a new law be passed that would limit the president's ability to commute sentences.

"A president should not be able to shorten the sentences of citizens of Israel that are traitors to their state and murder IDF soldiers for nationalist reasons," Schneller said.

One of the prisoners to be released is Karim Younis, who received a death sentence that was mitigated to life in prison after he murdered IDF soldier Avraham Bromberg in 1981. His sentence was commuted to 40 years in prison.

Bromberg's family came out in support of Schneller's suggestion, saying that "a red line was crossed, and we are witnesses to how the state abandons our soldiers and

citizens and breaches promises made in the past – that murderers with blood on their hands may not be released."

"The State of Israel must use the death penalty against nationalist murderers," the family added.

MK Danny Danon (Likud) agreed that the prisoners deserved the death penalty, but as long as Israel does not do so, high security prisoners should spend life in prison and "never see the light of day."

"This decision is a disgrace to the State of Israel," Danon said. "The message we are sending to terrorists and their supporters is that they can murder Israelis and get out of jail."

According to MK Moshe Matalon (Yisrael Beytenu), Peres's actions are another example of the government's powerlessness in dealing with terrorists' and their sentences.

"It is unfortunate that gestures are being made to help murderers of children," Matalon said, quoting national poet Haim Nachman Bialik: "Vengeance for the blood

of a small boy/Satan himself has not devised."

Peres on Monday commuted the life sentences of the seven prisoners to periods ranging from 30 to 45 years.

In addition to Younis, Peres reduced the life sentence of Ibrahim Abdel Razek Biadsa to 45 years. Biadsa was charged in 1986 for kidnapping an IDF soldier with Ibrahim bin Naif Abu Moch, whose sentence was commuted to 40 years.

The president consulted Justice Minister Ya'akov Neeman and the Special Prisoners Release Committee, who deliberated over each case based on accepted legal practice.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=282870>

- **Court hearing on Migron ends without a decision**

Outpost residents ask High Court for more time; Palestinian landowners' attorney demands court take a stand in the case.

The High Court of Justice concluded a hearing on a petition filed by Migron

residents asking for a delay in their eviction from the settlement outpost on Tuesday. The court was expected to announce its decision in the coming days.

Migron outpost residents on Monday afternoon petitioned the High Court of Justice to delay the evacuation of the 50 families that live there until such time as their new homes are ready.

The court had ordered the families to leave because their homes were built without permits on land classified by the state as belonging to private Palestinians.

At the hearing, a representative of the Binyamin Regional Council told the court that a new site with modular homes built for evacuated Migron residents will not be ready for several weeks, adding that permits to allow electricity to be turned on in the homes has not been approved.

Attorney Michael Sfar, who is representing the Palestinian families who own the land Migron is built on, argued that the court must order the demolition of Jewish homes in the outpost in order to take a stand on illegal construction.

Sfard asserted to the justices that Migron settlers stole land and built on it for ideological reasons in order to establish facts on the ground.

Last week the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories Maj.-Gen. Eitan Dangot sent a letter to Binyamin Regional Council head Avi Ro'eh in which he said that according to the court mandate, the families must leave their homes by the morning of August 28.

But in his written reply to Dangot on Sunday, Ro'eh said he believed that the evacuation could occur after a HJC court hearing on a request by 17 of the 50 families to remain on the site, set for Tuesday morning.

Migron families, however, believe that the disagreement between Dangot and Ro'eh as to the evacuation's timetable is irrelevant because the new site two kilometers away, near the Psagot winery is not ready.

Although modular homes have been placed at the site, the public institutions including the school, the synagogue and the mikve are not ready, Ro'eh and

Migron residents said. There are also safety concerns that need to be addressed.

On Monday, Migron residents and settler leaders focused on preparing for Tuesday's court hearing regarding the fate of the 17 Migron families who claim to have purchased the property on which their homes are located from the Palestinian land owners. They have asked to remain in their homes until the court can validate their claim.

But last week the Attorney General's Office told the court that the families must move because, irrespective of their purchase claim, it was not possible for Israelis to live on that plot of land without infringing on the rights of the abutting Palestinian property owners.

The office explained that it was not possible to access the purchased property without trespassing on Palestinian property.

On Monday Coalition Chairman MK Ze'ev Elkin (Likud) and Danny Dayan, who heads the Council of Jewish Communities of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip held a

closed door meeting with residents and other settler leaders to discuss Tuesday's hearing.

Dayan said the settlers plan to explain to the court that the site can be accessed through existing abandoned property or state land.

He held a map in his hand with access routes.

Settlers have argued that there is no need to evacuate the site and the state could appeal to the court to allow them to stay.

They have noted in particular, that the attorney general's response differs from that of the Ministerial Settlements Committee, which said that the 17 families could remain if the purchase claim was validated.

However Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has stood behind a policy adopted by his government that Jewish homes built without authorization on private Palestinian property must be evacuated.

In a show of support for continued Jewish presence in Judea and Samaria, on Monday, Netanyahu visited the Efrat settlement to mark the first day of school.

He said that "Efrat and Gush Etzion are an integral, fundamental and evident part of greater Jerusalem. They are the southern gates of Jerusalem and will always be part of the State of Israel.

"We are building Efrat and Gush Etzion with enthusiasm, faith and responsibility; thus we are also building education," said Netanyahu.

But right wing activists were not swayed by his words.

At the bottom of the hill where Migron is located, they placed many large signs against Netanyahu including one in English, which said, "Bibi is weak and not trustworthy. Right wing leader urgently needed."

Other signs said, "Bibi is sacrificing Migron."

Outside of political protests, area settlers made solidarity visits to Migron.

Families from the Ulpana outpost, who left their homes this summer after a similar court mandate came to the outpost Monday to distribute chocolate to the residents.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=282873>

- **Diplomat: FM's letter aimed to block Abbas's UN bid**

Senior diplomatic official: Liberman's letter to Quartet was aimed at persuading key democracies to oppose Palestinian statehood bid.

Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman's letter to the Quartet last week calling for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's ouster is part of a campaign to get leading democracies to oppose the PA's UN bid, a senior diplomatic official said Monday.

The idea behind the letter, the official said, was primarily to preempt Abbas's move at the UN by putting on the public agenda his record of rejecting Israeli gestures and refusing to negotiate, while trying to diplomatically isolate Israel.

The official said that, like last year, Abbas is expected to deliver a blistering attack on Israel at the UN General Assembly in September, and indicate his intention to seek non-member state status in the organization. He is only expected to make that move, however, after the November 6 American elections so as not to complicate matters for US President Barack Obama.

Abbas knows that Obama needs "peace and quiet until November," so he will raise the issue, but not act on it, until after the elections, the official said.

Liberman's letter, he added, was an attempt to be proactive and cast Abbas in the role of the intransigent party.

One of Abbas's arguments is expected to be that he is making his gambit now because all attempts at negotiation with the current Israeli government have failed.

Preempting, Liberman stated in his letter that Abbas is either "uninterested or unable – due to his standing in the domestic Palestinian scene vis-a-vis Hamas, and in light of the regional

geopolitical situation – to reach an agreement which would bring an end to the conflict, including addressing all the core issues.

Instead, Abbas is creating a culture of blaming Israel for delaying the process, while attempting to achieve advantages without negotiation, via blackmail and ongoing attempts to internationalize the conflict.”

While the official said it was clear that with their automatic majority in the UN General Assembly the Palestinians could easily get the motion passed, Israel was aiming to get some of the world’s key democracies – the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea and European countries – to oppose the move.

According to the source, the assessment in Jerusalem is that without most of those countries, the PA might not go through with the step.

While Washington has come out against such a move, Brussels has not yet weighed in on the matter, and it is likely that while some EU countries will want to oppose, others will support it.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian- Israeli Peace NGO Forum – comprised of 50 left-wing NGOs such as Peace Now, Yesh Din, Machsom Watch and Ir Amim – sent a letter to the Quartet Monday expressing their “outrage” at Liberman’s letter.

The letter encouraged the Quartet to “welcome a Palestinian initiative to secure a vote of confidence in the coming UN General Assembly, by which the State of Palestine will be declared a ‘non-member state’ of the UN.”

According to the NGO forum, “This achievement could constitute a major shift in the current stalemate and generate new political and diplomatic energies serving the peace process.”

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=282849>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Libyans protest Islamists’ destruction of shrines**

Activists call on parliament to take action to protect national heritage from Islamists hardliners.

By Imed Lamoum - TRIPOLI

Hardline Sunni Islamists are implacably opposed to the veneration of tombs of revered Muslim figures

Libyan activists and civil society groups on Monday urged the newly-elected parliament to intervene to protect the national heritage after Islamist hardliners destroyed shrines across the country.

In a letter addressed to the General National Congress and its speaker, Mohamed al-Megarief, 17 groups also called for the recent attacks to be investigated.

"Action must be taken before these criminals cause any further harm or damage to our heritage and our people," said the statement signed by 17 groups, including Lawyers for Justice in Libya and Women4Libya.

"We plead with you to act now to protect our heritage," they said.

Several Muslim shrines have been attacked in recent days, including those of the mystic Sufi strand of Islam.

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 -- was 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 Sufis, who have played a historical role in the affairs of Libya, have increasingly found themselves in conflict with Qatari- and Saudi-trained Salafist preachers who consider them heretical.

"You as our elected official authority must act now," read Monday's statement.

On Sunday, the national assembly accused the interior ministry's High Security Committee of being lax or even implicated in the destruction of shrines.

Protesters took to the streets of Tripoli on Monday for the second day to denounce the demolitions, with dozens of representatives of civil society groups demonstrating outside the national assembly building.



The protesters echoed the letter, calling for concrete action from parliament, an AFP photographer said.

On Sunday, dozens of protesters responded to calls on Internet social networks and marched from the centre of

Tripoli towards the ruins of the Al-Shaab al-Dahman mausoleum.

"Libya is not Afghanistan!" shouted one woman protester, alluding to the destruction by the Taliban militia of that country's famous Buddha statues at Bamiyan.

"We reject extremism," "No to the destruction of monuments" and "Islam rejects tombs being profaned" read some of the slogans on placards carried by protesters.

Prime Minister Abdelrahim al-Kib has come under fire in recent weeks over the work of his government, amid a spate of violence that has rocked parts of the country, including Tripoli where twin car bombings killed two people a week ago.

Authorities have blamed loyalists of now slain dictator Moamer Gathafi's ousted regime for the attacks which hit as Muslims celebrated the feast of Eid al-Fitr.

The bombings triggered a wave of criticism of the security services which are made up mostly of former rebels.

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.

On Sunday, Abdelali resigned.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54066>

- **Morocco consumer confidence fall for third quarter in a row**

Morocco's economic crisis weighs on consumer confidence amid price rises, simmering social discontent.

Morocco is suffering the knock-on effects of the debt crisis in Europe

RABAT - Morocco's economic crisis saw consumer confidence, a key engine of growth for the kingdom, fall for third straight quarter during three months to June, the state planning commission said in a report published Monday.

"During the second quarter of 2012, consumer confidence continued a downward trend that began in the fourth

quarter of 2011, recording its third consecutive fall," Morocco's planning commission (HCP) said in its study.



Between April and June, the consumer confidence index fell 5.1 points compared with the same period in 2011, and 2.2 points compared with the first three months of this year, the report noted.

A majority of households expected food prices to continue rising over the next 12 months, alongside a decline in the standard of living, according to the study.

Due to the precarious financial situation, 57.9 percent of Moroccans said they were forced to curtail their expenses, 36.6 percent said they were accumulating debt or dipping into their savings and only 5.5 percent said they were saving.

After a decade of prosperity, Morocco is suffering the knock-on effects of the debt crisis in Europe, its largest trade partner, cutting growth forecasts amid price rises and simmering social discontent.

The International Monetary Fund announced early in August that it was opening a "precautionary" \$6.2 billion line of credit for the kingdom to protect the economy from external shocks.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54068>

- **Morsi's spokesman reveals names of presidential assistants**

President appoints two from Islamist camp, one Coptic Christian intellectual, and a woman university professor as presidential assistants.

Four assistants are destined to be close associates of Morsi

CAIRO - Egypt's Islamist President Mohamed Morsi on Monday appointed a Coptic Christian intellectual and a woman university professor as presidential assistants, his spokesman Yasser Ali announced.

Samir Morcos, a liberal Coptic writer engaged in the dialogue between Islam and Christianity, has been named "assistant for democratic transition", Ali said.

Pakinam al-Sharkawi, a political sciences professor at Cairo University, was appointed "assistant for political affairs," he added.

The president also chose two assistants from the Islamist camp.

Emad Abdel Ghafour, the leader of the ultra-conservative Al-Nur Salafist party, was named "assistant in charge of relations with civil society" while Essam al-Haddad from the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party becomes assistant for "external relations and international cooperation."

Morsi, who was fielded for the presidential elections by the Freedom and Justice Party, had pledged during his campaign to include Copts in his administration.

But the Coptic community, which represents 14 percent of Egypt's 82 million people, was unhappy over the composition of the country's new cabinet which was sworn in in early August and includes only two women, one of them a Copt.

Sharkawi, who wears the veil despite not being affiliated with any Islamist party, told the independent Al-Masri al-Youm newspaper on Monday that the Muslim Brotherhood is an "expression of a moderate Islam."

The Salafist party Al-Nur had surprised everyone by winning nearly 20 percent of the seats in multi-phase parliamentary elections that concluded earlier this year.

Haddad is a member of the Freedom and Justice Party which had won most seats in the legislative polls.

These four assistants, who are destined to be close associates of the president, are part of a broader group of 17 people chosen to become "presidential advisers."

Morsi, who took office on June 30, is the first president of Egypt to come from an

Islamist camp and also the first civilian head of state since the overthrow of the monarchy in 1952.

He won the first presidential election since the fall of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011 with a short margin in the second round after clashing with Ahmed Shafiq, the last premier of the deposed regime.

On August 12, Morsi significantly strengthened his powers by retiring veteran Defence Minister Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi and scrapping a constitutional document that gave the military legislative and other powers.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54060>

- **Tunisia president's party re-elects secretary general amid tensions**

CPR re-elects as secretary general ex-minister who quit government in June, amid simmering tensions with ruling Islamist party.

Partnership that doesn't exclude calculations

TUNIS- The Congress for the Republic, the party of the Tunisian president, has re-elected as secretary general an ex-minister who quit the government in June, amid simmering tensions with the ruling Islamist party.

The CPR announced early on Monday, at the end of its annual conference, that Mohammed Abbou, who resigned as administrative reform minister in June over obstacles in the fight against corruption, would remain head of the party.

The political programme that the CPR was due to adopt at the three-day conference, elaborating its strategy ahead of planned elections next year and clarifying its direction, will be published later on Monday or on Tuesday, a spokesman said.

The secular, centre-left party to which President Moncef Marzouki belongs, partners the Islamist party Ennahda in Tunisia's ruling three-party coalition, alongside Ettakatol, another centre-left grouping.

Ennahda dominates the alliance, after winning the largest share of votes in legislative elections last October.



Tensions between the CPR and Ennahda resurfaced on Friday when Marzouki, at the start of the conference, strongly criticised the Islamists, prompting several top government officials with Ennahda to walk out, including Interior Minister Ali Larayedh.

"What complicates the situation is the growing feeling that our Ennahda brothers are working to control the administrative and political operations of the state," the president said in a letter read out by one of his advisers.

"This behaviour reminds us of the bygone era" of ousted dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali," Marzouki added, condemning "the appointment of supporters (of the

Ennahda party to key posts) whether or not they are qualified."

The CPR's reappointment of Abbou, 46, as secretary general would appear to strengthen this position, given the former minister's criticism of the Prime Minister, Ennahda's Hamadi Jabali, for not doing enough in the fight against corruption.

The ruling Islamists have also come under fire from activists in recent weeks for interfering in the control of the media, for seeking to curtail women's rights and for failing to rein in Tunisia's resurgent Salafist movement.

And Marzouki, himself a veteran human rights activist and dissident under Ben Ali, has been criticised for not resisting the Islamist party's increasingly authoritarian tendencies.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54054>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Eid: Situation in Tripoli 'calm'**

Arab Democratic Party Secretary General Rifaat Ali Eid said in remarks published on Tuesday that the security situation in Lebanon's northern city of Tripoli was "calm."

"The army controls [the city] and we abide by its decisions..." Eid told Al-Hayat newspaper.

The Alawite party leader also said that no political party has contacted him to broker reconciliation between the rival neighborhoods of Jabal Mohsen and Bab al-Tabbaneh.

"No one represents us. Many have called me and said they represented me in the meetings with [other] figures from Tripoli but I told them [all] that no one represents me," he added.

Eid also said that he wanted the rights of the Alawite sect to be respected.

"I refuse that we remain marginalized, or that someone confiscates our voice... no one has the right to take our employment rights [in the public sector]," Eid added.

Fighting linked to the troubles in Syria broke out last week in Tripoli between pro- and anti-Syrian regime gunmen from Sunni and Alawite groups, whose rival district – Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen respectively – are divided by a thoroughfare called Syria Street. The ensuing clashes have left at least 15 people dead.

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

- **Lebanese information minister condemns attack on MTV crew in Tripoli**

Lebanese Information Minister Walid al-Daouq condemned the recent attack on the crew of MTV television station in North Lebanon's Tripoli, the National News Agency reported on Monday.

"[I underscore] the importance of dissociating the media sector from any struggle and protecting it from harm," Daouq said in a phone call to MTV Director General Michel al-Murr.

The NNA reported earlier on Monday that youths in Tripoli – the scene of recent clashes linked to the crisis in Syria –

attacked the MTV crew that was reporting on events in Lebanon's northern city and accused it of "diffusing lies."

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

- **Berri's desperate attempts**

Hanin Ghaddar

What will Speaker Nabih Berri do when the Assad regime falls? (AFP photo)

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?ID=125478>

6. SYRIA

- **Diplomat: Iran Seeks to Materialize Egypt's Proposal on Syria**

TEHRAN (FNA)- A senior Iranian diplomat welcomed Egypt's proposal for the settlement of the Syrian crisis, and said Tehran will strive to materialize the contents of Cairo's suggested plan.



"Egypt's proposal on Syria is welcomed by Iran and we try to materialize the proposal," Head of the Iranian Foreign Ministry's Middle-East Office Ferdosipour told reporters in Tehran on Tuesday.

During the summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which was held on August 14-15 in Mecca, Egyptian President Mohammad Mursi proposed the formation of the contact group, including Iran, Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia on the situation in Syria.

Ferdosipour said that the contact group with its regional potentials can make its utmost efforts to settle the problems in Syria.

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

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

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

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

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106060186>

- **Senegal: Syria Crisis Top on NAM Summit's Agenda**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Senegalese Foreign Minister Alioune Badara Cissé said the Syrian crisis is a key topic in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Tehran.

Cissé said one of the most important issues that would be discussed in the summit is the Syrian crisis.

He also underscored Iran's influence on the Muslim world and praised the level of interactions among countries participating in the 16th Summit of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Iran's capital, Tehran.

Holding this meeting in the Islamic Republic reflects the country's influence among Muslim states, Cissé said.

More than 100 countries are partaking in the NAM meeting which kicked off at the expert level in Tehran on Sunday.

Meanwhile, upon arriving in Tehran, Niger's Foreign Minister Mohammed Bazoum expressed hope the NAM summit would take firm steps towards establishing global peace and resolving disagreements among nations.

Antoine Gambi, the foreign minister of the Central African Republic, also described the hosting of the NAM summit as a great success for Iran in political and international arenas.

Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh Mohammad, who is also in Tehran to attend the NAM meeting, said developing countries could use this opportunity for interacting with other nations.

Iran inherited the rotating three-year leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement on Sunday, a platform for anti-Western sentiments and grievances over big-power domination.

The United States and Israel are among the nations fearful that the summit drawing a reported 50 or more heads of state and government will give Tehran a boost in legitimacy and rally disgruntled states to its defense of its nuclear programs.

The Islamic Republic's three-year tenure as head of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which starts on Sunday, is a chance for Tehran to elevate its international standing as the United States seeks to cripple its economy and isolate it diplomatically over its disputed nuclear program.

Many analysts say that the diplomatic spotlight will give Tehran an opportunity

to show Washington has failed to cut it off from the rest of the world.

Around 110 are present at attending the conference and more than 45 states will send their top officials to the heads-of-state summit next week.

The guest list includes new Egyptian President Mohammad Mursi - the first Egyptian leader to visit Iran since its Islamic revolution in 1979.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106060174>

- **Iranian FM Asks NAM Members to Seriously Pursue Restoration of Tranquility in Syria**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi called on the members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to consider restoration of peace and tranquility in Syria as a main agenda.



Salehi made the remarks in a meeting with his Lebanese counterpart Adnan Mansour on Monday.

NAM is an international organization of states considering themselves not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc. NAM is the largest grouping of countries outside of the United Nations. NAM is comprised of some 120 member states and 17 observer countries.

Mansour, for his part, dismissed military intervention and foreign interference in Syria, and underlined the important role of the NAM members in settling the problems in the Arab country.

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

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

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

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

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106060172>

- **Assad will not step down under pressure from West: Syrian minister**

TEHRAN, Aug. 27 (MNA) -- Syrian Minister for National Reconciliation Ali Haidar said that President Bashar al-Assad will not step down due to pressure from foreign governments.

Foreign countries have recommended such a solution to the current crisis, and this has violated Syria's sovereignty and the United Nations Charter, Haidar told reporters in Tehran on Monday.

“The only solution to the Syrian crisis is the termination of foreign interference and the disarmament of the opposition,” he added.

“We will not veto any favorable propositions that are recommended, but we will not allow the Syrian government to be undermined,” he stated.

He went on to say that Syria is cooperating with its allies in order to solve the current crisis, and in regard to Iran’s involvement, everyone knows that Iran has never directly interfered in Syria’s internal affairs.

Iran has always stood by the Syrian people and has always been opposed to foreign intervention in Syria, he said in conclusion.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1682376>

- **Assad willing to talk with opposition, senior Iranian MP says**

TEHRAN, Aug. 27 (MNA) - A senior Iranian lawmaker says Syrian President Bashar al Assad is willing to meet opposition

representatives to end the 17-month conflict in his country.

“If the opposition, the armed opposition and the countries that are supporting it can accept it then a dialogue can begin,” said Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the chairman of the Iranian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

Boroujerdi who met President Assad in Damascus on Sunday said the willingness for dialogue by the Syrian government was a positive sign.

The Iranian envoy announced his country was willing to host the talks.

The Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi also told reporters on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement expert meeting in Tehran on Sunday that Tehran was ready to host negotiations between the Syrian government and opposition.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1681930>

- **Syrian rebels dream of weapons to down aircraft**

Sara Hussein

On the edge of the Saif al-Dawla district of Aleppo, a commander argues with a rebel. He has ordered him to try to take out a regime tank, alone and with a single rocket-propelled grenade.

"Just one is enough – you can take out the whole army," the commander tells the reluctant fighter.

The scene is one repeated across the frontlines of the battle between the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian regime, as the rag-tag rebel forces try to take on tanks, helicopter gunships and fighter jets with armory that is desperately lacking.

Rebel commanders say the weapons they do have – Kalashnikovs, some RPGs, a handful of anti-aircraft guns – are old and expensive while the weapons they need to take on the might of an army are impossible to come by.

"I flew MIG war planes for 12 years, and we are fighting these planes with Kalashnikovs, and not even good Kalashnikovs," says Alaa Saadeddin, a defected pilot.

"Anti-aircraft guns are the heaviest weapon we have," he adds. "We don't have ground-to-ground rockets, we don't have Grads, we don't have surface-to-air missiles."

When Abu Maryam decided to set up his own rebel brigade, he approached the Liwa al-Tawhid, a rebel umbrella group, to ask about the possibility of getting weapons.

"Liwa al-Tawhid gave us two Kalashnikovs, but we had to find a way to buy the rest. We have 22 men and 12 guns, so we will go in groups. The first group will take the guns, when they come back, they will give the guns to the second group."

And the weapons that are available don't come cheap -- a Kalashnikov goes for 150,000 Syrian pounds, nearly \$2,400, bullets start at \$2 each, and a grenade will set you back over \$150, according to commanders.

Syria's rebels laugh at stories of Libyan fighters who regularly unloaded their weapons into the air to celebrate a victory on the battlefield.

"If any rebel in any group fires a single bullet in any direction other than at the enemy, they will be kicked out of the group," Saadeddin said.

Western nations have said they are providing non-lethal aid, in the form of money or communications equipment to the rebels, and the opposition Syrian National Council says countries including Saudi Arabia and Qatar have provided arms to fighters inside the country.

But the weapons in evidence on the ground look as old as rebels claim they are – beaten-up guns and dusty RPGs that are a world away from the shiny new equipment that was in circulation on the Libyan battlefield.

"The vast majority of the weapons we have come from the regime, either we take them from the soldiers when we kill them, or we buy them from shabiha (pro-regime militiamen) or corrupt state army troops," said Abu Walid, a commander in the city of Marea.

"Take this grenade for example, we bought it from an Alawite soldier," he

said, displaying a plump green grenade with Russian labeling.

"He loves money more than he loves his side," he sneered.

Rebels said they had also managed to buy some weapons over the border, mainly in Iraq, but also in Lebanon and to a lesser extent in Turkey.

Abu Walid and other commanders said their forces were in need of everything from ammunition to ground-to-ground missiles. But the weapon that the rebels dream of most is something that can take out a plane.

The Syrian army has rained destruction on Aleppo and its surroundings with its fleet of warplanes and helicopter gunships.

"When we say a neighborhood has been liberated, it doesn't mean in the air, but only on the ground, because at any point a plane or helicopter can come [and strike] and we don't have rockets," said Abul Abbas, another Liwa al-Tawhid commander in Marea.

"The most important thing is to have a weapon that can take out a plane," Abu Walid added emphatically.

In the absence of anything heavier, rebels are working to make homemade devices, bombs and rockets.

But a group of three rebels who proudly shared a video showing the firing of what they said was a homemade rocket, admitted they had no way to aim the device and no idea where it lands.

"We've tried to make some homemade rockets, but honestly most of them have blown up in our faces," Saadeddin said.

In the Mashhad neighborhood of Aleppo, as a tank round landed ever closer, a group of rebels found themselves armed with nothing more than their Kalashnikovs and Molotov cocktails made out of old pickle jars.

"That's the difference between us and them," one commander said of the Syrian army. "They have everything, we have nothing but God."

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=431273#>

- **UN: Syrian refugees in Jordan camp double in past week**

The number of Syrians fleeing to the Al-Zaatri refugee camp in Jordan has doubled in recent days, with more than 10,000 taking shelter there, the UN refugee agency said on Tuesday.

"The pace of arrivals from the Syrian border to the Zaatri camp in North Jordan has doubled in the past week," Melissa Flemming, a spokesperson for the UN refugee agency UNHCR, told a press conference.

She said that 10,200 people had poured into the camp in the week ending on August 27, compared with 4,500 the week before. More than 22,000 Syrians have taken shelter at the Al Zaatri camp since it opened on July 30.

"Refugees say many thousands more are waiting to cross amid violence around Daraa and we believe this could be the start of a much larger influx."

An increasing number of refugees were unaccompanied minors, she said.

"We have received in the camp over the past week an increased number of unaccompanied children," she said. "Some children report that their parents have died, or are staying behind in Syria to look after relatives or are working in other countries."

She did not give any numbers for the children, but a spokesperson for the UN children agency UNICEF said they were estimated at several hundred.

"In Syria, there is an urgent need to find alternative shelter for the increasing number of displaced people staying in schools," where classes are in theory due to resume on September 16, Flemming said.

Some 25,000 people have been killed since an uprising against President Bashar al-Assad's rule first erupted in March 2011, according to activists. The UN says at least 200,000 people have fled the fighting to neighboring countries while another 2.5 million are in need inside Syria.

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

- **US says Syrian opposition must coordinate first**

The United States said Monday that the Syrian opposition's first priority should be to coordinate and set a democratic path after France called for the quick formation of a provisional government.

President Francois Hollande, stepping up pressure on Syria in a speech to French diplomats, pledged that France would recognize a provisional government as soon as it is formed and urged the rebels to be inclusive.

Asked about Hollande's remarks, State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland said that the United States was calling on Syria's opposition "to coordinate more closely" with citizens both inside and outside the war-torn country.

"So that's the first order of business – for them to all agree on what a transition ought to look like. Obviously, it's a matter for them to decide if and when they may

be prepared to start naming folks," she told reporters.

"We would want to ensure that that was based on a solid democratic plan and that it reflected a broad cross-section of those in Syria and reflected the values of inclusion, the values of human rights and protections for all groups," she said.

Some experts and activists have voiced concern about Syria's opposition, fearing that it is disjointed and that Sunni Muslim hardliners would seek revenge against President Bashar al-Assad's minority Alawite community.

The leader of the Syrian National Council, Abdel Basset Sayda, said on August 21 that the opposition group was studying the formation of a transitional government but warned against moving too quickly.

Hollande in his speech also warned of foreign intervention if Assad used chemical weapons to put down the revolt. Nuland declined comment on Hollande's remarks beyond pointing to US President Barack Obama's statement last week that

the use of chemical weapons in Syria would be a "red line."

Activists say around 25,000 people have been killed since March last year as Assad tries to crush the biggest threat to his family's four-decade grip on power.

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

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

• Saudi king on "private visit" to Morocco

Saudi King Abdullah arrived in Casablanca on Monday for a private visit to Morocco, official sources said.

The 88-year-old monarch was received at the airport by senior Moroccan dignitaries, the official MAP news agency reported.

King Abdullah is a frequent visitor to the North African country, where his family owns palaces in Casablanca, the economic capital, and Agadir to the southwest.

His last trip was at the beginning of 2011, after he underwent surgery in New York for a debilitating herniated disc complicated by a hematoma.

During his visit, the Saudi monarch usually meets his Moroccan counterpart, King Mohammed VI, and receives foreign politicians.

King Abdullah left the new heir to the throne, Crown Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz, who is also deputy prime minister and defense minister, in charge of the oil-rich kingdom during his absence, the SPA news agency reported.

It is the Saudi king's first trip abroad since he appointed Salman, 76, first in line to the throne in June, following the death of crown prince Nayef ben Abdel Aziz at the age of 79.

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

- **Released Kuwaiti says abductors accused him of supporting Syrian rebels**

The Kuwaiti national who was abducted in Lebanon's Beqaa on Saturday and

released on Monday said that his kidnappers accused him of being a terrorist affiliated with the Syrian rebels.

Issam al-Houti also said that his kidnappers abducted him after he left the house of relatives whom he was visiting.

"[The kidnappers] yelled at me and ordered me to insult some countries, but I [refused]. They also accused me of being a leader of a terrorist organization affiliated with the Free Syrian Army, but I told them that I did not engage in politics," Houti said Monday night during a press conference held at the residence of Amal Movement official Bassam Tleiss in the Beqaa town of Brital following his release.

He also said that the kidnappers left him alone tied up in a dark deserted location.

"I prayed to be released and my prayers were met [when] someone came, put me in a car trunk and drove me to a place near a church on a dirt road," he added.

The Kuwaiti national also said that he came to Lebanon to visit his wife on the occasion of the Eid al-Fitr, adding that he

was building a house in the Beqaa town of Talya.

In turn, the Amal official denied that a ransom was paid for the release of Houti.

“The security pressure and the pressure exerted by people made the kidnapers [feel] that they could no longer protect themselves and protect him. This pressure led to his release without a ransom because the abductees felt that he became a burden,” Tleiss said.

Earlier in August, a series of kidnappings took place in Lebanon in retaliation for the capture of Lebanese nationals in Syria.

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

- **Kuwaitis rally against amending electoral districts**

Around 2,000 Kuwaitis rallied late Monday outside the parliament building to protest a government move to amend the electoral law, with the opposition threatening to boycott future polls.

Under the banner of "the people are the source of sovereignty," 19 opposition MPs

and former lawmakers took part in the protest which was held at night to escape daytime sweltering heat, an AFP correspondent said.

Earlier this month the government decided to refer the electoral law, amended in its current form in 2006, to the constitutional court over suspicion that it contradicts the constitution.

The move will effectively put on hold dissolving the pro-government parliament, reinstated in a court ruling on June 20 after it was dismissed in December, and holding fresh general election.

Elections held in February brought in an opposition-dominated chamber.

The opposition has blasted the move, describing it as a coup against the constitutional system.

Mohammed Dallal, an MP in the dismissed 2012 parliament, said that the government's move was "worse than the catastrophic Iraqi invasion" of oil-rich Kuwait in 1990.

"The government could not rig the ballots, that is why it is resorting to change the constituencies," he told protesters who gathered at the so called "Determination Square" outside the parliament on Monday evening.

The rally was called for by Nahj, an umbrella group of Islamist and independent opposition and youth activists who have called for activating the constitutional monarchy concept in Kuwait.

Their aim is to see a prime minister representing the parliamentary majority in the country.

Kuwait was the first Arab state in the Gulf to introduce democracy 50 years ago but the constitution entrusts massive powers in the hands of the ruler and the government is dominated by the Al-Sabah dynasty.

Since 2006, the government resigned nine times and parliament was dissolved on five occasions.

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

- **Reinstated Kuwaiti parliament gives momentum to fresh protests**

Kuwaitis rally outside parliament building to protest government move to amend electoral law, with opposition threatening to boycott future polls.

No Spring in Kuwait, but no calm

KUWAIT CITY - Around 2,000 Kuwaitis rallied late Monday outside the parliament building to protest a government move to amend the electoral law, with the opposition threatening to boycott future polls.

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Their aim is to see a prime minister representing the parliamentary majority in the country.

Kuwait was the first Arab state in the Gulf to introduce democracy 50 years ago but the constitution entrusts massive powers in the hands of the ruler and the government is dominated by the Al-Sabah dynasty.

Since 2006, the government resigned nine times and parliament was dissolved on five occasions.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54071>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

• Taliban Beheads 17 Afghan Civilians

VOA News

August 27, 2012

Officials in southern Afghanistan say Taliban insurgents have beheaded 17 Afghan civilians, including two women.

The Interior Ministry says the civilians were killed in the Kajaki district of Helmand province late Sunday.

There were conflicting reports about the reasons behind the killings. Some Afghan officials said the Taliban attacked the party because insurgents disapprove of music and dancing. But Helmand's governor said the killings took place after a long-standing feud between two Taliban commanders turned violent. And the governor of nearby Musa Qala district said insurgents killed the civilians because they had links to the government.

Authorities say it is difficult to corroborate the reports, because the area is not controlled by the government.

Later on Sunday, officials say insurgents overran an Afghan military post in Helmand's Washir district, killing 10 Afghan troops and wounding four others. A local official said five other Afghan soldiers were either kidnapped or joined the attackers.

Meanwhile, in eastern Afghanistan, NATO officials say an Afghan soldier turned his weapon on two coalition service

members, killing them. NATO says its troops returned fire, killing the soldier.

The attack in Laghman province is the latest in a string of insider attacks this year.

Monday's attack brings the number of foreign soldiers killed in such violence this month to 12.

Last week, the commander of U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan, General John Allen, said many of the attacks are due to personal grievances and arguments, with about 25 percent attributed to Taliban infiltration, impersonation or coercion.

Some information for this report was provided by AP and Reuters.

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

- **Afghans Say Top Haqqani Leader Killed In U.S. Drone Strike**

August 27, 2012

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Afghanistan says it believes that a top commander of the militant Haqqani insurgent network was killed last week in

a U.S. drone strike, citing intelligence reports that it said countered Afghan Taliban claims that Badruddin Haqqani was still alive.

Haqqani, who was head of operations and ran the network's vital business interests, was thought to have been killed during the strike this week in Pakistan's tribal North Waziristan, both Afghanistan's Interior Ministry and national spy agency said.

"The elimination of Badruddin Haqqani will deal a major blow and serious setback to the Haqqani Network," Afghan Interior Ministry spokesman Sediq Sediqqi said.

Shafiquallah Tahriri, spokesman for Afghanistan's spy agency the National Directorate of Security, also said that Haqqani was killed last week, based on intelligence from Afghan agents collected from sources in Pakistan.

Tahriri declined to say what evidence was in the reports the government had received, including whether anyone had actually seen Badruddin Haqqani's body.

However, Afghanistan's Taliban, allies of the Haqqani network, dismissed claims of Badruddin's death on August 25 as propaganda from Pakistan's military and the NATO-Afghan coalition.

Maulvi Ahmed Jan, a senior Haqqani network commander, also denied that Badruddin -- the son of the network's founder Jalaluddin Haqqani --- had been killed and said the insurgents would soon provide proof he was alive.

U.S. officials blame the Al-Qaeda-linked Haqqanis for some of the worst recent attacks in Afghanistan, including an April 15 attack on embassies, NATO headquarters, and the parliament in Kabul that lasted 18 hours, killing 11 Afghan security forces and four civilians.

Another attack in June that Afghan and Western officials blamed on the Haqqanis saw insurgents armed with rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machineguns storm a hotel.

The United States accuses Pakistan's intelligence agency of supporting the Haqqani network and using it as a proxy in Afghanistan to gain leverage against the

growing influence of its arch-rival India in the country.

Pakistan denies the allegations.

Based on reporting by Reuters

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

- **Two ISAF Troops Killed In New Attack By Afghan Army Soldier**

August 27, 2012

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

NATO says two of its soldiers have been shot dead in a new "green-on-blue," or insider, attack by an Afghan army soldier.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said a member of the Afghan National Army turned his weapon on ISAF forces on August 27 in eastern Laghman Province, killing two service members.

An ISAF statement said NATO soldiers returned fire and killed the attacker.

The latest deaths take the toll from such attacks in August to at least 12 and to more than 40 so far this year.

Taliban insurgents have claimed responsibility for many of the attacks, saying militants had infiltrated NATO-led forces.

Based on reporting by Reuters, AP, and AFP

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

- **Insider attacks not to affect NATO operations in Afghanistan: spokesman**

KABUL, Aug. 27 (Xinhua) -- The so-called "green-on-blue" or insider attacks will not affect the NATO's counter-insurgency campaign in the war-torn Afghanistan, a spokesman said Monday.

"These incidents will not affect our operation. The campaign is on track, we effectively fight the insurgency, and most importantly, we continue to fight alongside our partners from the Afghan National Security Force, who take responsibility for more of this country every day," a NATO-led coalition or International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) spokesman, Brigadier General Gunter Katz, told reporters in a weekly press briefing.

The comments came hours after an Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier shot dead two U.S. soldiers with the ISAF in eastern Afghanistan, the latest in the green-on-blue attacks when Afghan army or police or gunmen in their uniform turned their weapons against foreign soldiers with the coalition.

The attacker was also killed in the incident which occurred Monday morning in eastern Laghman province.

"The factors that contribute to these insider threat incidents were wide-ranging from infiltration and impersonation to personnel grievances. We can clearly identify a direct insurgent connection to the attacker in about 10 percent of the cases," he said, adding "In another 15 percent of the cases we suspect an insurgent link with the attacker, however, the tie cannot be definitively proven. "

The Taliban insurgents, who have been waging more than a decade-long insurgency and launched spring offensive from May 3 this year to target security forces, have regularly claimed responsibility for the insider attacks or green-on-blue offensives.

"Given these two points, our conclusion is that about 25 percent of these attacks are in some manner related to the insurgency," the ISAF spokesman noted.

Currently over 130,000 NATO-led ISAF troops with majority of them Americans have been serving in Afghanistan since the Taliban regime was toppled in late 2001.

According to ISAF spokesman Katz, up to 42 soldiers with the coalition have been killed in the 33 so-called green-on-blue attacks since beginning this year, including 12 soldiers who lost their lives in such attacks so far this month.

Meantime, in a similar incident, five members of ANA shot dead 10 colleagues and injured four others in an Afghan army checkpoint in Washer district of southern Helmand province on Sunday night, before leaving the checkpoint.

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

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