



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procces of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

Energy Security

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1. IRAQ

- **MP: Political disputes led to communications minister's resignation (AKnews)**

ERBIL, Aug.28 (AKnews)- Iraqi Communications Minister Mohammed Allawi resigned due to disputes between the State of Law Coalition (SLC) of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and Iraqiya List, led by PM's elections rival Ayad Allawi, said an independent MP.

The minister handed his resignation to Maliki on July 28. He explained there were "political interventions" in the ministry's affairs and the PM did not respond to some of the demands by the ministry.

Turhan Mufti, state minister for provinces' affairs, has taken over as the minister by proxy until the new minister is assigned.

"Resignation of the communications minister is linked to the disputes between SLC and Iraqiya List [led by Allawi]," said Hassan al-Alawi, the independent MP.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/323504/>

- **IS to hold meeting over Telecommunications Minister's resignation (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Aug 28 (AIN) –The Iraqiya Slate will hold a meeting soon to take a unified decision over the resignation of the Telecommunications Minister, Mohamed Allawi.

The spokesman of the IS, Haider al-Mulla, stated to AIN "The Slate will hold a meeting to discuss this issue and to take a unified decision by the Slate."

Earlier, the Minister of State for Provinces Affairs, Torhan al-Mufti, announced that he assumed the post of the Acting Minister of Telecommunications after approving the resignation of the Minister of Telecommunications, Mohamed Allawi, by the Premier, Nouri al-Maliki.

He stated to All Iraq News Agency (AIN) "I was tasked to assume this post after approving Allawi's resignation by Maliki," noting that "We will deal with the defects which accompany the performance of the Ministry till the nomination of the new Minister of Telecommunications."

"I have received the official document from the Premier office over this task on Monday," he added.

"Such procedure is a normal step taken by the cabinet to avoid keeping the Ministry without Minister," he stressed.

The Iraqi National Accord Movement headed by, Ayad Allawi, attributed "The resignation of the Telecommunications Minister, Mohamed Allawi, who is a member in the INAM, to the marginalization of his role in the Ministry."

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17295

- **Iraq election chief gets prison sentence for graft (AFP)**

BAGHDAD, Aug 28, 2012 (AFP) - Iraq's outgoing election commission chief told AFP that he and two other senior election officials were found guilty of graft on Tuesday and handed suspended one-year prison sentences.

The sentences effectively bar them from public office for life, as anyone convicted of a criminal offence cannot hold a civil

service position in Iraq, Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) chief Faraj al-Haidari said.

"Sentence was issued against me, Mr. Karim al-Tamimi and Mr. Osama al-Ani, of one-year suspended prison terms," Haidari told AFP by telephone.

The judgement was handed down by Rusafa Criminal Court in Baghdad.

The three were arrested in April on charges of corruption, specifically paying a bonus of 150,000 dinars (\$130) to an employee of Iraq's state property commission in order to secure better-located government-allotted plots of land.

Haidari insisted on Tuesday that any payments made were legal, adding: "I have no idea why (the sentence was handed down). I do not have any relation or role in this issue."

Alluding to widespread political sectarianism in Iraq, Haidari said, "There is sectarianism even in this verdict -- a Shiite, a Sunni and a Kurd," referring to Tamimi, Ani and himself respectively.

<http://uk.news.yahoo.com/iraq-election-chief-gets-prison-sentence-graft-150457694.html>

- **Parliament session lifted till next Thursday (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Aug 28 (AIN) –The parliament session was lifted till next Thursday.

Parliamentary source stated to AIN "The parliament Speaker, Osama al-Nijaifi, lifted the session after reading some law drafts which were involved in the session agenda."

The parliament resumed its sessions after lifting them since 6th of current August.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17300

- **Islamic party and PUK stress need for partnership in managing Diyala (AKnews)**

ERBIL, Aug. 28 (AKnews) - The Islamic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) have stressed the need to manage Diyala province through partnership.

The announcement came during a visit by a delegation from the Iraqi Islamic Party headed by deputy secretary general of the party Salim al-Jabbouri on Monday to the political bureau of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in Suli city.

A statement issued by the Islamic Party added: "The party delegation was received by Mullah Bakhtiar, official of the public committee in the political bureau of the PUK, who in turn offered condolences on behalf of President Jalal Talabani after the death of the member of the Islamic Party and governor of Diyala Hisham Hayali."

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/323528/>

- **Kurdistan warns Baghdad it will halt oil exports again (Reuters)**

By Ahmed Rasheed

BAGHDAD, Aug 28 (Reuters) - Iraq's Kurdistan regional government threatened to stop its share of national oil exports again at the start of September, claiming Baghdad has continued to hold off on payments to oil companies, as the two sides continue a long-running dispute.

"We are moving ahead to stop oil exports at the start of September, because until this moment we didn't receive any sign Baghdad will approve payments for oil companies working in the region," a senior Kurdistan government official said on Tuesday.

Iraq's uneasy federal union is being tested as the central government has a long-standing disagreement with autonomous Kurdistan in the north over control of oil and territory along their internal border.

Baghdad maintains it alone has the right to export Iraqi crude. But Kurdistan has moved ahead with signing exploration deals with oil majors such as Exxon and Chevron, which the central government rejects as illegal.

In April Kurdistan halted exports, saying Baghdad had not made payments to companies working there, but it restarted shipments on Aug. 7 with a warning they could be halted again in a month if there were no payments.

Iraq says Kurdistan's oil shipments have fluctuated around 100,000 to 120,000 barrels per day since they restarted, below

the 175,000 bpd that Baghdad says was agreed with Kurdistan.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/08/28/energy-iraq-kurdistan-idINL6E8JSD2320120828>

- **General census guarantees funds distribution, Sadrist MP (Aswat al-Iraq)**

KARBALA, Aug 28/ Aswat al-Iraq: Ahrar bloc, affiliate to the Sadrist Trend, MP called today for "just" distribution of financial allocations on the provinces, stressing that the general census will solve many issues and crises currently engulfing Iraq.

MP Iman al-Mussawi told Aswat al-Iraq that "the Kurdish 17% share in the federal budget is "unfair in comparison to the allocations of other provinces".

"Not only Kurdistan faced injustice during the previous regime, but Iraq, as a whole, was the victim", she confirmed.

She supported the suggestion of deputy premier for energy affairs Hussein Shahrستاني to minimize Kurdistan share from 17 to 13%.

Mussawi added that "the best solution is to hold the general census" and urged to determine it is date to solve many issues and crises because Iraq has no accurate information about it is people".

On the other hand, the Kurdish Alliance called for a general census in the country to determine the Kurdish population percentage, as well as other provinces.

http://en.aswatiraq.info/%28S%28s5fq2u45igfr1wr1gkygc0qb%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150199&l=1

- **MP calls to prevent implementing 200 death sentences next Wednesday (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Aug 28 (AIN) –The leader within the Iraqiya Slate called "The Presidency and the Ministry of Justice to prevent implementing the death sentences against 200 convicts on next Wednesday."

He stated to All Iraq News Agency (AIN) "While parliament is working on endorsing the General Amnesty Law on next Thursday, the Ministry of Justice is preparing to implement the death sentences issued against more than 200

persons on next Wednesday in a way that arouses doubts over the aims behind it."

"It is obvious that these sentences have sectarian aims behind them because they are implemented against one sect," he added.

"The situation in the detention facilities and prisons are tragic where the detainees are abused and their rights as human are violated which goes against the Iraqi constitution," he stressed.

"Implementing these sentences resembles a tragic point in the Iraqi political history," he mentioned.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17311

- **Encouraging elections in Kirkuk, US Consul (Aswat al-Iraq)**

KIRKUK, Aug 28/ Aswat al-Iraq: New US Consul called today for expediting local elections in the province to enhance democracy.

During a meeting between governor Najm al-Din Omar Kareem with new US Consul

Tim Pound, both sides discussed internal political situation and the efforts of the consulate to encourage investments in the province, as well as supporting the administration there, according to media director here.

Dulair Samad told Aswat al-Iraq that the governor stressed the importance of improving living standards of the citizens, development of hospitals, building schools and roads maintenance.

Kurdish Alliance submitted a project for the elections in Kirkuk to create a local national partnership government.

http://en.aswatiraq.info/%28S%28s5fq2u45igfr1wr1gkygc0qb%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150202&l=1

- **Non-Alligned Organization reformation needed-Iraq demanded (Aswat al-Iraq)**

BAGHDAD, Aug 28/ Aswat al-Iraq: Foreign minister Hoshiar Zebari called to re-organize the Non-Alligned Organization, stressing supportive stand to Syrian ambitions and peaceful transfer of power.

In his speech before the conference, Zebari called for modernizing the movement to meet the developing changes in world order.

He pointed out Iraqi participation in international efforts in the Syrian question, stressing Iraqi support to the UN and Arab League envoy Al-Akhdhar al-Ibrahimi to find a way out of this crisis.

Zebari stated that Iraq stands with the legitimate demands of the Syrian people in freedom, democracy, self-determination and peaceful transfer of power through dialogue and organized political process, without any foreign intervention, as well condemning the daily and arbitrary killings.

He referred to international political and economic questions, including sustained development in lesser developed countries, achieving the millennium objectives in development, combating desertification, water problems, human rights, weather changes, and anti-terrorism actions.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28s5fq2u45jgfr1wr1gkygc0qb%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150201&l=1

- **Elewi calls to protest Turkish violations on Iraqi airspaces at UNSC (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Aug 28 (AIN) -MP Karim Elewi of the Iraqi National Alliance demanded "The Iraqi Government to submit a protest letter to the UN Security Council against the Turkish violations on the Iraqi airspace and the repeated shelling for a number of regions at the border areas."

Elewi stressed in a statement to AIN "What is done by Turkey represents a violation for the legal and international principles; therefore, the Government of Iraq should be serious about this topic and issue a protest letter or call the UN Security Council to discuss these violations."

He criticized the stance of the Kurdistan Regional Government towards this issue in allowing Turkey to enter the Iraqi airspace, stressing that "This would have negative impact on the relations between the KRG and the Central Government."

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17268

- **Assistance to immigrants in Syria continues - organization (Aswat al-Iraq)**

BAGHDAD, Aug 28 / Aswat al-Iraq: World Immigration Organization announced today it will continue accommodating Iraqi immigrants living in Syria, including those in Damascus, where it gave assistance for travelling 2800 migrants to other countries, including the United States.

Qatari news agency reported that the organization extends assistance to 1195 immigrants in four centers around Damascus, while 806 people were returned to their countries.

The organization received requests from countries, like Egypt, Yemen and Indonesia to assist their national working in Syria, whose figures will reach to about 3700 persons.

Phillip Shuzi, organization's spokesman, said that the organization demanded an amount of \$22 million for its operations there, but only received \$2 million.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28s5fq2u45igfr1wr1gkygc0qb%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150194&l=1

- **Iraqi FM: Syria, nations' right to nuclear energy in NAM agenda**

Tehran, Aug 28, IRNA – Iraq's foreign minister said here Tuesday Syria issue and need for respecting nations' absolute right to take peaceful advantage of nuclear energy would be among most important issue to be surveyed at XVI Tehran NAM Summit.

According to an IRNA Culture Desk reporter, Hoshyar Zabari who had arrived in Tehran's Imam Khomeini (P) International Airport early Tuesday morning to attend the ministerial conference of the Nam Summit added addressing the present reporters at the ceremonial pavilion of the airport, "Trying to uproot poverty, improvement of the relations among nations, medical services and Palestinian nation's problems would be among the other issues to be surveyed during the two day meeting."

He emphasized, "The XVI Tehran NAM Summit is one of the most important

conferences held in the region this year as this movement is one of the greatest international organizations."

Pointing out that the Non-Aligned Movement has 120 members from five continents around the globe, the Iraqi foreign minister noted, "The sponsoring of the 16th Summit meeting in Tehran is of great importance both due to the time it is held and due to the place, and very significant issues would be surveyed by the present member countries."

Zabari added, "Iraq is present at this conference at highest possible level."

He noted that being present in Iran is joyful for the Iraqi officials, arguing, "The most important shared decisions would be published in the final communiqué of the XVI Summit Conference and that communiqué would definitely be approved by the majority of the present countries at the summit."

<http://www.irna.ir/News/Politic/Iraqi-FM,-Syria,-nations%E2%80%99-right-to-nuclear-energy-in-NAM-agenda/80295695>

- **US denies preconditions on Iraq's use of its purchased F-16 jets**

BAGHDAD, Aug 28 (KUNA) -- The US denied on Tuesday placing preconditions on Iraq, over its use of F-16 warplanes it had recently purchased from Washington. The US embassy in Baghdad said in a statement that Iraq alone would determine how and when it intends to use the fighter jets.

The warplanes will significantly raise the capabilities of the Iraqi Air Force, in its role in defending the country's borders and sovereignty, the statement added.

Earlier reports mentioned that US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin E. Dempsey, who was in Baghdad earlier this month, had requested assurances from Iraqi officials over the use of the traded weapons during his visit.

According to Iraqi MP Qassim Al-Araji, Washington had stipulated in the contract that Iraq should not, under any condition, use the fighters to attack neighbouring Israel.

"This means that Washington is intent on ensuring Israel's regional security in the first degree," he said.

The reports also claimed that the US requested that only pilots of Arab and Kurd Muslims of the Sunni sect of Islam may be granted the right to fly the planes.

<http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2259608&Language=en>

- **Turkey, Iraq differ on whether oil exports resumed**

Iraq's terms deter oil, gas explorers at auction

The flow of crude oil on a link carrying about a quarter of Iraq's total exports has resumed on one of two pipes after a fire shut it down, Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yildiz told Reuters on Tuesday.

August 28, 2012 by Reuters

The flow of crude oil on a link carrying about a quarter of Iraq's total exports has resumed on one of two pipes after a fire shut it down, Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yildiz told Reuters on Tuesday.

However, the Iraqi Oil Ministry said exports to Turkey were still suspended on

Tuesday because Turkish pumping stations were not working.

“The flow of oil resumed at 10 a.m. today on this (second pipe), and the fire on the damaged link was extinguished last night,” Yildiz said.

The second link in the double pipeline will become operational within one week when repair work, which has now begun, should be completed, Yildiz also said.

But Asim Jihad, an Oil Ministry spokesman in Baghdad, said Iraq was unable to export crude from its northern oilfields and called on the Turkish side to quickly rehabilitate the pipeline.

“Despite switching crude flows through another line, until now we cannot resume exports because Turkish authorities informed us crude pumping stations are not working due to a lack of electricity,” Jihad said.

<http://www.kippreport.com/2012/08/turkey-iraq-differ-on-whether-oil-exports-resumed/>

- **Iraq completes new roads worth \$82 million**

August 28, 2012

Mohammed Sahib al-Daraji, the Iraqi Minister of Construction and Housing, said Tuesday (August 28th) that more than 50 road and bridge projects have been completed as part of the country's 2012 investment plan.

"The most important projects were executed in the capital Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Dhi Qar, Salaheddine, Ninawa, Maysan, Basra, Samawa, Diwaniyyah, Karbala, Wasit and Anbar," he said in a statement.

The projects, worth approximately 95 billion dinars (\$82 million), include building new roads, resurfacing old ones and installing traffic signs and lights that use solar energy.

Al-Daraji said the other projects scheduled for 2012 are scheduled to be completed before the end of the year.

http://al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/meii/newsbriefs/2012/08/28/newsbrief-06

- **Central Bank of Iraq refutes claims about Islamic Banks carrying out illegal operations in the country**

28-08-2012

Central Bank of Iraq refuted latest claims about some Islamic Banks carrying out illegal operations in the country assuring that it hasn't discovered any illegal actions while executing its regulatory tasks so far.

"We cannot accuse banks without having material proofs," Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Iraq Mazhar Mohammed Saleh said adding that they interrogated banks about such claims.

Central Bank accused some Banks though, including Islamic ones, of neglecting laws such as the one that requires the gathering of information related to the source of transferred and deposited money.

"Banks licensed from the Central Bank are legally committed to learn their clients' money source," Saleh advanced noting that banks neglect this point just to increase liquidity profits.

Money experts and banks Presidents blamed Central Bank and Iraqi parliament for any breach of laws because they simply neglect such laws.

"Weak procedures in Central Bank allow some to overcome directions and act in favor of their own goals by making illegal profits through the wasting of foreign currencies in Iraq," financial expert Abdullah Al Jabouri uttered.

"There was no law regulating Islamic banks work when they first started operating, Central Bank issued some instructions instead while parliament neglected the stipulation of related laws," a bank president Seif Al Helfi indicated.

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/61996/central-bank-of-iraq-refutes-claims-about-islamic/en>

- **Conference gathers unemployed and company representatives**

ERBIL, Aug.28 (AKnews)- In a conference today in Erbil representatives of more than 50 companies and unemployed individuals gathered to discuss the ways companies can better introduce their vacancies in the interest of both sides.

The two-day conference was arranged by a group of volunteers and is also due to be held in Suli on Sept.1.

This effort for finding jobs for the unemployed is different from the others in that here the unemployed and the companies meet face to face, said Amanj Shawkat, conference supervisor.

Shawkat said so far there have been many job opportunities but misunderstandings prevented the unemployed from taking the jobs. These conferences will help in removing such misunderstandings, Shawkat thought.

In the conference, the companies announced hundreds of job vacancies and some of the participating youth accepted to apply for the positions.

Conference supervisor added the issues related to creating jobs for the unemployed will be also discussed in this conference.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/3/323499/>

2. IRAN

- **UN chief Ban arrives in Tehran for NAM summit**



The United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has arrived in the Iranian capital, Tehran, to attend the 16th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The UN chief had left New York for the Islamic Republic on Tuesday.

Prior to the departure, his spokesman Martin Nesirky said that the secretary general will hold talks with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and a number of Iranian lawmakers during his visit to Iran.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/08/29/258758/ban-arrives-in-tehran-for-nam-summit/>

- **Iran will not relinquish right to enrichment: IAEA ambassador**

TEHRAN – The Iranian ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency insisted on Tuesday that Iran will not relinquish its right to uranium enrichment.



Ambassador Ali Asghar Soltanieh made the remarks during a news briefing, which was held on the sidelines of the XVI Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement currently underway in Tehran.

“We will not relinquish our inalienable rights to peaceful use of nuclear energy and uranium enrichment,” he added.

Soltanieh also said, “Iran abides by all its international commitments, including (those under) the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) and the agency’s Statute and will continue its cooperation (with the IAEA).”

Commenting on the meeting that Iranian and IAEA officials held in Vienna on Friday, he stated, “The negotiations are on the right track, and, during the meeting that was recently held, some progress was made and certain disagreements were resolved.”

“However, certain differences still remain, about which discussions should be held (so that) a final document can be drawn up for the framework of activities,” Soltanieh said.

He added, “One of the issues is (our demand) that the agency hand over the documents of the alleged (weapons studies) to Iran. And this issue is one of the fundamental demands of Iran, and if the agency accepts this demand of ours, we will pursue the issue.”

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/100979-iran-will-not-relinquish-right-to-enrichment-iaea-ambassador>

- **UN denies report Ban plans to visit Natanz nuclear facility in Iran**



TEHRAN – The United Nations on Monday denied the report claiming that Secretary General Ban Ki-moon would visit the Natanz nuclear enrichment facility in the central province of Isfahan during his stay in Iran to attend the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Iranian capital.

The Fars News Agency had reported on Monday that Ban, who will visit Tehran on Thursday and Friday, would inspect the facility.

“There is no such plan for a visit of this kind by the secretary general while he is in Iran for the summit,” UN spokesman Martin Nesirky said in New York, the Gulf Times reported, citing a report by the German Press Agency, dpa.

In addition, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said in Tehran on Tuesday, “We have no special

plan for a visit to Iran’s nuclear facilities by foreign guests participating at the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement countries in Tehran.”

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/100977-un-denies-report-ban-plans-to-visit-natanz-nuclear-facility-in-iran>

- **NAM Ministerial Meeting Good Opportunity to Hold Bilateral Talks**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi and his counterparts as well as other officials participating in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) ministerial meeting (August 28-29) seized the opportunity to hold bilateral talks on the sidelines of main meeting.

The meetings took place on the sidelines of the two-day foreign ministerial meeting of the 16th NAM summit in Tehran on Tuesday.

In a meeting with Libyan Foreign Minister Ashur Bin Khayal, Salehi called for the release of a number of the members of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) who were abducted in Libya in July.

On July 31, gunmen kidnapped a seven-member delegation from the IRCS visiting the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi. The Iranian delegation travelled to Libya at the invitation of the Libyan Red Crescent to discuss various prospects for cooperation in the field of humanitarian assistance.

The Iranian foreign minister also held a meeting with Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa, where he talked about the plight of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. Salehi called for closer Iran-Indonesia ties to help prevent similar problems for Muslims in other parts of the world.

Salehi also held a meeting with Senegalese Foreign Minister Alioune Badara Cissé, during which the two sides exchanged views on issues of common concern.

In separate meetings with Jordanian Deputy Foreign Minister Anwar Gargash and Yemeni Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Muthana Hassan, Salehi called for the expansion of relations between the Islamic Republic and the two countries.

The 16th NAM summit started on August 26 in Tehran and will end on August 31.

Iran received 3-year presidency of NAM from Egypt in opening ceremony of NAM senior experts meeting on August 26.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106060396>

- **PM: Iran, Islamic rise are barriers to negotiations**

Speaking with visiting US Senator Bennet, Netanyahu expresses skepticism over peace talks, blames Iran, Islamic ascendancy.

Iran and the growing Islamic ascendancy in the region are acting as a barrier against any chances of soon restarting negotiations with the Palestinians, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said Tuesday.

Netanyahu, in a meeting with visiting Senator Michael Bennet (D-Colorado), was asked if he thought there was any chance of a quick return to the talks. While saying he was ready for their immediate resumption, the prime minister expressed skepticism that this was going to happen.

Iran, he said, was driving the Palestinian issue, more than the Palestinian issue was impacting on the world's ability to deal with Iran.

Netanyahu's point was that as long as Iran seemed to be ascendant, and as long as it supported a growing Islamist tendency in the region that is overwhelmingly hostile to Israel – including holding huge sway over Hamas – the Palestinian Authority was not going to come out against the way it perceived the regional winds were blowing.

Netanyahu's remark to the senator was a throwback to the early days of US President Barack Obama's term, when there was tension between Jerusalem and Washington over which issue to tackle first: Iran or the Palestinians.

The US position was that a breakthrough on the Palestinian issue would have a great deal of impact in dealing with Iran, as more Arab and Muslim countries would support the West's effort to halt Iran's nuclear march.

Israel's position was, and remains, that if Iran was successfully dealt with and its

regional influence reduced, it would be easier to strike a deal with the Palestinians since there would be fewer actors trying to torpedo any agreement.

The bulk of Netanyahu's conversation with Bennet, according to government officials, had to do with Iran, with the prime minister stressing the importance of keeping Iran from getting nuclear weapons capability.

One of the central differences between the Obama administration and Jerusalem over this issue is that while Israel talks about preventing Iran from achieving nuclear weapons capability – meaning preventing Tehran from getting all the components together they need to build a bomb, if they decide to do so – the US position is that Tehran must simply be kept from building a bomb.

Netanyahu told Bennet that it was important "to draw a line in the sand," and let Iran understand that there is a price to be paid if they cross that line.

In a related development, French President François Hollande told a conference of French ambassadors in Paris

on Tuesday that Iran’s nuclear program was a threat “to all the countries in the region.”

“This is even more unacceptable when we realize that this is the project of a regime that calls directly and continuously for the destruction of Israel – which we have seen recently,” he said, referring to a spate of genocidal calls that came from the Islamic Republic over the last couple of weeks.

Hollande said France’s position was clear: “Iran cannot possess nuclear weapons.” He said, however, that the path of dialogue remained open, but that as long as Iran did not meet the demands of the international community, “France will work to stiffen the sanctions against the regime in Tehran.”

On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Hollande said that a solution “is the key to stability in the Middle East.” He said he recommended to Israel that it renew the talks, “since the Palestinians have removed a big part of their pre-conditions.” Hollande did not elaborate.

<http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=282960>

• The Missing Option to Defuse Iran Threat

To keep “all options on the table” in the U.S., Israel plans to change the incumbent Syrian and Iranian regimes and neutralize what both countries perceive as an imminent “threat” — a formula missing the only feasible option to defuse their perceived threat peacefully, which is obviously much cheaper in money and human souls.

On August 19, Israeli former head of the Operations Directorate of the Israeli military, Maj. Gen. (res.) Uri Saguy, wrote in Haaretz that late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak “Rabin strove to achieve agreements with our neighbors before the Iranians got a bomb. If we had peace accords today with the Arab countries and with the Palestinians, what exactly would the Iranians' conflict with us be about?”

Giving priority to making peace with Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinian people on the land-for-peace basis, which is the essence of the Arab Peace Initiative proposed by the 22 member states of the Arab League in 2002, would disarm Iran of its Arab and Palestinian credentials and create a new regional environment that

would in turn render any Arab alliance with Iran unnecessary, and would uncover Iranian regional expansion as an endeavor sought per se by Tehran.

Instead, Israel is running away from peacemaking to warmongering, risking the embroilment of the United States in a war on Iran that Washington does not want, at least for now.

Four-star Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey said on August 19 that he has been conferring with his Israeli counterpart Benny Gantz on a regular “bi-weekly” basis and “we’ve admitted to each other that our clocks are turning at different rates.” Israel’s envoy to Washington, Michael Oren, acknowledged in a CNN interview the following day that Israel’s clock was ticking faster than Washington’s.

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali “Khamenei has not [“probably”] given orders to start building a [nuclear] weapon,” according to Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak in a CNN interview on April 20; His Iranian counterpart Ahmad Vahidi this week dismissed Israeli warmongering as “psychological war;”

General Martin Dempsey cautioned against an Israeli strike saying it would not destroy Iran’s nuclear program; President Shimon Peres last week joined senior security, military and political experts to warn against a unilateral Israeli strike not coordinated with the U.S.

In a RAND Review of spring this year, Ambassador James Dobbins, who directs RAND’s international security and defense policy center, and three expert analysts argued that “an Israeli or American attack on Iranian nuclear facilities would make it more, not less, likely that the Iranian regime would decide to produce and deploy nuclear weapons. Such an attack would also make it more, not less, difficult to contain Iranian influence.”

Nonetheless, Benjamin Netanyahu’s government has been beating the drums of war, linking the Iranian “threat” to a second holocaust (a comparison dismissed by Nobel Laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel). His newly appointed home front defense minister, Avi Dichter, says, “Israel’s existence is threatened.” Israel’s top-tier missile defense system was announced upgraded and a missile alert system tested. In a nationwide experiment

to continue through Thursday, text messages warning of incoming missiles are being sent to cellphone users. Gas mask centers have already distributed more than four million masks.

Israeli warmongering is creating, in Saguy's words, an "orchestrated and purposely timed hysteria" in Israel as if "someone is lighting a fire, then yelling that it has to be put out."

Financial markets are shivering, foreign investors are on guard, the Israeli new shekel is growing increasingly weaker against the dollar and Pnina Grinbaum, a 55-year-old government clerk in Jerusalem, was quoted by the Associated Press on August 16 as saying: "I'm very afraid. I want peace, not war."

The international standoff over Iran's nuclear program as well as over the Syrian crisis is very tightly linked to the impasse, which saw the Arab and Palestinian-Israeli peace process reach a dead end.

The Syrian crisis in particular is more closely tied to the impasse in the Arab-Israeli conflict. De-linked from this conflict, it would boil down to an internal

crisis that could be easily solved by Syrians themselves.

Regional and international involvement in the Syrian crisis has nothing to do with the internal crisis per se, but has exploited the internal crisis because it has a lot to do with the U.S.-Israeli plans to isolate and contain what both countries perceive as an Iranian regional threat to their interests.

To this end, Israel and the U.S. are now doing all what they can to break the alliance between Iran and Syria and the Syrian bridge linking Iran to Lebanese and Palestinian movements resisting Israeli military occupation, thus cutting off Iran from the Mediterranean, as well as depriving these movements of their Syrian support, by coordinating a "regime change" in Damascus.

For four years since Benyamin Netanyahu came to power, Israel risked a confrontation with the U.S. administration of President Barack Obama over his order of priorities in the Middle East, which gave precedence to reaching a negotiated political settlement for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a precondition to

building up a U.S., Arab and Israeli front against Iran.

Netanyahu advocated a reversed order of priorities and has succeeded in pushing the Palestinian–Israeli conflict down from the top of the U.S. regional agenda in favor of solving the U.S.–Israeli Iranian debacle first.

This rearrangement of Israeli–U.S. priorities has marginalized the Arab–Israeli “peace process” to the extent that both countries feel relaxed enough now to feel free from any serious commitment to resume it.

However, developments prove this rearrangement of priorities counterproductive and to be playing in Iranian hands, making the regional Iranian alliances stronger, perpetuating the Syrian crisis around which a new multi-polar world is emerging. They are also sidelining the Palestinian peace partners, leaving them with no other option but to take their deadlocked peace process to the United Nations and bring back on track the Palestinian–Israeli conflict to the top of the international agenda in the Middle East, thus creating a fait accompli that will

make impossible the Arab–Israeli–U.S. front against Iran that Washington has been trying to build up over the past few years.

Cornering the Palestinians longer in their United Nations option, similarly changing nothing on the ground to end the Israeli military occupation, would in no time see them losing faith in peacemaking and being pushed involuntarily to regionally realign with the other side, which would exacerbate the Iran “threat” rather than contain it.

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<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/141023/the-missing-option-to-defuse-iran-threat.html>

- **Mursi visit spells cautious Iran-Egypt shift**

CAIRO: Egypt’s President Mohamed Mursi, by visiting Iran this week, aims to distance himself from three decades of chilly ties and cautiously pursue a more agile

diplomacy than his predecessor Hosni Mubarak.

Egypt's first Islamist and freely elected president is headed for Tehran to hand over the rotating leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement at a summit on Thursday and Friday.

The visit will last a "few hours," his spokesman Yassir Ali said, and only summit-related issues will be raised.

"No other topic is expected," he said, ruling out discussions on a resumption of diplomatic relations with Iran, severed after the 1979 Islamic revolution which installed a theocracy opposed to Egypt's peace treaty with Israel.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said last week he hoped the two countries would resume diplomatic ties, currently at the level of low-key interest sections in each other's country.

"Mursi's visit will give a big push towards normalisation (of) Egyptian-Iranian relations", said Elsayed Amin Shalby, director of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs think-tank. But "a four-

hour visit can't make a breakthrough," he stressed.

A distinct warming in ties with Tehran would anger the United States, which has been pushing to isolate and sanction the Islamic republic over its controversial nuclear programme.

It would also antagonise Sunni monarchies in the Gulf that accuse Iran of trying to destabilise their oil-rich region, and on which Egypt partially relies for aid to revive its battered economy after its 2011 uprising.

Mursi himself hails from the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni movement which has had an ambivalent stance towards Shiite Iran.

Mubarak, who ruled for three decades before his overthrow in February 2011, positioned himself alongside the United States and other countries hostile to Iran's influence, which extends to the Hamas rulers of Gaza in Egypt's back yard.

Before its downfall, Mubarak's government even accused Tehran of trying to destabilise his regime, which

gave way after the uprising to military rule and then Mursi's election last June.

Mursi appears set on taking a different tack, while sending reassuring messages to the Gulf states. His first foreign visit after his election was to Saudi Arabia, Iran's main rival in the region.

Egypt's diplomatic line will be "more agile and active," leaving behind the "stagnation" under Mubarak's rule, Mursi's spokesman Ali said before the president left for China en route to Iran. "We are not in competition with any country," he said.

The conflict in Syria, where US- and Gulf-backed rebels are trying to unseat President Bashar al-Assad, Iran's closest regional ally, has given Mursi an opportunity to reach out to Tehran.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-1-128727-Mursi-visit-spells-cautious-Iran-Egypt-shift>

- **Peace at stake due to Iran conflict: FM Hina**

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar said on Tuesday the growing

confrontation over Iran's nuclear programme threatens further instability in the broader region.

"Dialogue and Diplomacy should be the only instruments to resolve outstanding issues," Khar said at NAM Ministerial Meeting's Interactive Debate on 'Lasting Peace through Joint Global Governance', in Tehran.

She said Pakistan believes that a peaceful resolution of Iran's issue is still possible on the basis of reciprocal confidence-building measures and security assurances against external threats.

Khar called for dealing the major challenge confronting the world today to achieve international peace and security on the basis of equity and UN Charter principles. "We all know peace and development are mutually reinforcing and without peace we cannot even think of development and prosperity," she said.

She said the world today is afflicted by many paradoxes, marked by interdependence and inequality; connectivity and chaos; islands of prosperity and oceans of abject poverty;

technological prowess and underdevelopment; hegemony and repression, all of which existed side by side and causing all sorts of upheavals and turmoil in the world.

She said in this backdrop the theme of the conference 'Lasting Peace through Joint Global Governance' is both relevant and pertinent.

The foreign minister said Pakistan believes that for peace, security and prosperity, a just solution of Palestine issue on the basis of Palestinian people's right to self-determination is essential.

She also called for an immediate end to the ongoing bloodshed by all sides in Syria in the interest of regional peace and stability.



Khar said in South Asian region, Afghanistan will need support of the NAM fraternity as it moves towards the transition phase in 2014 – and through the transformation decade. She said the founding principles of NAM, including peaceful co-existence, respect for human rights, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states and non-interference and non-intervention in internal affairs of other countries provide the firm basis for enduring peace, stability and development in the world.

The foreign minister said as a vibrant democracy, Pakistan holds promotion and protection of human rights and democratic ideals very dear to its heart. "It is deeply committed to the nurturing and strengthening of these values," she added.

She said disarmament and non-proliferation is an important area for the global peace and security.

She believed that the new consensus should be based on equity and objective criteria, rather than selectivity and discrimination. Equal and undiminished security for all states must be the norm to ensure global peace and security.

She stressed for economic and social development of the member countries to build and sustain peaceful, prosperous and harmonious societies.

"Many NAM members have achieved significant and sustained economic growth, yet the challenge of development continues to be formidable for all NAM countries," she said.

She pointed out that efforts have so far failed to make even modest progress towards introducing equity in international trade, inter alia, through the Doha Round.

The foreign minister stressed that the world needs to generate 600 million jobs to accommodate the young people who would enter the job market over the next 10 years.

She said the NAM can play a role in the enlargement and implementation of the trade and development agenda through measures like reduction of agricultural subsidies in rich countries; elimination of high and escalating tariffs against developing countries; commodity price

stabilisation; special and differential treatment, and capacity-building.

<http://paktribune.com/news/Peace-at-stake-due-to-Iran-conflict-FM-Hina-252792.html>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

• France opens Arafat murder inquiry

PARIS (Reuters) -- A French court has opened a murder inquiry into the 2004 death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, prosecutors said on Tuesday, following claims by his wife that he may have been poisoned.

Arafat died in a Paris military hospital in November 2004, a month after being airlifted - when his health collapsed - from his battered headquarters in Ramallah, where he had been effectively confined by Israel for more than two and a half years.

Allegations of foul play have long surrounded Arafat's demise after French doctors who treated him in his final days said they could not establish the cause of death.

Last month, Arafat's wife, Suha, asked a court in the western Paris suburb of Nanterre to launch a murder investigation following revelations that a Swiss institute had discovered high levels of the radioactive element polonium-210 on Arafat's clothing.

That substance was found to have killed former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006.



An investigating magistrate, yet to be named, will lead the French probe into possible premeditated murder, a legal source said.

A lawyer for Suha Arafat told Europe 1 radio that the French court was correct in recognizing its jurisdiction to investigate the case, since Arafat died in France.

"The tests done in Switzerland showed that Mr. Arafat, in all likelihood, died through poisoning," lawyer Marc Bonnant said. "This hypothesis must be proved, and if that's the case, then it's premeditated murder."

Suha Arafat has said her suspicions were raised when the hospital where her husband was treated acknowledged that they had destroyed his blood and urine samples.

The Palestinian Authority plans to exhume Arafat's body from a limestone mausoleum in Ramallah for an autopsy and Tunisia has called for a ministerial meeting of the Arab League to discuss his death.

Yigal Palmor, spokesman for Israel's Foreign Ministry said: "This does not pertain to us. The complaint lodged by Suha Arafat with the French police does not address Israel or anyone in particular. If the French justice system has decided to open an investigation, we hope that it will shed light on this matter."

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=515283>

- **Settlers 'burn car, spray racist graffiti' in Ramallah village**

RAMALLAH (Ma'an) -- A group of settlers set fire to a car and sprayed racist graffiti in a Ramallah village early Wednesday, locals said.

Hatem Abdul Latif told Ma'an that a number of settlers attempted to set fire to his brothers car, with the vehicle only partially igniting.

Settlers then sprayed racist graffiti on other vehicles and the walls of homes in al-Zira village, located by al-Jalazun refugee camp opposite the settlement of Beit El settlement.

"Death to Arabs" and other slogans were written in the neighborhood. Israeli police and army forces arrived at the scene to investigate the crime, Latif said.

On Tuesday, settlers set fire to three cars in the Hebron village of Sair, locals said.

On Sunday, Israeli police arrested three Israeli settlers, aged 12 to 13, suspected of firebombing a Palestinian taxi near Hebron.

Extremist settlers have adopted what they call a "price tag" policy in which they attack Palestinians and their property in retaliation for Israeli government policies against settlements.

Over 500,000 Israeli settlers live in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in Jewish-only communities which Palestinians say threaten the viability of a promised Palestinian state.

Rights groups say settlers are rarely prosecuted by Israeli authorities for attacks against Palestinians, which take place frequently in the West Bank.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=515315>

- **Fayyad approves measures to counter electricity crisis**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad approved new measures on Tuesday to help counter an electricity crisis in the West Bank, a statement said.

Fayyad approved the measures during a weekly session of the Council of Ministers in Ramallah. The council endorsed

measures to support low-income consumers of electricity as well as encouraging higher-income consumers to conserve their energy consumption.

The council will also enter discussions with Jordan about bringing electricity prices into line with previous tariffs.

"A meeting will be held between the Jerusalem Electric Company and the PM, as well as a number of security chiefs to discuss electricity theft, and follow-up with the issue in the West Bank," Hisham al-Omari, director of the JEC, told Ma'an.

"We are working on scheduling our debts and committing with accumulated taxes to the PA," he added.

The Israeli electric company is demanding back payments and is serious about cutting off electricity to Ramallah, Bethlehem Jericho and parts of Jerusalem if payments are not received, al-Omari said last week.

The Jerusalem Electric Company owes about 415 million shekels (\$104 million), he said.

Al-Omari blamed the Palestinian Authority for failing to seek payments from refugee camps and said the company could not take responsibility for the camps, which are exempted from paying for electricity.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=515336>

- **Israeli Soldiers Shoot, Critically Wound Woman in Gaza**

GAZA, August 29, 2012 (Wafa) – A Palestinian woman was critically injured on Wednesday when Israeli soldiers stationed along the borders with the Gaza Strip opened fire at an area east of Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, according to local sources.

Witnesses said Safiya Abu Mughesib, 41, was injured in the abdomen and foot when Israeli soldiers opened fire at Wadi Salqa area near Deir al-Balah.

Mughesib was reported in a critical condition and was transferred to the hospital for treatment.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20546>

- **Newspapers Review: Settlers' Attacks on Palestinians Dominate Daily**

RAMALLAH, August 29, 2012 (WAFA) – Wednesday's issue of al-Hayat al-Jadida Arabic newspaper highlighted the repeated settlers' attacks against Palestinians across the West Bank on Tuesday.

The daily reported that settlers set fire to three cars in an area in the town of Seir, east of Hebron, attacked a Palestinian house, injuring two children, in Al-Lubban Asharqiya, a village south of Nablus, and broke into Joseph's Tomb, inside the Palestinian Authority-controlled city of Nablus.

Al-Quds' prime headline featured the Israeli District court's decision to dismiss the case made against the state of Israel on the death of Rachel Corrie, an American activist who was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer while she was participating in a demonstration in the Gaza Strip in 2003.

The front page of al-Ayyam newspaper focused on the opening of a judicial inquiry in the death of late Palestinian leader Yaser Arafat in France after his

widow filed a case against unknown persons for the assassination of Arafat.

The dailies featured several Israeli airstrikes that targeted several locations in the Gaza Strip, resulting in the injury of two Palestinians.

Al-Quds daily slammed the Israeli court rule in the Corrie case, and sent out a message of solidarity to the activist's family. The daily urged the international community to take action after what it called a "judicial farce."

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20545>

- **Corrie Family: Ruling a black day for human rights**

Family whose daughter killed by IDF bulldozer reacts angrily to rejection of case; state satisfied court fully accepted its arguments.

There was no middle ground in reactions to the Haifa District Court ruling rejecting the Corrie family's case on Tuesday, with Rachel Corrie's parents and attorney calling the ruling a "black day for human rights," and the State Attorney's Office

expressing complete satisfaction that the court fully accepted its arguments.

Hussein Abu-Hussein said that the court's ruling showed that there was injustice across the legal system.

He displayed photographs which had been presented in court and which he said proved that the bulldozer must have seen Corrie.

The photographs also disproved the judge's ruling that the bulldozers were active, but not demolishing homes at the time, said Hussein.

Hussein argued that there was no basis for applying the "combatant activities" exception because there was no battle going on at the time that Rachel was killed.

Rather, he noted that all that was happening was several hours of a slow motion version of cat and mouse where the bulldozers would approach an area to bulldoze it and International Solidarity Movement (ISM) Activists like Corrie would step in the way until they were

removed or moved out of the way on their own.

Her voice trembling, Corrie's mother Cindy read out a letter written by Rachel to thank her hosts in Gaza where she was staying at the time of the incident and in which she told them to remain hopeful against the "occupation."

Cindy also said that the ruling was a blow not just for her family personally, but for human rights both in Gaza and in Israel.

Rachel Corrie's humanity was missing from the trial and was ignored by the court's decision, said Cindy.

Cindy also lashed out at the IDF, saying that she believed the investigation was flawed and a cover-up from the start, but that she had hoped the judge would fix the situation.

In contrast, the state attorney called Corrie's death "without a doubt a tragic accident." However, the state also said that, "As the verdict states – the driver of the bulldozer and his commander had a very limited field of vision, such that they had no possibility of seeing Ms. Corrie and

thus are exonerated of any blame for negligence.”

The press release also noted that the background to the incident was “a military action in the course of war.” “The security forces at the Philadelphi Corridor during 2003 were compelled to carry out ‘leveling’ work against explosive devices that posed a tangible danger to life and limb and were not in any form posing a threat to Palestinian homes,” said the statement.

On behalf of the Palestinian Authority, legislator and activist Hanan Ashrawi said that despite the “testimonies of eyewitnesses, the audiovisual evidence and the overwhelming proof that Rachel was deliberately murdered, the Israeli court insists on victimizing her again in her tragic death.”

“This proves that once again the occupation has distorted the legal and judicial systems in Israel and that the lack of accountability for its violence and violations has generated a culture of hate and impunity,” she said.

NGO Monitor, which critiques various anti-Israel NGOs, said that the court had affirmed that Corrie had put herself in harm’s way while acting on behalf of the ISM.

“The verdict reflects all of the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident, without the slogans and distortions,” said the statement.

In fact, “Corrie’s death was entirely unnecessary, and the leaders of the ISM bear much culpability for her death,” said Prof. Gerald Steinberg, president of NGO Monitor.

NGO Monitor also quoted ISM co-founders Adam Shapiro and Huwaida Arraf as stating in 2002 that, “The Palestinian resistance must take on a variety of characteristics, both non-violent and violent...”

Yes, people will get killed and injured,” but these deaths are “no less noble than carrying out a suicide operation.”

<http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=282946>

- **FM to Morsy: Peace is not an abstraction, come visit**

Peace is more than just expressing a willingness to abide by international treaties, Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said Tuesday, even as he positively noted Egyptian President Mohamed Morsy's stated willingness to respect the Camp David accord.

Liberman, during a speech at a Tel Aviv legal conference, called on Morsy to host Israeli representatives, agree to be interviewed by the Israeli media and visit Israel.

The foreign minister's comments were in response to an interview Morsy granted Reuters Monday, saying he would abide by all international treaties, including the Egypt-Israel peace accord.

This was the Islamist president's first interview with an international news organization, and was carried out on the eve of his visit to China and Iran.

"Egypt is now a civilian state... a national, democratic, constitutional, modern state," he said. "International relations between all states are open and the basis for all

relations is balance. We are not against anyone but we are for achieving our interests," said the American-educated engineer, appearing confident and assertive in the marble-lined presidential palace.

Morsy, who refrained throughout the interview from mentioning Israel by name, indicated it had nothing to fear from a new military campaign in the Sinai Peninsula, which he ordered after terrorists attacked an Egyptian border post earlier this month, killed 16 guards and tried to burst across the frontier into Israel.

"Egypt is practicing its very normal role on its soil and does not threaten anyone, and there should not be any kind of international or regional concerns at all from the presence of Egyptian security forces," he said, referring to the extra weaponry, police, army and other forces moved to the area.

The military campaign was in "full respect to international treaties," he said. The Egypt- Israel peace deal includes strict limits on Egyptian military deployment in Sinai, and Israeli officials complained

earlier this month that Egypt was moving weaponry and forces into Sinai without Israeli approval as designated in the treaty.

Morsy would not say if he would meet Israeli officials.

Deposed president Hosni Mubarak regularly received top officials, although he only went to Israel once as president, for the funeral of slain prime minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Liberman, in Israel's only formal reaction to Morsy's comments, said he was "happy to hear" the new president talk about "Egypt's commitment to peace with Israel, to the Camp David treaty and the struggle against terrorism. That is a very important message." But, the foreign minister continued, anyone talking about peace and security needs to understand that this cannot just be something theoretical and abstract. "Peace also has tangible expressions," he said. "Peace is not a telepathic connection."

Therefore, he added, "we hope to see President Morsy host official Israeli representatives; we want to see him give

interviews to the Israeli press, and we want to see him in Jerusalem as the guest of President [Shimon] Peres."

Liberman made it a point in his speech to note the role the US has played in maintaining equilibrium in Israeli-Egyptian ties during the current sensitive time.

"We need to thank our friend the US, which over the recent period – a very sensitive time – did very important, even critical, work," he said. In addition to passing messages between the sides, the United States also acted as a "shock absorber" during this rocky period.

"If there is regular communication between Israel and Egypt, the US has a large role in that," Liberman said. Diplomatic officials said that the US Embassy in Cairo played an essential role over the last few months, and has been in very close contact with the Israeli Embassy in Egypt.

Morsy's emphasis on "balance" during his interview, as well as his choice of China as his first destination outside of the region, suggest to some that he is seeking a less explicitly pro-American role in the region.

In an effort to increase Egypt's role in regional affairs, he has called for dialogue between Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran to find a way to stop the bloodshed in Syria.

Notably, the initiative has been welcomed by Iran, the only country in the group that supports Syrian President Bashar Assad.

During his interview, Morsy gave a particularly strong call for Assad to be removed from power, suggesting that he is comfortable taking a high profile role in regional affairs. It is a message he will take on his trip to Iran and China, which along with Russia, are the main countries backing Assad.

“Now is the time to stop this bloodshed, and for the Syrian people to regain their full rights, and for this regime that kills its people to disappear from the scene,” Morsy said.

“There is no room to talk about reform, but the discussion is about change,” Morsy said, adding Egypt had repeated that “the friends of the Syrian people in China and Russia and other states” need to back ordinary Syrians. However, Morsy

said he opposed foreign military action in Syria “in any form.”

In what could be an important sign of a shift in the region, Morsy's visit to Iran this week will be the first by an Egyptian leader since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. The two countries broke off diplomatic relations at the time over Egypt's support for the ousted Iranian Shah and its peace with Israel, and have yet to formally restore ties.

Officially, Morsy's visit is to attend the summit of the 120- nation Non-Aligned Movement, and he would not be drawn into whether Egypt would resume full diplomatic ties with Iran.

Asked whether he saw a threat from Iran, Morsy said: “We see that all the countries in the region need stability and peaceful coexistence with each other. This cannot be achieved with wars but through political work and special relations between the countries of the region.”

After Iran, Morsy will travel in September to the US, which still gives the Egyptian military \$1.3 billion in aid a year.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=282900>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **No action against Libya shrine destroyers**

Interior Minister warns against armed Islamists in Libya, says he will not kill people because of a tomb.

Interior Minister Fawzi Abdelali warned on Tuesday that Islamists amount to a "major force" in Libya both in terms of numbers and arms, following a surge in violence including attacks on shrines.

"These people are a major force in terms of numbers and the equipment they have in Libya," said the minister as he reversed a decision to resign that he had taken after accusations of lax security.

"These people have arms and big groups. We must not close our eyes to this," the minister told a press conference, ruling out a head-on confrontation with Islamist hardliners.

"As for me, I am not going to go into a losing battle and will not kill people

because of a tomb," he said, referring to the destruction of shrines by the hardliners as "a very complicated business" that required dialogue.

But he would take them on if instructed by Libya's elected assembly.

Abdelali stressed that the security services in their current state lacked the necessary equipment to enforce order in the face of the proliferation of arms in Libya.

Many of the heavily armed revolutionaries who defeated Moamer Kadhafi's regime last year have refused to be integrated into the security forces.

"The amount of arms in Libya exceeds all estimates. Once we have a real army which can deal with groups that possess heavy armaments, the interior ministry will be able to carry out its mission," he said.

Abdelali said he was withdrawing his resignation, two days after having announced he was standing down.

"When I submitted my resignation, I thought I would be relieving many people.

But it seems that my resignation will further complicate security and I have decided to withdraw it," he said.

An aide said on Sunday that Abdelali quit "to protest against congressmen criticising the government and to defend the revolutionaries," referring to former rebels who now form part of Libya's security services.

That same day the newly elected General National Congress, or national assembly, accused the interior ministry's High Security Committee of being lax or even implicated in the destruction of shrines, including those of Sufis.

Dozens of people took to the streets of Tripoli on Sunday and Monday to protest the violence, which also included double car bombings in Tripoli that killed two people as Muslims celebrated the feast of Eid al-Fitr a week ago.

Islamist hardliners last 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) to the east.

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

The UN cultural body UNESCO's head, Irina Bokova, on Tuesday expressed "grave concern" at the destruction of the Sufi sites and urged perpetrators to "cease the destruction immediately."

"I am deeply concerned about these brutal attacks on places of cultural and religious significance. Such acts must be halted, if Libyan society is to complete its transition to democracy," she said in a statement.

In a travel warning, meanwhile, the US State Department has advised its citizens "against all but essential travel to Libya."

"The incidence of violent crime, especially carjacking and robbery, has become a serious problem. In addition, political violence in the form of assassinations and vehicle bombs has increased," it said on Monday.

"The embassy's ability to intervene in such cases remains limited, as these groups (behind attacks) are neither sanctioned nor controlled by the Libyan government."

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54092>

- **Algeria signs new trade deal with EU**

Algeria will avoid '\$8.5 billion loss' in customs duties after signing trade accord with European block.

ALGIERS - A trade accord signed by Algeria and the EU that delays the lifting of tariff barriers will allow Algiers to avoid an \$8.5 billion (6.8 billion euro) loss in customs

duties, the commerce minister said Tuesday.



"Algeria lost \$2.5 billion since the entry into force of the association agreement with the EU in 2005, up to 2009," Mustapha Benbada told a press conference in Algiers.

"A simulation shows that Algeria would lose \$8.5 billion if an agreement was not reached to delay the lifting of tariff barriers with the EU and the establishment of a free trade zone," he added.

Algeria announced last week that its trade agreement with the European bloc, due to come into force on September 1, will delay the lifting of tariff barriers on industrial products that the North African imports from 2017 to 2020.

It also envisages a readjustment to preferential quotas for the EU on agricultural products.

The EU is Algeria's largest trading partner, accounting for 57 percent of its international trade, with average annual imports of European products of around \$20 billion (16 billion euros), Benbada said.

Energy-rich Algeria is the EU's third biggest supplier of natural gas.

The head of the European section at Algeria's foreign ministry, Ismail Alawa, said on Tuesday that the three-year delay in the trade agreement was "motivated by purely commercial and economic considerations."

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54093>

- **After 48 hours: Libyan interior minister retracts resignation**

Abdelali says he is withdrawing his resignation announced amid criticism over surge of violence, including destructions of shrines.

TRIPOLI - Libyan Interior Minister Fawzi Abdelali said on Tuesday he was withdrawing his resignation announced two days earlier amid criticism over a surge of violence, including destructions of shrines.

"When I submitted my resignation, I thought I would be relieving many people. But it seems that my resignation will further complicate security and I have decided to withdraw it," Abdelali told a news conference in Tripoli.

Abdelali had resigned on Sunday after coming under fire for the performance of security forces during a surge of violence that has rocked Libya, including attacks by Islamist hardliners on shrines across the country.

"I withdraw my resignation and I am ready to continue my mission," he added.

Abdelali also slammed what he described as a "ferocious media war" waged against him.

On Sunday an aide said that Abdelali quit "to protest against congressmen criticising

the government and to defend the revolutionaries," referring to former rebels who now form part of the country's security services.

That same day the newly elected General National Congress, or national assembly, accused the interior ministry's High Security Committee of being lax or even implicated in the destruction of shrines, including those of Sufis.

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

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

Dozens of people took to the streets of Tripoli on Sunday and Monday to protest the violence, which also included double car bombings in Tripoli that killed two people as Muslims celebrated the feast of Eid al-Fitr a week ago.

Islamist hardliners on Saturday bulldozed part of the mausoleum of Al-Shaab Al-

Dahman, close to the centre of the Libyan capital.

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

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

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

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

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54086>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Berri: Jumblatt accepts Lebanon leading Arab delegation at NAM summit**

Speaker Nabih Berri said in remarks published on Wednesday that Progressive Socialist Party leader MP Walid Jumblatt did not object to Lebanon leading the Arab delegation at the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Tehran.

“Lebanon will lead the Arab delegation at the NAM summit... and this opportunity should not be missed. Jumblatt’s view falls within this context, contrary to what is being said that he is objecting to Lebanon’s presiding over the delegation [as a sign] of the country’s adopted dissociation policy regarding the crisis in Syria,” Berri told Al-Jumhuriya newspaper.

Jumblatt said on Tuesday, that it was “ironic” that the NAM summit in Tehran in Iran would be attended by Palestinians as well as Syrian regime representatives after the latter had done “what Israel did to the Palestinian people.”

He also said that it was “ironic” that the meeting would be attended by “Arab

leaders who were recently elected after popular uprisings... who would sit beside those who are standing in the way of the rights of the Syrian people.”

Iran is to host some 30 leaders, including those of India, Egypt and Cuba, at an August 30-31 NAM summit that officials are billing as proof the Islamic republic is not as isolated as the West would like.

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

- **Aoun brands North Lebanon events as “separatist movement”**

Free Patriotic Movement leader MP Michel Aoun said on Tuesday that the events in North Lebanon’s Tripoli amounted to a separatist movement and that if the crisis continues they might disrupt the 2013 parliamentary elections.

“What is happening in Tripoli is a separatist [movement],” Aoun said during a televised interview with OTV, adding: “If the situation in Tripoli and Akkar persists then there will be no [parliamentary] elections, neither in Akkar nor in Tripoli.”

He also said that the next elections would only be disrupted if “a major regional war erupted.”

Last week, at least 15 people were killed in fighting between pro- and anti-Syrian factions in Lebanon’s second largest city, Tripoli.

Commenting on the leaked media reports concerning the investigation of former Information Minister Michel Samaha, Aoun said that the case was “politically exploited.”

“What was the point of the leaked Al-Joumhouriya report?” he inquired.

On August 9, Lebanese security forces arrested Samaha, who has close ties with Syria's embattled regime, in a case linked to explosives.

Judge Sami Sader charged the ex-minister and two Syrian army officers, including Syrian National Security Chief General Ali Mamluk, with setting up an armed group to incite sectarian strife through “terror attacks.”

According to alleged leaked security documents published by a local newspaper Al-Joumhouriya on Monday, Samaha confessed to plotting sectarian killings in cooperation with Syria's security chief.

The FPM leader also said that the latest series of abductions targeting Syrian and Arab nationals that gripped Lebanon showed that “the government lost its credibility in preserving security.”

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>

6. SYRIA

- **Cracks emerge in main Syria opposition coalition**

Syrian dissident Bassma Qodmani resigns from main opposition coalition after accusing it of failing to protect Syrians.

She will devote her time to contributing to the humanitarian effort for the Syrian people

BEIRUT - A prominent France-based Syrian dissident resigned on Tuesday from the embattled country's main opposition coalition, accusing it of failing to protect the population against "horrific massacres."

"The project did not achieve its objectives, it did not earn the necessary credibility, nor did it maintain the level of confidence that it sought from the Syrian people when it was set up," the Syrian National Council's foreign relations head Bassma Qodmani said in a statement.

Founding SNC member and member of its executive committee, Qodmani pledged she would continue to work from outside the coalition.

"I will devote my time to contributing to the humanitarian effort for the Syrian people, and I will return to my profession as a researcher," Qodmani said by telephone.

"It is not the time to talk about differences, but of course there are disagreements with some members of the

council," she said, accusing the council of "playing a very individualistic role."

"The SNC does not work well with other opposition groups," Qodmani added.

The SNC was established a year ago as a coalition of dissidents from across the political spectrum, bringing together independent activists as well as the broad-based Muslim Brotherhood, exiled from Syria since a massive crackdown by President Bashar al-Assad's father Hafez in the 1980s.

Unlike many other opposition groups, the SNC has strong ties with the rebel Free Syrian Army and with several Western governments. It calls for the fall of Assad and has frequently sought international intervention in the Syrian crisis, though the UN Security Council has remained deadlocked in this regard.

The SNC has members both abroad and inside Syria, though most of its non-exiled militants work anonymously.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54091>

- **Syrian opposition says too soon to form interim government**

Opposition figures, meeting in Berlin to present political roadmap after possible ouster of Assad, say it is premature to try to set up new state.

BERLIN - Syrian opposition activists gathered in Berlin said Tuesday that it was too soon to form a transition post-Assad government after France said it would recognise a new provisional administration.

The opposition figures, meeting in the German capital to present a political roadmap after a possible ouster of President Bashar al-Assad, said it was premature to try to set up a new state.

"If the international community is not willing at this point to give recognition to a transitional government unanimously then it would be a wasted effort to jump into that," Afra Jalabi, a Syrian-Canadian member of the executive committee of the so-called "Day After Project", told reporters.

President Francois Hollande, speaking to French diplomats Monday, urged the

Syrian opposition to form a "provisional, inclusive and representative" government, which he said France would recognise "as soon as it is formed".

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said he found the Day After project "an important contribution to a new Syria" but appeared cool to Hollande's call.

"What is key is that the Syrian opposition unites and recognises democracy, tolerance and pluralism," he said. "We support the establishment of a credible alternative to the Assad regime."

Amr al-Azm, a US-based history professor who is also on the Day After committee, said he was upbeat that a democratic government could eventually supplant the Assad regime.



"The transitional government must be inclusive, and reflect the diverse forces" in the country, he said. "I expect sometime in the near future there will be a transitional government."

The group's project was initiated by the Washington-based United States Institute of Peace in partnership with the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

The 45 participants included women and men, members of the Syrian National Council (SNC), the Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition groups, those with experience in the Free Syrian Army and youth activists.

The project lays out goals including developing a new national identity based on civic unity, building consensus on key democratic principles and revamping the security forces to protect the rights of all citizens.

The document, the first of its kind from the Syrian opposition, offers recommendations for a new constitution and principles for institution building.

SNC member Murhaf Jouejati called the draft "a series of suggestions that will be taken or not by a provisional government, they are not written in stone".

Analysts say the opposition is marred by sharp differences in strategy for fighting the regime and goals for a post-Assad Syria.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54080>

- **Deadly bombing hits loyalist funeral outside Damascus**

Syrians inspect damage at the site of a car bomb in the mainly Druze and Christian suburb of Jaramana on the southeastern outskirts of the Syrian capital on Tuesday. (AFP/Joseph Eid)

A car bomb rocked the funeral of two government loyalists in a Damascus suburb killing 27 people on Tuesday as the army kept up its bombardment of rebel strongholds in the east of the capital.

The bombing hit Jaramana, a mainly Druze and Christian town on the southeastern outskirts of Damascus that the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights described

as generally supportive of the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

"The number of people killed in a funeral held for two supporters of the regime has risen to 27," said the Observatory.

Earlier, state television had put the toll at 12, adding that another 48 were wounded.

"At around 3 p.m. (1200 GMT), a funeral procession was making its way to the cemetery, when a car parked on the side of the road exploded," an army official told AFP.

The funeral was held for two supporters of Assad who were killed in a bomb attack on Monday, the Britain-based Observatory said.

The force of the explosion completely demolished the facade of one building and caused heavy damage to others nearby, an AFP photographer reported.

State media blamed rebel fighters for the bombing, which came amid an intensified bombardment by government troops of eastern districts of Damascus that shelter

some of the Free Syrian Army's best organized battalions.

But the opposition Syrian National Council accused Assad's regime of staging the bombing against its own supporters in a bid to divert attention from the killings of hundreds of people during an army assault on a largely Sunni Muslim suburb of the capital last week.

"The regime wants to cover up for its massacres," SNC spokesperson George Sabra said, alluding to the discovery of more than 300 bodies in the town of Daraya that sparked an international outcry.

"It also wants to punish residents of Jaramana – who are of mixed religious backgrounds – for welcoming people who were displaced from nearby towns." Sabra told AFP by telephone.

"It wants to turn the revolution... into a bloody civil war fought along sectarian lines," he said.

Some 80 percent of Syrians are Sunni Muslim, while around 10 percent belong to Assad's Alawite community, five

percent are Christian, three percent Druze and one percent Ismaili.

The opposition draws much of its support from the Sunni majority, who have borne the brunt of the government's crackdown.

Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt warned Tuesday of the risks of Syria descending into bloody sectarian conflict after what he said was the inevitable fall of Assad's regime.

"Whether it will be replaced by a secular democracy, an Islamic one or by a sectarian fragmentation remains to be seen," Bildt said. "The longer the conflict lasts, the greater the risk that we will see the latter development."

The Observatory reported fierce shelling of northeastern neighborhoods of Damascus as the army pressed its drive to push rebel fighters out of the capital.

Among the districts targeted was Qaboon where rebels from the Free Syrian Army claimed to have downed a military helicopter on Monday.

The rebels opened what they described as a new front in East Damascus at the weekend after a major offensive by the army last week against their positions southwest of the capital, including in Daraya.

Outside the capital, the army hit rebel positions in the second city Aleppo as well as in Edleb province, in the northwest close to the border with Turkey.

A bombardment of the Edleb village of Kfar Nabal killed at least 13 civilians, two of them women, among at least 97 people killed nationwide.

Activist network, the Syrian Revolution General Council, said warplanes had taken part in the assault and released gruesome footage of dozens of residents desperately combing the rubble of apartment blocks for survivors.

Rescuers were seen loading charred bodies onto the back of a truck in the footage which could not be independently verified.

Activists say around 25,000 people have been killed since the uprising against

Assad's rule broke out in March last year, while the United Nations says more than 214,000 people have fled to neighboring countries.

Underscoring the growing humanitarian crisis, it emerged that seven Syrians, two of them children, who attempted to flee the conflict by boat earlier this month, drowned off the coast of the nearby Mediterranean island of Cyprus.

The UN refugee agency said it was the "first case" of Syrian refugees trying to make the 100 kilometer (60 mile) sea passage.

"It is hard to know if this is a trend," UNHCR spokesperson Melissa Fleming told reporters in Geneva.

She also said there had been a two-fold increase in arrivals in recent days at a refugee camp in Jordan, where officials reported more than 20 police injured on Tuesday in clashes with stone-throwing residents protesting about living conditions.

Syria's rebels meanwhile claimed that they had seized 10 missiles from the regime's

arsenal in the eastern belt of Damascus province, amid a marked escalation of violence in the area.

Rebels calling themselves the Gathering of Ansar al-Islam (Partisans of Islam) Battalions posted footage on YouTube which they said showed a missile storage warehouse seized from regime troops.

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

- **Syria's non-violent opposition groups seek end of fighting**

Some 20 non-violent Syrian opposition parties and movements said in a meeting in Damascus on Tuesday that they seek to establish a democratic regime without resorting to arms.

"We are faced with two sides that use violence, but weapons only lead to attrition," said Raja Nassar, who coordinated the gathering.

Syria's 17-month uprising started off as a peaceful revolt, but was faced with such brutal repression that it turned into a bloody armed insurgency against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

Opposed both to the regime and to the rebel Free Syrian Army, the movements said they were organizing a conference in September to call for "democratic change that preserves the unity of the nation and social peace."

"The regime has unleashed almost all its force on the ground, and has been unable to defeat the armed opposition, which for its part has yet to win a single victory," veteran dissident Nasser told journalists.

The parties and movements taking part in the gathering are opposed to both the main opposition coalition – the Syrian National Council – and the FSA, which have consistently called for international intervention against the regime.

More than 25,000 people have been killed since the outbreak of the revolt in March last year, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

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

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

• Saudi Arabia- Militants plan to revive Al-Qaeda in region

(MENAFN - Arab News) A group of terrorists has planned to launch a third version of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula aimed at calling for jihad (holy war) to destabilize Saudi security, Saudi sources said.

Though the group has no link with similar groups in Iraq or Syria, debates with them showed that foreign hands orchestrated them, the sources said.

In what has become known as the Sakinah Campaign, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs debated via the Internet over the last three months with the "Katibah Group."

This group is run by more than one person and advocates terrorist acts in Saudi Arabia. It has been proven that the new cells have superficial knowledge about Shariah and religious studies, a matter that explains their confusion and reveals that Al-Qaeda has been infiltrated by foreign circles that want to destabilize security in the Kingdom.

Earlier, Al-Qaeda used to infiltrate and manipulate other groups and circles for its own purposes but, due to the weakness of the organization, it has become an implementation instrument for other (foreign) parties who are exploiting Al-Qaeda members to produce more brutal and bloodthirsty thoughts, the sources said. Saudi society rejects such thoughts because they carry deviant ideas, the sources said.

The debates revealed that Al-Qaeda members tried to evade many points raised with them. Instead, they used obscenities that had nothing to do with scientific debate based on proper Shariah knowledge. Some said they wanted to contact their references to obtain fatwas. This indicates that foreigners who are planning to implant sedition in the Kingdom, were guiding them, the sources said.

According to the sources, Al-Qaeda elements are coming from a number of countries, mainly from Yemen. This country is receiving the biggest support from Al-Qaeda leader Aiman Zawahiri, whose members were the first to declare their loyalty to him. They maintain

external links that intend to hit stability and security of the Kingdom.

Head of the Sakinah Campaign Abdulmonim Al-Mushawah said online debates with Al-Qaeda elements intensified in the last four months before Ramadan and substantially diminished during the holy month.

One of the members has recently been arrested, said the Ministry of Interior. This member was engaged in such debates, the sources said. The diminishing of debates with Al-Qaeda elements during Ramadan was timed with the bust-up of two terror cells in Riyadh and Jeddah, the sources pointed out.

Al-Mushawah stressed the need to continue thought programs to boost religious moderation in the face of extremism.

<http://www.menafn.com/menafn/1093551216/Saudi-Arabia-Militants-plan-to-revive-AlQaeda-region>

- **Reform in Saudi Arabia is Essential to U.S. Interests**

Arab Spring arab spring saudi arabia israel
Israel News Jewish Jewish News Jews
obama saudi arabia Saudi Arabia Israel
saudi arabia oil saudi arabia politics saudi
arabia reform saudi arabia us suadi
monarchy

King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi
Arabia. Photo: wiki commons.

Earlier this month we learned that U.S. oil
imports from Saudi Arabia increased
significantly this year. The conventional
wisdom is that the United States must
unconditionally support the Saudi
monarchy in order to keep the spigot
running. The conventional wisdom is
wrong. In fact, pushing Riyadh to reform is
the only way to preserve our access to
Saudi oil.

America's insatiable demand for Middle
Eastern oil has been a driving force in U.S.
foreign policy for more than half a
century. And, combined with our Cold War
strategy of supporting anti-Communists at
any cost, led to a policy of championing
Middle Eastern autocrats — even as they
brutally suppressed their own people.

Nowhere was this policy more evident
than in Saudi Arabia. During the 20th
century, the United States supported the
Saudi monarchy forcefully and often
unconditionally, from military assistance
during the Yemeni crisis to the
deployment of U.S. forces during the Gulf
War.

At the same time, the Saudi monarchy was
oppressing its citizens (particularly women
and minorities) and stifling all dissent.
These practices went unchallenged by
Washington, except when U.S. interests
were affected (for example, when Jewish
officials and soldiers were barred from
entering the kingdom).

During much of the 20th century, the
Saudi government also caused problems
on the international stage, from waging
war against Israel to financing terrorists.
But the U.S. continued to support the
regime, believing a strong alliance was
essential to our interests (and on issues
such as oil, it was). American officials also
worried that if the Saudi monarchy fell,
whatever replaced it would be worse.

But in the long term, America's strategy of
supporting friendly autocrats left the

region in chaos and endangered our security. It left us dependent on a handful of leaders who did not represent the true will of their people. And our interests became tied to the hope that these unpopular autocrats would remain in power indefinitely. The Arab Spring has shown this hope to be a fallacious one.

Advocates of a “realist” foreign policy argue that America has to deal with the foreign leaders it has, not the foreign leaders it wants. But there is a difference between unconditionally working with autocratic regimes and working with them while also aggressively pushing them to reform and democratize.

Regimes that represent and reflect the will of their people are more stable partners for peace. On the other hand, autocrats and dictators almost invariably fall, as they have in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. Regimes that don’t reform must often be willing to slaughter their people to maintain power. And as we’re seeing in Syria, even this isn’t always enough.

Thus, the only way for these regimes to peacefully maintain power is to moderate and begin to hand control to their citizens.

It’s no coincidence, for example, that Jordan is one of the countries that the Arab Spring largely passed over.

The wisdom of reform is something that even Saudi Arabia’s leaders now publicly acknowledge. Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz al-Saud recently stated, “The revolution that took place around us was a wake-up call. No one will say it, but it was the catalyst.”

And over the past few years, reforms in Saudi Arabia have accelerated. Examples include the regime’s decisions to send women to the Olympics, promote reform-minded leaders, and relax restrictions on media outlets.

The U.S. should be doing everything it can to encourage and hasten these efforts. Unless the Saudi monarchy reforms, it will fall. It may take decades, but it will happen. And if it does, the consequences for the United States could be severe.

First, our access to oil could be cut off or severely restricted, whether because a radical regime rises in Riyadh or because there is no central government to continue and maintain production.

Second, Saudi Arabia could transform from a country that strongly supports our interests in the region to a radical theocracy or a listless state ruled by warlords or sects.

Finally, if the Saudi government falls, we would lose a stabilizing and moderating force in the region, and a bulwark that has proved helpful to the U.S. on numerous priorities (Iran, Syria, and Israel being some current examples).

And all of this ignores the compelling human rights and morality arguments for encouraging reform, which are just as strong as our direct security interests.

During his brief presidency, John F. Kennedy told the Saudis that internal reform was the best way to preserve their monarchy. Realists argue that Kennedy was mistaken, simply because the Saudi regime thrived for decades without reforming. In the wake of the Arab Spring, however, Kennedy's warning looms ominously. And if the Saudis don't heed his advice, they will prove him prescient.

David Meyers served in the White House from 2006 to 2009, and later in the United States Senate. He is currently pursuing graduate studies at Columbia University.

<http://www.algemeiner.com/2012/08/28/reform-in-saudi-arabia-is-essential-to-u-s-interests/>

- **Kuwait rallies 52.26 pts as sentiment improves KFH rises 10 fils; Wataniya extends gain**

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 28: Kuwait stocks revved up Tuesday after eking modest gains in the previous session. The index rallied 52.26 points — the highest single day gain of the month, to end at 5,839.45 points.

Buying was seen mostly in mid and small - caps even as trading floor sentiment showed signs of improvement. The bourse has closed higher in eight of the last nine sessions.

The KSX 15 benchmark rose 1.01 points to 952.24 points whereas the weighted index added 1.75 points. The volume turnover surged to hit the highest level in 15 weeks. 430.05 million shares changed hands — a 43.84 percent spike from the day before.

KSE, after a wobbly start as been upbeat in the second half of the month. Sector wise, telecommunication outshone the rest with 1.87 percent gain whereas healthcare posted the biggest decline of 2.04 percent. In terms of volume, financials sector accounted for the highest market share of 50.55 million shares while real estate came next with 30.35 percent contribution.

Wataniya Telecom continued to rally albeit at a slower pace. The stock rose 20 fils on back of 0.41 million shares adding to the robust gains after it recommence trading in the bourse on 22nd Aug. Zain fluctuated in narrow range before closing unchanged at KD 0.700 and the counter saw 1.18 million shares change hands.

Agility was up 10 fils at KD 0.420 after slipping into red in the previous session. The stock has added 35 fils from the start of the month and is up 45 fils year-to-date. The logistics major has posted KD 7.82 million in the April- June quarter while earnings per share clocked 7.85 fils.

Among other movers, Gulf Glass Manufacturing Co climbed 40 fils and Kuwait National Cinema Co followed suit

to wind up at KD 0.890. The company has registered net profit of KD 3.30 million and earnings per share of 33.11 fils in the first six months of 2012

Rose

City Group Company rose 25 fils to KD 0.495 and Contracting and Marine Services Co was up 10 fils. Gulf Cables climbed 20 fils to KD 1.080 and Kuwait Food Co (Americana) too was up by same measure. The stock has rallied 40 fils from start of the month whereas year-to-date it has erased 200 fils.

The bourse opened on positive note and edged higher in early trade. The index continued to trend higher as investors took positions across the board amid positive sentiments. It moved sideways in the second half before pulling up to close at the day's highest level of 5,839.45 points.

Top gainer of the day, Al Masaken Real Estate Development Co spiked 55.56 percent to 28 fils while Amar For Finance and Leasing Co rose 9.8 percent to stand next. Taiba dived over 9 percent, the steepest decliner of the day, whereas Gulf

Finance House topped the volume with 63.91 million shares.

Reflecting the day's robust gains, the winner vastly out led the losers. 73 stocks advanced whereas 24 closed lower. Of the 121 counters active on Tuesday, 24 closed flat. 6,317 deals worth KD 22.98 million were transacted — a 22.75 percent increase in value from the previous session.

“The smaller stocks continue to dominate the market — you have inter-funds buying stocks again,” Reuters quoted Fouad Darwish, head of brokerage at Global Investment House. “People were waiting and minimizing risk due to fears of suspension on stocks but after the deadline when almost every single company reported their financials, it gave a huge boost to the market.”

On the downside, Boubyan Petrochemical Co fell 10 fils to KD 0.550 and RISCO was down 4 fils extending the decline from previous session. Jazeera Airways pulled 5 fils lower to settle at KD 0.551. The carrier's Q2 net profit jumped 23.5 percent to KD 2.6 million while in the first

half net earnings climbed 21.6 percent to KD 3.8 million.

In the banking sector, National Bank of Kuwait was flat at KD 0.980 after edging lower on Tuesday and Gulf Bank too did not budge from its earlier close of KD 0.395. Commercial Bank stagnated at KD 0.720 whereas Al Ahli Bank and Ahli United Bank were not traded during the day.

Kuwait International Bank rose 2 fils on back of 1.34 million shares and Burgan Bank gained 5 fils to end at KD 0.480. The stock has added 5 fils from start of the month and is trading higher by same measure year-to-date.

Kuwait Finance House climbed 10 fils to KD 0.610 and Boubyan Bank rose 3 fils to KD 0.102. Boubyan Bank has logged net profit of KD 4.8 million in the first half of 2012 — a 9.9% increase from -ago period while revenue climbed 23.7. The lender's provisions surged 99.5% year-on-year to KD 10.5 million.

International Financial Advisors inched 0.5 fils with a volume of whopping 35.6 million shares whereas National

Investment Co closed flat. KMEFIC was up 1 fils and KIPCO held the ground steady at KD 0.365. The company has posted a net profit of KD 17.1 million or 13.12 fils per share for the first six months of 2012 while the second quarter earnings chalked KD 8.6 million.

Al Maal Investment Co rose 0.5 fils on back of 1.06 million shares while Osoul Investment climbed 5 fils to end at 65 fils. Bayan Investment closed 1 fils higher at 35 fils. The company has logged H1 Net Loss of KD 3,948,426 and loss per share of 11.02 fils.

United Industries Co ticked 1 fils higher to 90 fils and Kuwait Gulf Links followed suit with thin trading. The company has posted a 55 percent year-on-year decline in losses to KD 3.85 million during the first half of 2012 while in the second-quarter, losses narrowed by 52.2 percent year-on-year to KD 1.86 million.

The bourse has been upbeat so far during the week and has climbed 59.26 points up in last three sessions. It has gained 119.08 points from start of the month and is trading 0.82 percent higher year-to-date. KSE, with 213 listed companies, is the

second largest bourse in the region. In the bourse related news, Al Madina for Finance and Investment has logged a net loss of KD 614,242 and loss per share of 1.6 fils in the first six months of the year as compared to loss of KD 1,597,043 and 4.16 fils LPS in the same period last year.

Noor Financial Investment Co has logged a net profit of KD 1.462.757 and earnings per share of 4 fils in January-June period rebounding from KD 4.899.448 loss and 13 fils loss per share in the same period last year.

Global Investment House has posted a net loss of KD 20,576,000 and Loss per share of 17 fils in the first half, narrowing from KD 38,693,000 and loss per share of 32 fils in 2011 H1.

IFA Hotels and Resorts Co. has incurred a net loss of KD 1,805,454 and loss per share of 4.19 fils as compared to KD 5,170,290 earning and 11.99 fils EPS in the same period last year.

<http://www.arabtimesonline.com/NewsDetails/tabid/96/smId/414/ArticleID/187278/reftab/36/Default.aspx>

- **Kuwait opposition rally calls for upholding electoral law**

Discrepancy in turnout estimates reflects deep divisions over issue

Kuwaiti opposition activists demonstrate at Erada Square, Kuwait City, on Monday against the government's move to seek a review of the electoral law by the constitutional court.

Manama: Thousands of Kuwaitis took part in a rally to protest possible amendments to the country's controversial electoral law and to press for the dissolution of the recently-reinstated 2009 parliament.

In the absence of an independent figure about the turnout, organisers and supporting media said that around 10,000 people braved the evening heat on Monday to attend the rally at the Erada (Will power) Square in Kuwait City, while others put the figure at 1,500, saying they were "mainly relatives of the MPs and their office staff".

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Kuwaitis rallied under the banner of "the people are the source of sovereignty." 19

opposition MPs and former lawmakers took part in the protest.

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 its was dismissed in December, and holding fresh general election.

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

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.”

The discrepancy reflects the deep sense of social and political unease prevailing in Kuwait over controversial constitutional and election issues.

In June, the constitutional court ruled that the decrees to dissolve the parliament elected in 2009 and to call for elections that were held on February 2 were unconstitutional.

Article continues below

The verdict, which could not be challenged, effectively dissolved the 2012 parliament and reinstated the 2009 legislative body. However, the reinstated parliament could not convene despite two attempts by its speaker Jasem Al Khorafi who referred the matter to the Emir.

Earlier this month, the cabinet referred the 2006 electoral law to the constitutional court to review the constitutionality of the article dividing Kuwait into five constituencies. The government said that it wanted to end all legal loopholes and ensure a fair representation of various demographic sectors in the parliament.

The law promulgated in 2006 divides Kuwait into five electoral constituencies, down from 25 previously, and opposition figures have said that any changes introduced by the constitutional court would limit their prospects and boost opportunities for the government in future parliamentary elections.

The opposition insisted that the move to refer the electoral rules to the court amounted to a coup against it and pledged street action to force the government to reconsider its moves.

“We reject the 2009 parliament which has no popular, political or moral support and we refuse that the government has the monopoly to amend the constituencies without the participation of the

parliament,” opposition figures said at the rally on Monday. “We also reject any role for the courts in political issues and we want a fully integrated parliament and a single electoral constituency.”

However, Maasooma Al Mubarak, one of the four women lawmakers elected in 2009 in an unprecedented achievement for local women, charged that people who participated in the rally “had their own agenda”.

“The people do not follow them and have kept their distance from their demands,” she told local Arabic daily Al Kuwaitiya. “Most of the people are worried about their moves and we pray that God will protect Kuwait from them. They claim that they are partners in ruling the country and that is not true. They do not represent us,” she said.

Earlier, Al Khorafi dealt a blow to the claims made by several lawmakers from the 2009 parliament that they had resigned and that they did not want to be part of “a corrupt legislative body”.

“Only three people have resigned while the others are still enjoying the benefits

that come with their responsibilities, including salaries, cars and other perks,” he said in a statement.

Kuwait boasts the oldest parliament in the region.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/kuwait-opposition-rally-calls-for-upholding-electoral-law-1.1066903>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

• 3 US Marines get slap on wrist for acts of desecration in Afghanistan

Press TV

August 28, 2012

The US military says it is disciplining nine Marines and Army soldiers over two incidents that occurred in Afghanistan in 2011 and 2012, one involving the desecration of Afghan dead bodies and the other the desecration of the Holy Qur’an.

The administrative punishments issued to the nine soldiers on Monday could include reduction in rank and forfeiture of pay. However, the punishments fell short of criminal prosecution.

Three Marines pled guilty to charges of urinating on the dead bodies of Afghans and posing for pictures with the dead.

“Three Marines received non-judicial punishment today for violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice for their role in the desecration and filming of deceased Taliban that became public in January 2012,” the military said in a statement.

The statement did not provide further details on the penalties handed to the convicts, but it noted that action against other Marines involved in the incident would be announced at a later date.

The video footage, which was posted on the video-sharing website YouTube and other websites on January 11, shows the four members of the US Marine Corps in camouflage uniforms making lewd jokes while urinating on the bodies of three Taliban militants.

The actions shown in the video occurred in the Musa Qala district of Helmand Province, in southwestern Afghanistan in July 2011.

The US Marine Corps had said it would investigate the video.

Meanwhile, the US Army spokesman said that six Army soldiers were given administrative punishments for their role in the burning of copies of the Qur’an and other religious materials.

A US military investigation said up to 100 copies of the Qur’an and other religious texts from a detention center library were burned on February 20 in Afghanistan.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has called for a public trial for the soldiers.

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

- **Karzai, U.S. Condemn Mass Beheadings**

August 28, 2012

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai has condemned the mass beheadings of 17 Afghan civilians in southern Helmand Province.

In a written statement, Karzai called the killings an "unforgivable" crime in complete defiance of Islamic teachings.

The statement said resorting to such acts "clearly demonstrates that the enemy is desperate and in disarray."

U.S. officials have also condemned the beheadings, with the U.S. Embassy in Kabul calling them a "shameful act," and U.S. General John Allen, the commander of international forces in Afghanistan, describing the killers as "cowards."

Taliban militants are suspected of carrying out the massacre, whose victims included two women.

Some reports said the victims had staged a music and dance party before the slayings.

Other reports said they were suspected of working against the Taliban.

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

- **Truck Bomb Targeting Afghan Police Chief Kills Four**

August 28, 2012

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Reports from southern Afghan city of Kandahar say a "massive" truck bomb has killed four civilians and slightly wounded the provincial police chief.

Kandahar provincial spokesman Jawed Faisal said the truck bomb was detonated by a suicide attacker as General Abdul Raziq's vehicle passed through a neighborhood in Kandahar City late on August 27.

Faisal said Raziq survived the bombing with minor injuries.

He said 20 other people, mostly civilians, were wounded in the blast.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the bombing, but Taliban insurgents regularly target Afghan government officials.

In another development, NATO says one of its helicopters crash-landed in southeastern Afghanistan but that no one was injured.

ISAF said the helicopter made a "hard landing" in eastern Logar Province on August 27. It said there were no initial reports of insurgent activity nearby.

Taliban militants claimed in a statement that its fighters had shot down the helicopter and killed all those aboard.

Based on reporting by AFP and AP

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

- **NATO-led helicopter crash-lands in eastern Afghanistan**

Press TV

August 28, 2012

A helicopter, belonging to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), has crash-landed in eastern Afghanistan, Press TV reports.

The Western military alliance reported in a statement that the forced landing had taken place in the Logar province on Tuesday.

The statement did not provide further information about the "hard landing."

"ISAF is still in the process of assessing the circumstances to determine more facts," it said.

The Taliban, however, have claimed that their militants shot down the helicopter and killed all the US troopers aboard, whom, they alleged, numbered 20.

In mid-August, a NATO helicopter crashed in southern Kandahar province, leaving seven US troopers and four Afghans dead.

The US-led war in Afghanistan, which has caused record-high civilian and military casualties, has become the longest military conflict in the American history.

Washington invaded Afghanistan in 2001 under the pretext of combating terrorism.

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

- **14 Taliban militants give up fighting in northern Afghan town**

MAZAR-E-SHARIF, Afghanistan, Aug. 28 (Xinhua) -- More than a dozen Taliban fighters gave up fighting and resumed normal life in Balkh province 305 km north of capital city Kabul on Tuesday.

"Fourteen of our dissident brothers gave up fighting and handed over their weapons to police in Charbolak district today," provincial police chief Mohammad Salim Ahsas said, while welcoming the former fighters in a ceremony held there.

These former fighters were active in Charbolak district and adjoining areas for the past couple of years and with their joining the peace process, the security will be further improved in the area, he added.

Taliban militants fighting the government are yet to comment.

More than 3,500 Taliban militants, according to officials, have joined the government-backed peace process in Afghanistan since early this year, a claim rebuffed by Taliban as baseless.

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

- **Anti-graft panel says corruption poses 'major challenge' to Afghanistan's development, aid delivery**

By UNAMA Kabul

28 August 2012 – A report of a high-level anti-corruption committee released last week has warned that corruption continues to be a major challenge to Afghanistan's national development, international aid and even legitimacy of the Afghan Government.

The Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC), which was set up through a Presidential decree in 2010, said in its second six-month report prepared last month and released on 23 August that despite public commitments from the national and international community to tackle corruption, no sufficient progress has been made to date, putting "the entire development and aid effort of the past 10 years at risk".

The Committee, which was established after the need was identified at international conferences in Kabul and London for independent monitoring and evaluation of anti-corruption efforts in Afghanistan, has so far made 73 recommendations and 74 benchmarks in the areas of governance, prevention, and law enforcement affecting a variety

Government and international institutions and organizations.

The Committee is mandated to identify effective development criteria for institutions, monitor and evaluate anti-corruption activities at the national level, international organizations and donor aid and to report to the President, Parliament, the people of Afghanistan and the international community.

The committee has six members – three senior anti-corruption experts appointed on the recommendation of the Government of Afghanistan and three others on recommendation of the United Nations on behalf of the international community. The 21-page report says UNAMA has “a central role” in the administration of aid and development in Afghanistan and is a natural organization to coordinate efforts in this regard.

Afghanistan has consistently ranked at the bottom of worldwide corruption indexes published annually by the global anti-corruption watchdog, the Transparency International. In its 2011 report, Afghanistan is only ahead of Myanmar,

North Korea and Somalia out of 182 countries.

Although MEC enjoyed cooperation from most of the Afghan and international organizations, the report is highly critical of the High Office of Oversight (HOO), the prime institution that should be playing the lead anti-corruption role.

“Within the transparency and accountability framework of the country there are a number of institutions that have failed to implement the MEC recommendations and benchmarks... the HOO didn’t recognize the mandate of MEC and refuses to cooperate in trying to enhance the integrity of the governance structure.”

The report said MEC observed “the political will to enhance transparency and accountability of the potential revenue generation and collection system of the Government”. “While these institutions (the Ministry of Mines and the Afghan Customs Directorate) are far from free of corruption they have undertaken some of the reforms recommended by the MEC as well as other steps initiated on their own,” the report added.

The Committee has submitted a set of recommendations and benchmarks to the President's Office, Afghan Parliament and the media. These recommendations and benchmarks are based on the findings of the Committee's sixth visit to Afghanistan in July 2012. The report said 81 per cent of the MEC's benchmarks have been fully or partially implemented.

Concerning transparency and accountability measures, the Committee has demanded further oversight of borders and strengthening the capacity of civil society institutions to fight against corruption.

To raise public awareness, the Committee has stressed upon introducing an anti-corruption training module in schools and universities. To cover the larger population, a nation-wide mobilization campaign has been recommended.

An Integrity Management System (IMS) has also been demanded for all contract-awarding process to assist institutions function more effectively and efficiently.

To ensure further administrative effectiveness, more clarification of the procedures for business licensing, public expenditures and setting terms for appointments of high-ranking public officials has been urged.

The final recommendation of Committee relates to the verification of tax exemptions for imported goods and prohibition of sub-contracting in infrastructure projects.

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

This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistants Nebahat Tanrıverdi O and Selen Tonkuş. It covers news and commentaries as reported by the national media sources publishing in the Middle Eastern countries. The views expressed are not those of ORSAM and their inclusion does not imply factual accuracy.*

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