



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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Ethnic and Secterian Groups

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

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1. IRAQ

- **MP: The return of Talabani will participate in solving a part of the current crisis.**



BAGHDAD / NINA / MP, citizen bloc, Ali Shubbar, thought that the return of President Jalal Talabani will contribute to solve a part of the political crisis, not all.

He said in a statement to the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / that "the current political crisis can not be solved without making concessions from the political blocs, especially the blocs that raised its demands in the recent period," indicating that "the return of president Talabani will contribute in solving a part of the political crisis but not all."

He added "The Islamic Supreme Council headed by Ammar al-Hakim is still working to collect the political parties at the

dialogue table, and not to deepen the political crisis."

It is mentioned that most of the political blocs counting on the return of President Jalal Talabani from Germany to resolve the current crisis and get out of the tunnel of the problems.

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

- **Kurdistan's spokesman: suspending oil exports will be justified if the government does not pay dues for foreign companies.**

BAGHDAD / NINA / spokesman of Kurdish coalition forces, Moaid al-Tayeb considered that suspended exporting oil will be justified, if the central government does not pay dues of the oil companies operating in the region.

He said in a statement to the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / that "the resumption of the oil exporting was conditional with the central government, to pay dues of the oil companies in the region as agreed in the budget in 2012."

Tayeb added "stop exports from Kurdistan region would lose the federal budget \$ 3 billion dollars, due to the announcement of the oil companies that oil exports from the region will increase to 200 thousand barrels per day and during the four months, the amount of revenue will be to \$ 3 billion."



He pointed out that "the reason that central government does not pay the dues of oil companies, is to put pressure on the Kurdistan region because of the oil contracts," indicating that "the Deputy Prime Minister Hussain al-Shahristani and the central government resorted to threat these companies, including them in the black list in a attempt to thwart the oil file management in the region and limit the oil file within the hand of Federal Ministry of oil. "

It is mentioned that the Kurdistan Regional Government announced that it will stop oil exports in September in case of not paying the dues of the oil companies operating in the region.

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

- **Iraqiya MP calls to unify Iraqi stance towards Larijani's threats to occupy Kuwait.**

Baghdad /NINA/ an MP, for Iraqiya List, Ahmed al-Alwani called to "unified Iraqi stance towards threats uttered by the Chairman of Shura Council , Ali Larijani to occupy Kuwait in case of the fall of Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria."



He said in a statement to the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / that "Larijani's remarks on Iran's occupation of Kuwait in case of the fall of the regime of Bashar al-

Assad in Syria and his call for the Arabs to be isolated in the Arabian Peninsula, has exposed Iran's intentions and its hatred against the Arabs."

Alwani added "We, as Iraqis, must stand clearly against the offensive Larijani's remarks to Arabs, because Iraq is a founding member of the Arab League"

It is mentioned that the head of the Iranian Shura Council Ali Larijani considered, in an interview with / Manar / channel affiliated to Hezbollah and published in its account in the social networking site / Twitter / that "the fall of Bashar al-Assad in Syria is an introduction to the fall of Kuwait" without specifying what he intended by the words/ fall of Kuwait

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

- **Parliament session starts**

Baghdad (AIN) –The parliament has started its regular session that includes the first and second readings to some law drafts such as the local elections law draft.

A parliamentary source stated to All Iraq News Agency (AIN) on Thursday "The parliament has held its session headed by the First Deputy Speaker, Qusai al-Sihail where the agenda of the session includes the second reading of the third amendment of the local elections law draft No. 36 in 2008."

"The agenda also contains the voting on the rehabilitation of the infrastructure and the service sectors," the source added.

"The session will witness the citing constitutional oath by MP, Hassan Abdul-Nibi Abbas, to replace MP, Khalaf Abdul Samad Khalaf, who was assigned as the governor of Basra province," the source concluded.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17443:breaking-news-parliament-session-starts-&catid=40:2011-11-19-15-20-50

- **Zebari chairs NAM foreign ministers meeting**

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiar Zebari chaired on Wednesday the foreign ministers meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Tehran.



"The Iraqi ministers chaired the meeting as Iraq is the deputy president of the NAM for the Arab and Asian group," said a foreign ministry statement received by Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

The ministers will wrap up meeting today as the summit of heads of states and governments will start on Thursday.

http://en.aswatiraq.info/%28S%28a2x3xrjwzarvib55izt45i55%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150213&l=1

- **Energy parliamentary committee launches initiative to resolve oil problems between Baghdad and Kurdistan**

Shafaq News / Oil and Energy Commission in the parliament revealed on Thursday that it is seeking to solve all the problems between the Federal Ministry of Oil and

officials in Kurdistan on oil contracts concluded by Kurdistan with foreign companies.

The decision maker of the parliamentary oil and energy Commission, Qasim Meshkte told "Shafaq News" that "the oil and energy Commission has launched an initiative that would contribute to resolve the dispute between Kurdistan and the center on the oil topics as it has sent a delegation before Eid to the Kurdistan to see the reality of the dispute between the parties."

"The delegation has met the Minister of Natural Resources of the province, who gave the delegation a detailed explanation on all contracts concluded by the center with the oil companies and the minister told us that all the details related to the contracts were delivered to the center to be informed on."



He added that "the visit was discussed in the committee after the delegation returned and the delegation impressions were positive on it because the visit supplied the delegation with all details regarding the disagreements on the contracts."

He noted that "the Committee wanted to send the delegation to the Ministry of Oil before Eid, but the presidency of the Council did not agree to make any members of the council go out for the existence of important laws they need voting that way the visit was postponed until after Eid holiday."

Meshkte denied that the relationship between the parliamentary oil and energy committee and the oil ministry is bad after accusations launched by former MP, Farhad Atrushi that the ministry not dealing in a good way with the Commission and said that, "the Oil Minister is collaborating with our committee and our relationship is quite good."

The Ministry of Natural Resources in Kurdistan Regional Government has considered on mid of August that the oil

contracts concluded by the region is more transparent than the contracts of many of the countries of the world in spite of pressure from the federal government, considering the latter claim to export oil through Iraqi pipelines as a recognition of the results those contracts.

Relations between Baghdad and Erbil is witnessing a chronic crisis that has worsened months ago but intensified in recent after disagreements on oil contracts that was concluded by Kurdistan Region with a number of foreign companies that Baghdad considers as illegal, while the region say that they are based on the Iraqi constitution and bilateral agreements with the federal government.

<http://www.shafaaq.com/en/news/3409-energy-parliamentary-committee-launches-initiative-to-resolve-oil-problems-between-baghdad-and-kurdistan.html>

- **Spike in Price of Weapons in Kurdistan Due to War in Syria**

SULAIMANI, Kurdistan Region — The price of weapons and munitions has considerably risen in Kurdistan's market.

The price of an AK-47 Kalashnikov, for example, has doubled in the past year. The revolution in Syria has caused the inflation, according to gun dealers.

“We don’t know whether these weapons and munitions go to the opposition or the Syrian regime, but we know for sure that the weapons go to Syria illegally,” a gun dealer told Rudaw.

The gun dealer, who wanted to remain anonymous, spoke to Rudaw in Sulaimani city. He said there has been a continuous increase in the price of weapons, especially in the past two months as the war between the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the Syrian regime has intensified in Aleppo and Damascus.



“Before, there were always markets for dealing weapons in Kurdistan, but nowadays, the method of buying and

selling weapons has changed,” the dealer said. “Several unknown people from Erbil came to this area looking to purchase weapons, village to village.”

“In the past, if someone had a weapon to sell, he would go straight to the special gun market and sell it there, but today the buyers go to houses to buy weapons,” he added.

Since the beginning of the Syrian revolution, China, Russia and Iran have backed President Bashar al-Assad’s regime against any international intervention. Both Russia and China vetoed the U.N. Security Council’s resolution calling for action against the Assad regime. In reaction, Syrian revolutionists boycotted Chinese and Russian products. This boycott is clearly evident in Kurdistan’s markets.

The gun dealer told Rudaw that the price of Libyan weapons has risen from 250,000 dinars to 500,000 dinars (US\$400). However, the price for Russian weapons is still the same.

Isa Zewaiyi, an official from the border guards unit in the Nineveh province on the

Syrian border, admitted that weapons and munitions are being smuggled into Syria.

“We can only stop a few since the weapons are being smuggled secretly,” he said.

Zewaiyi told Rudaw, “Iraq has a long border with Syria. Our forces cannot control the entire border and arrest the smugglers.”

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurds/5136.html>

- **All parliamentary blocs agree on the need to conduct census, says White Bloc**

30/08/2012 16:14

ERBIL, Aug. 30 (AKnews) - A member of the Iraqi Council of Representatives from the White bloc said all parties agreed on the need to hold a census to develop data in Iraq, denying that any party rejects the census.

Kurdish newspaper Rudaw cited Kurdish MPs as saying that only Kurds want to conduct a census in Iraq, while others (Shiite and Sunni) do not want to hold it.

The newspaper reported that: “The Iraqi PM Nouri al-Maliki signed an agreement with the Kurds in 2010 and the census was supposed to be held within one year, according to the agreement, but this was not implemented at all.”

Rudaw also quoted a Kurdish MP as saying: “Maliki does not want to hold the census and the reason, as everyone knows, is that 85 percent of the population of Khanaqin, 50 percent of the people of Kirkuk, and 75 percent of the population of Chenkal (in Nineveh) are Kurds. Accordingly, if the census was conducted, Maliki will lose control on the disputed areas.”

Bloc member Jamal al-Battikh said: “The census is an urgent need for the country, because the countries of the world have a census every ten years to develop data about the population and their needs, and now we are in dire need for a census, but there are obstacles that hinder conducting it.

“The most prominent obstacles that hinder conducting the census are the areas disputed between Erbil and Baghdad.

"We support holding the census, especially because the Ministry of Planning announced two years ago the end of the preparations. But another issue hindered the census - that is the issue of religion and nationalism. But this issue is not as serious as the issue of disputed areas."

Regarding the presence of political efforts in the Council of Representatives to disrupt the census, Battikh said: "Everyone supports Iraq's need for a census to organize the overall aspects of life, and contribute to acquiring news statistics that allow the state to find out the real need of citizens."

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/323882/>

- **Voting on High Electoral Commission postponed to Monday (AKnews)**

ERBIL, Aug.30 (AKnews)- The presidency of the Iraqi Council of Representatives decided to postpone the voting on the amended law of the Independent High Electoral Commission and its new members to Monday, said MP Muayyad Tayyeb.

The reason for postponing the voting is not clear, said Tayyeb, who is also the spokesperson for the Kurdistan Blocs Coalition (KBC).

Earlier today Tayyeb said "all the preparations for voting on the members of the commission have been completed and today the parliament will vote on the commission.

"The parliament will vote on whether the commission remains at nine members or to vote on increasing it to 15. If the seats increase to 15, Kurds would receive one more seat. Kurds now have two seats.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/323813/>

- **Catherine Ashton deplores Iraq executions (Voice of Russia)**

30 Aug 2012

EU foreign policy commissioner Catherine Ashton deplores the recent execution of 26 people in Iraq, which brought to 96 the overall number of executions there since the start of this year.

A communiqué released in Brussels on Wednesday says that the growing number of executions in Iraq is openly at variance with the global trend towards the abolishment of capital punishment.

The UN General Assembly calls for a moratorium on executions, which have already been outlawed in more than 130 countries.

http://english.ruvr.ru/2012_08_30/Catherine-Ashton-deplores-Iraq-executions/

- **Kirkuk to build 5000 residential units (PUKmedia)**

Aug 29 2012

Kirkuk governor Najmadeen Karim decided Wednesday to build 5000 residential units in Kirkuk for the city's poor.

There are an increasing number of renters while housing shortcomings is one of the prominent crises in Kirkuk and other Iraqi cities beside bad security situations.

The governor stated today in a meeting with Kirkuk investment committee and a number of the city's investor that a plan has been made by the committee includes

building 5000 residential units in the city that will be sold to the poor people at a reasonable price.

Karim made sure that the city's administration will not prioritize any investors or any firms, saying that there will be a transparent tendering process.

Falah Bazzaz head of the committee said that a portion of land in the northern city has been allocated to the project as a bid to address the housing problems.

<http://pukmedia.co/english/index.php/77/kurdistan-region/2180-kirkuk-to-build-5000-residential-units>

- **Metro supports Kirkuk journalists (Kirkuk Now)**

Aug 29 2012

Metro Centre to defend journalists support Kirkuk journalists and urge realization of their demands.

In a statement issued on August 29, the Metro Centre refers to the gathering of more than 20 media organizations in Kirkuk that were asking for equality in access of information and that "Metro supports their demands and further asks

the authority to end up violations done against journalists.”

“We see their demands as legitimate and support them. We urge putting an end to the violations done against them,” according to the statement which also announced that Metro is expected to open an office in Kirkuk soon.

Metro is an independent centre to defend journalists based in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. It also represents Journalists Freedom Orientations (JFO) based in Baghdad.

<http://kirkuknow.com/english/?p=12502>

- **Zebari heads meeting session of Non-Aligned Movement (AKnews)**

ERBIL, August 30 (AKnews) – Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari headed the meeting session of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Tehran on Wednesday.

Zebari led the session because Iraq at the moment is the vice president of the Asian/Arab group in the movement.

Iraq was chosen as vice president in 2011 during a meeting in Bali, Indonesia on the

50th anniversary of the organization, said a statement from Iraq's Foreign Ministry.

Iraq's Foreign Ministry said in a statement earlier: “The ministerial meeting comes in order to make an agenda and decisions of the sixth summit of heads of states and governments of the Non-Aligned Movement.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/323826/>

- **Iraqi foreign policy affected by regional developments, says MP (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Aug 30 (AIN) –The member of the Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee, Emad Yaqo, stated that the Iraqi foreign policy is facing many challenges and difficulties due to the developments of the regional situation and the internal tensions.

Speaking to All Iraq News Agency (AIN), he stated "In spite of the successful foreign progress in holding the Arab Summit I Baghdad and the meetings of 5+1 countries in addition to the High Conference that will be held in Baghdad, but this progress is not as we required

where the politicians have to support the foreign policy and push it forward."

He accused some foreign sides of "Limiting the Iraqi foreign role and understating it by creating the sectarian tensions inside Iraq," noting that "This issue affected the Iraqi role in the foreign policy."

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17400

- **Low-Income Families Hopeful about New Housing Policy (Rudaw)**

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region -- Aram Khalid has been married for 18 years and is still a tenant.

He was pleased to learn that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is going to revise its housing policy in order that more low-income families can benefit from the massive construction campaign currently underway in Kurdistan. He hopes the change in policy will bring him a home.

"We have seen about many 'good laws' but, because of nepotism and the need for connections, the housing problem has not been resolved," said Khalid.

He added that due to the high price of property, low-income people like himself cannot afford to buy a home.

According to figures from Kurdistan Investment Board (KIB), over 150,000 housing units have been built in Kurdistan since 2006. Currently, 18,000 are under construction. But the housing problem still remains unresolved.

That has lead to widespread criticism that the new homes are only built for well-to-do people and have pushed up prices beyond affordability.

Sama Areb, the legal director at KIB, told Rudaw, "Any new housing unit built from now on must be for low-income people. The ones built before could not meet the objective of reducing the number of tenants."

Land and home prices in Kurdistan have jumped exponentially over the past decade, with some areas witnessing an increase in prices of up to 70 to 80 times. Income levels have not kept up with the rise in property prices, making it difficult -- if not impossible -- for many to afford buying a home.

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurds/5147.html>

2. IRAN

- **Leader: Preventing Weaponization of Armed Groups Only Solution to Syrian Crisis**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei in a meeting with Lebanese President Michel Suleiman described efforts to stop supply of arms to terrorist groups in Syria as the only way to settle the crisis in the Arab country.

"The only way to solve the Syrian issue is preventing the dispatch of weapons for irresponsible groups," Ayatollah Khamenei said in the meeting on the sidelines of the first day of the 16th heads-of-state summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Tehran on Thursday.

Suleiman, for his part, stressed Beirut's opposition to foreign interference in Syria, and said, "The problems in Syria should be solved through talks."

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

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



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

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

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106060900>

- **PA President's Visit to Tehran Angers Tel Aviv**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's visit to Tehran has angered Israeli officials so deeply that the regime's foreign minister Avigdor Liberman asked for his assassination.

According to a report by Palestine Today news website, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman in an interview with Channel 10 of Israeli television used harsh and provocative remarks against Abbas and asked for the assassination of the PA chief or his seizure in Ramallah when he returns from Iran.

Abbas is in Tehran to attend the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit meeting.

Despite the fact that his call for assassinating Abbas is a blatant case of state-sponsored terrorism, the Israeli foreign minister used vulgar language to

insult over 120 NAM member states calling them all "terrorists".

"The fact that Abbas attended terrorists' summit in Tehran is a black day in Israel's history," Liberman said.

Abbas, heading a high-ranking delegation, arrived in Tehran on Wednesday to attend the 16th Non-Aligned Movement summit in the Iranian capital.



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

The Islamic Republic's three-year tenure as head of the NAM is a chance for Tehran to elevate its international standing as the United States seeks to cripple its economy and isolate it diplomatically over its disputed nuclear program.

Many analysts say that the diplomatic spotlight will give Tehran an opportunity to show Washington has failed to cut it off from the rest of the world.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106060918>

- **Mualem Praises Iran's Support for Syria**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Mualem dismissed media allegations that Iran is interfering in Syria's internal affairs, and said Tehran is a friendly country defending Syria against the enemies.

"Iran is a friendly country defending Syria against the unrighteous front," Mualem told reporters on the sidelines of the first day of the 16th heads-of-state summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Tehran on Thursday.

He rejected the accusations that Iran is meddling in Syria's internal affairs, and said, "These reports are lies." "Actually there are only some consultations and coordination between the leaders of the two countries."

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

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

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

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

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106060914>

- **Senior MP Sees Leader's Remarks as "Roadmap for NAM, UN"**

TEHRAN (FNA)- The guidelines presented by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei at the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Tehran was a comprehensive roadmap to the removal of the existing flaws of the international bodies.

Speaking to FNA, member of the parliament's Presiding Board Mohammad Hossein Farhangi said that the Leader's remarks reminded the principles and raison d'état of the NAM.

He pointed to the Leader's remarks about the UN Security Council's unfair structure and unilateralism, and noted, "The points raised by the dear Leader are the solution to these problems and serve the growth and spread of the ideas and plans of the NAM."

Ayatollah Khamenei told participants in the 16th Non-Aligned Movement to renovate the movement and boost its activity and role in the world.

The Leader praised the founders of the NAM and its operation in the last 60 years,

but said the movement should boost its international role and clout through increased operations and fresh movements.

The Leader said the world is entering a new era and the NAM should play a bigger role in this new world, adding that all world countries should have a share in global management.

"States should raise their relations on the basis of common interests and not threat and intimidation," he stressed.

The Leader said the world should not be ruled by a few number of "bullying powers".

He said the "UN Security Council has a completely unfair structure, and the US and its allies have been misusing this unfair structure to materialize their interests".

The Leader said the US and its allies try to impose their own values on the world. "Their security in the US and Europe is important, while security of the rest of the world does not matter from their viewpoint."

"They impose their own rules and bullying words on the rest of the world" through the UN, he added, and said the US-led West portrays its aspirations as to be correct and fair through a media hegemony and propaganda.

"Everyone is tired of this situation in the world," he said.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106060912>

- **Leader says situation ripe for expansion of Iran-India ties**

TEHRAN, Aug. 29 (MNA) - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that the situation is ripe for the expansion of ties between Iran and India in all areas, particularly in regard to trade and the development of infrastructure.

The Leader made the remarks during a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who visited Iran to attend the 16th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Ayatollah Khamenei said Iran and India should enhance cooperation on regional issues, the Tehran Times reported.

Iran has always had a positive view of India, the Leader said, adding that the two countries can enhance their cooperation on regional issues.

For his part, Singh stated that India is opposed to foreign interference in Syria's internal affairs and calls for a Syrian-Syrian solution to the crisis.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1684421>

- **Egypt-Iran rapprochement: Prospects and challenges**

President Mohamed Morsi is heading to Iran on Thursday for a four hour visit to attend the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Tehran, a move that signifies a diplomatic shift in the history of Egypt-Iran relations, and that could see the restoration of ties between the two countries.

Despite the fact that there is no clear Egyptian policy on the issue, the potential for future Iran-Egypt relations is there,

Elizabeth Iskander, a research fellow at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies has said.

Mustafa Ellabbad, director of Al-Sharq Centre for Regional and Strategic Studies, said that President Morsi's visit to Tehran was an important step for widening Egypt's room for maneuver, and for challenging attempts by the Persian Gulf States to blackmail the country through promises of conditional financial aid.

The visit will also be central to mediating a solution to the Syria crisis that cannot be reached without ties with Iran, which is a stumbling block on the path to resolution because of its support for the Syrian regime, Ellabbad explained.

Since the downfall of the Mubarak regime early last year, Iranian officials have expressed enthusiasm over the prospect of restarting relations with Egypt.

"Cooperation between the two countries – especially in the political sphere – will contribute to stability, security, and peace in the region," Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said at a recent press conference in Doha. Furthermore, Iranian

President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad congratulated Morsi for winning Egypt's first post-Mubarak presidential election earlier this year, noting that the two countries shared a "cultural heritage."

Signaling optimism in the wake of Mubarak's ouster, Iran requested permission to allow two of its warships to pass through Egypt's Suez Canal, the first passage of Iranian naval vessels through the strategic waterway since 1979. The Egyptian government agreed on the condition that the vessels did not contain "military equipment, nuclear materials or chemicals," the BBC reported at the time.

Furthermore, earlier this month, an Iranian delegation led by Alaeddin Boroujerdi Chairman of the Iranian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, met in Cairo with a handful of Egyptian officials, including former Foreign Minister and Arab League Chief Nabil Al-Arabi.

Some observers believe it is inevitable that Egypt will open a new chapter with Iran under a Muslim Brotherhood presidency. Throughout its 80-year history, the Brotherhood has maintained a

relationship with Iran, Ellabbad noted. For example, the Brotherhood's Yousef Nada mediated talks between the warring sides during the bloody Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s.

"The Muslim Brotherhood has sought to combat sectarianism, put the Shi'ite-Sunni conflict aside, and create a united Muslim front – even if that includes Iran," read an article published on Ikhwanweb, the Muslim Brotherhood's official English-language website, explaining that Mubarak had perceived the rising Shi'ite tide in the region as a threat to his power.

Therefore, the article asserts, Egypt's Mubarak-era government and state media launched a campaign against Shi'ism and Shi'ite symbols. "Under the influence of the tolerant Brotherhood, Egyptians are more comfortable with Shi'ite Islam than other Sunnis in other Arab countries," the article states.

Despite the religious and ideological differences between the two countries, "pragmatism has often been the order of the day for both Iranian and Egyptian foreign policy," Iskander noted. For example, Iran has supported both

Palestinian resistance faction Hamas, a Sunni-Muslim offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Lebanese Shi'ite resistance group Hezbollah. What's more, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei vocally supported Egypt's January 25 Revolution, which he described as an "Islamic Revolution."

The Muslim Brotherhood, for its part, has been cautious not to overstate the future of Egypt-Iran ties in official statements. Brotherhood spokesman Mahmoud Ghozlan recently told Egypt's Al-Ahram newspaper that Morsi's Iran visit came within the framework of the NAM summit, and should not be interpreted as an indication of a close future partnership with the Islamic Republic.

Morsi's visit to Tehran comes after decades of deteriorating relations between the two countries since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iran denounced late Egyptian president Anwar El-Sadat's peace deal with Israel in 1979. Ayatollah Khomeini, who led Iran's Islamic Revolution, labeled El-Sadat's decision as "treason against Islam", calling

on the Egyptian people to overthrow the El-Sadat regime.

Iran was further alienated when El-Sadat permitted the overthrown Shah of Iran and his family to take refuge in Cairo following Iran's revolution. Egypt, meanwhile, was likewise infuriated over Iran's decision to name a Tehran street after Khaled El-Islambouli, the man who allegedly assassinated El-Sadat in 1981.

Under the Mubarak regime, Egypt and Iran maintained thorny relations, despite having nominal economic ties. Hosni Mubarak considered Iran a threat to regional stability and Egyptian national security due to Iranian support for resistance groups Hamas and Hezbollah.

Looking at the future of the Iran-Egypt relations, Iskander believes they will depend on a number of factors: the development of Egypt's foreign policy, Cairo's relations with the U.S. and Israel, and whether Iran perceives its regional interests as including closer ties with Egypt.

Ellabbad, for his part, believes Tehran has a strong interest in restoring relations

with Cairo, as Egypt is considered a pillar of the Arab world and North Africa. Iran also needs to win a regional ally in light of its tense relationship with the Persian Gulf States and deteriorating relationship with Turkey. It also wants to maintain access to Egypt's strategic Suez Canal.

Ellabbad also notes the importance of not overestimating the potential for Iran-Egypt ties, explaining that Iran cannot serve as "strategic partner" to Egypt since strategic partnerships require harmonious political systems and common goals and values, which do not appear to be the case in this instance.

"Iran-Egypt relations might have a new framework and new terminology while largely remaining the same," he said. "Egypt might play new roles, but the quality of these roles will be bridled by Egypt's strategic partnerships with Saudi Arabia, the U.S. and Israel."

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1684221>

- **Iran committed to Mideast free of nuclear weapons, Leader tells NAM**

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei insisted on Thursday that Iran has never been seeking to produce nuclear weapons.

However, the Leader said Iran “will never give up” its right to a peaceful use of nuclear energy.

“I stress that the Islamic Republic has never been after nuclear weapons and that it will never give up the right of its people to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes,” the Leader said in an inaugural speech to the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Tehran.

The Leader added, “The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the use of nuclear, chemical and similar weapons as a great and unforgivable sin. We proposed the idea of ‘Middle East free of nuclear weapons’ and we are committed to it.”

Elsewhere in his speech the Leader advised the United States to stop supporting Israel, saying “this regime has created countless problems” for the U.S.

“Now I would like to give a benevolent piece of advice to American politicians

who always stood up to defend and support the Zionist regime. So far, this regime has created countless problems for you.”

During his speech to the high-profile summit attended by international figures including UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Ayatollah Khamenei said, “The UN Security Council has an illogical, unjust and completely undemocratic structure and mechanism... whose expiry date has passed.”

The following is the full text of Ayatollah Khamenei’s inaugural address posted on leader.ir website:

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Two Worlds, and may peace and blessings be upon the greatest and trustworthy Messenger and on his pure progeny, his select companions, and all the prophets and divine envoys.

I welcome you honorable guests, the leaders and delegations representing the member states of the Non-Aligned

Movement, and all the other participants of this great international summit.

We have gathered here to continue a movement with God's guidance and assistance and to give it new life and momentum on the basis of the current conditions and needs in the world. The movement was founded almost six decades ago thanks to the intelligence and courage of a few caring and responsible political leaders who were aware of the conditions and circumstances of their time.

Our guests have gathered here from different geographical locations, far and near, and they belong to different nationalities and races with different ideological, cultural and historical characteristics, but just as Ahmad Sukarno, one of the founders of this movement said in the famous Bandung Conference in the year 1955, the basis of establishing the Non-Aligned Movement is not geographical or racial and religious unity, but rather unity of needs. At that time, the member states of the Non-Aligned Movement were in need of a bond that could safeguard them against authoritarian, arrogant and insatiable

networks and today with the progress and spread of the instruments of hegemony, this need still exists.

I would like to point out another truth. Islam has taught us that in spite of their racial, linguistic and cultural differences, human beings share the same nature, which calls them to purity, justice, benevolence, compassion and cooperation. It is this universal human nature which – if it can safely steer away from misleading motives – guides human beings to monotheism and understanding of God's transcendent essence.

This brilliant truth has such potential that it can form the foundation of societies which are free and proud and at the same time enjoy progress and justice. It can extend the light of spirituality to all material and worldly endeavors of humankind and it can create a paradise on earth for human beings in advance of the other-worldly paradise, which has been promised by divine religions. And it is this common and universal truth that can form the foundations of brotherly cooperation among the nations that do not share any similarities in terms of outward structures,

historical background and geographical location.

Whenever international cooperation is based on such a foundation, governments will build their relationships with each other not on the basis of fear and threats, or greed and unilateral interests, or mediation of treasonous and venal individuals, but on the basis of wholesome and shared interests and more importantly, the interests of humanity. In this way, governments can relieve their awakened consciences and put the minds of their peoples at ease.

This values-based order is the exact opposite of the hegemony-based order, which has been upheld, propagandized and led by hegemonic Western powers in the recent centuries and by the domineering and aggressive government of America today.

Dear guests, today after the passage of nearly six decades, the main values of the Non-Aligned Movement remain alive and steady: values such as anti-colonialism, political, economic and cultural independence, non-alignment with any power blocs, and improving solidarity and

cooperation among the member states. The realities of today's world fall short of those values, but the collective will and comprehensive efforts to change the existing realities and achieve these values, though full of challenges, are promising and rewarding.

In the recent past, we have been witness to the failure of the policies of the Cold War era and the unilateralism that followed it. Having learnt lessons from this historical experience, the world is in transition towards a new international order and the Non-Aligned Movement can and should play a new role. This new order should be based on the participation of all nations and equal rights for all of them. And as members of this movement, our solidarity is an obvious necessity in the current era for establishing this new order.

Fortunately, the outlook of global developments promises a multi-faceted system in which the traditional power blocs are replaced with a group of countries, cultures and civilizations from different economic, social and political origins. The striking events that we have witnessed over the past three decades

clearly show that the emergence of new powers has coincided with the decline of the traditional powers. This gradual transition of power provides the non-aligned countries with an opportunity to play a significant and worthy role on the world stage and prepare the ground for a just and truly participatory global management. In spite of varying perspectives and orientations, we member states of this movement have managed to preserve our solidarity and bond over a long period of time within the framework of the shared values and this is not a simple and small achievement. This bond can prepare the ground for transitioning to a just and humane order.

Current global conditions provide the Non-Aligned Movement with an opportunity that might never arise again. Our view is that the control room of the world should not be managed by the dictatorial will of a few Western countries. It should be possible to establish and ensure a participatory system for managing international affairs, one that is global and democratic. This is what is needed by all the countries that have been directly or indirectly harmed as a

result of the transgression of a few bullying and hegemonic countries.

The UN Security Council has an illogical, unjust and completely undemocratic structure and mechanism. This is a flagrant form of dictatorship, which is antiquated and obsolete and whose expiry date has passed. It is through abusing this improper mechanism that America and its accomplices have managed to disguise their bullying as noble concepts and impose it on the world. They protect the interests of the West in the name of “human rights”. They interfere militarily in other countries in the name of “democracy”. They target defenseless people in villages and cities with their bombs and weapons in the name of “combating terrorism”. From their perspective, humanity is divided into first-, second- and third-class citizens. Human life is considered cheap in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and expensive in America and Western Europe. The security of America and Europe is considered important, while the security of the rest of humanity is considered unimportant. Torture and assassination are permissible and completely ignored if they are carried out by America, the Zionists and their

puppets. It does not trouble their conscience that they have secret prisons in various places on different continents, in which defenseless prisoners who have no legal representation and have not been tried in a court of law are treated in the most hideous and detestable way. Good and evil are defined in a completely one-sided and selective way. They impose their interests on the nations of the world in the name of “international law”. They impose their domineering and illegal demands in the name of “international community”. Using their exclusive and organized media network, they disguise their lies as the truth, their falsehood as true, and their oppression as efforts to promote justice. In contrast, they brand as lies every true statement that exposes their deceit and label every legitimate demand as roguish.

Friends, this flawed and harmful situation cannot continue. Everybody has become tired of this faulty international structure. The 99 percent movement of the American people against the centers of wealth and power in America and the widespread protests of the people in Western Europe against the economic policies of their governments show that

the people are losing their patience with this situation. It is necessary to remedy this irrational situation. Firm, logical and comprehensive bonds between member states of the Non-Aligned Movement can play an important role in finding a remedy.

Honorable audience, international peace and security are among the critical issues of today’s world and the elimination of catastrophic weapons of mass destruction is an urgent necessity and a universal demand. In today’s world, security is a shared need where there is no room for discrimination. Those who stockpile their anti-human weapons in their arsenals do not have the right to declare themselves as standard-bearers of global security. Undoubtedly, this will not bring about security for themselves either. It is most unfortunate to see that countries possessing the largest nuclear arsenals have no serious and genuine intention of removing these deadly weapons from their military doctrines and they still consider such weapons as an instrument that dispels threats and as an important standard that defines their political and international position. This conception

needs to be completely rejected and condemned.

Nuclear weapons neither ensure security, nor do they consolidate political power, rather they are a threat to both security and political power. The events that took place in the 1990s showed that the possession of such weapons could not even safeguard a regime like the former Soviet Union. And today we see certain countries which are exposed to waves of deadly insecurity despite possessing atomic bombs.

The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the use of nuclear, chemical and similar weapons as a great and unforgivable sin. We proposed the idea of “Middle East free of nuclear weapons” and we are committed to it. This does not mean forgoing our right to peaceful use of nuclear power and production of nuclear fuel. On the basis of international laws, peaceful use of nuclear energy is a right of every country. All should be able to employ this wholesome source of energy for various vital uses for the benefit of their country and people, without having to depend on others for exercising this right. Some Western countries,

themselves possessing nuclear weapons and guilty of this illegal action, want to monopolize the production of nuclear fuel. Surreptitious moves are under way to consolidate a permanent monopoly over production and sale of nuclear fuel in centers carrying an international label but in fact within the control of a few Western countries.

A bitter irony of our era is that the U.S. government, which possesses the largest and deadliest stockpiles of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction and the only country guilty of its use, is today eager to carry the banner of opposition to nuclear proliferation. The U.S. and its Western allies have armed the usurper Zionist regime with nuclear weapons and created a major threat for this sensitive region. Yet the same deceitful group does not tolerate the peaceful use of nuclear energy by independent countries, and even opposes, with all its strength, the production of nuclear fuel for radiopharmaceuticals and other peaceful and humane purposes. Their pretext is fear of production of nuclear weapons. In the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran, they themselves know that they are lying, but lies are

sanctioned by the kind of politics that is completely devoid of the slightest trace of spirituality. One who makes nuclear threats in the 21st century and does not feel ashamed, will he feel ashamed of lying?

I stress that the Islamic Republic has never been after nuclear weapons and that it will never give up the right of its people to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Our motto is: “Nuclear energy for all and nuclear weapons for none.” We will insist on each of these two precepts, and we know that breaking the monopoly of certain Western countries on production of nuclear energy in the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty is in the interest of all independent countries, including the members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Islamic Republic's successful experience in resistance against the bullying and comprehensive pressures by America and its accomplices has firmly convinced it that the resistance of a unified and firmly determined nation can overcome all enmities and hostilities and open a glorious path to its lofty goals. The comprehensive advances made by our country in the last two decades are facts

for all to see, as repeatedly attested by official international observers. All this has happened under sanctions, economic pressures and propaganda campaigns by networks affiliated with America and Zionism. The sanctions, which were regarded as paralyzing by nonsensical commentators, not only did not and will not paralyze us, but have made our steps steadier, elevated our resolve and strengthened our confidence in the correctness of our analyses and the inborn capacities of our nation. We have with our own eyes repeatedly witnessed divine assistance in these challenges.

Honored guests, I deem it necessary to speak about a very important issue, which though related to our region has dimensions extending far beyond it and which has influenced global policies for several decades. This issue is the agonizing issue of Palestine. The summary of this matter is that on the basis of a horrible Western plot and under the direction of England in the 1940s, an independent country with a clear historical identity called “Palestine” has been taken away from its people through the use of weapons, killings and deception and has been given to a group of people the

majority of whom are immigrants from European countries. This great usurpation – which at the outset was accompanied with massacres of defenseless people in towns and villages and their expulsion from their homes and homeland to bordering countries – has continued for more than six decades with similar crimes and continues to this very day. This is one of the most important issues of the human community.



Political and military leaders of the usurping Zionist regime have not avoided any crimes during this time: from killing the people, destroying their homes and farms and arresting and torturing men and women and even their children, to humiliating and insulting that nation and trying to destroy it in order to digest it in the haraam-eating stomach of the Zionist regime, to attacking their refugee camps in Palestine itself and in the neighboring

countries where millions of refugees live. Such names as Sabra and Shatila, Qana and Deir Yasin have been etched in the history of our region with the blood of the oppressed Palestinian people.

Even now after 65 years the same kind of crimes marks the treatment of Palestinians remaining in the occupied territories by the ferocious Zionist wolves. They commit new crimes one after the other and create new crises for the region. Hardly a day passes without reports of murder, injury and arrests of the youth who stand up to defend their homeland and their honor and protest against the destruction of their farms and homes. The Zionist regime, which has carried out assassinations and caused conflicts and crimes for decades by waging disastrous wars, killing people, occupying Arab territories and organizing state terror in the region and in the world, labels the Palestinian people as “terrorists”, the people who have stood up to fight for their rights. And the media networks which belong to Zionism and many of the Western and mercenary media repeat this great lie in violation of ethical values and journalistic commitment, and the political leaders who claim to defend human rights

have closed their eyes on all these crimes and support that criminal regime shamelessly and boldly and assume the role of their advocates.

Our standpoint is that Palestine belongs to the Palestinians and that continuing its occupation is a great and intolerable injustice and a major threat to global peace and security. All solutions suggested and followed up by the Westerners and their affiliates for “resolving the problem of Palestine” have been wrong and unsuccessful, and it will remain so in the future. We have put forth a just and entirely democratic solution. All the Palestinians – both the current citizens of Palestine and those who have been forced to immigrate to other countries but have preserved their Palestinian identity, including Muslims, Christians and Jews – should take part in a carefully supervised and confidence-building referendum and chose the political system of their country, and all the Palestinians who have suffered from years of exile should return to their country and take part in this referendum and then help draft a Constitution and hold elections. Peace will then be established.

Now I would like to give a benevolent piece of advice to American politicians who always stood up to defend and support the Zionist regime. So far, this regime has created countless problems for you. It has presented a hateful image of you to the regional peoples, and it has made you look like an accomplice in the crimes of the usurping Zionists. The material and moral costs borne by the American government and people on account of this are staggering, and if this continues, the costs might become even heavier in the future. Think about the Islamic Republic's proposal of a referendum and with a courageous decision, rescue yourselves from the current impossible situation. Undoubtedly, the people of the region and all free-thinkers across the world will welcome this measure.

Honorable guests, now I would like to return to my initial point. Global conditions are sensitive and the world is passing through a crucial historical juncture. It is anticipated that a new order shall be born. The Non-Aligned Movement, which includes almost two-thirds of the world community, can play a major role in shaping that future. The

holding of this major conference in Tehran is itself a significant event to be taken into consideration. By pooling our resources and capacities, we members of this movement can create a new historic and lasting role towards rescuing the world from insecurity, war and hegemony.

This goal can be achieved only through our comprehensive cooperation with each other. There are among us quite a few countries that are very wealthy and countries that enjoy international influence. It is completely possible to find solutions for problems through economic and media cooperation and through passing on experiences that help us improve and make progress. We need to strengthen our determination. We need to remain faithful to our goals. We should not fear the bullying powers when they frown at us, nor should we become happy when they smile at us. We should consider the will of God and the laws of creation as our support. We should learn lessons from what happened to the communist camp two decades ago and from the failure of the policies of so-called “Western liberal democracy” at the present time, whose signs can be seen by everybody in the streets of European countries and America

and in the insoluble economic problems of these countries. And finally, we should consider the Islamic Awakening in the region and the fall of the dictatorships in North Africa, which were dependent on America and were accomplices to the Zionist regime, as a great opportunity. We can help improve the “political productivity” of the Non-Aligned Movement in global governance. We can prepare a historic document aimed to bring about a change in this governance and to provide for its administrative tools. We can plan for effective economic cooperation and define paradigms for cultural relationships among ourselves. Undoubtedly, establishing an active and motivated secretariat for this organization will be a great and significant help in achieving these goals.

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/101-048-iran-committed-to-mideast-free-of-nuclear-weapons-leader-tells-nam>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Israeli Authorities to Evict Palestinians from Agricultural Land**

BETHLEHEM, August 30, 2012 (WAFA) – Israeli authorities Thursday handed a

number of Palestinians from the village of Nahhalin, west of Bethlehem, eviction orders to take over 12 dunums of land, according to local sources.

Head of Nahhalin village council, Osama Shakarneh, told Wafa that Israeli soldiers accompanied by civil administration employees handed eviction orders to Palestinians south of Nahhalin.

He pointed out that the soldiers have escalated their attacks against the village and its people by pumping waste water to their agricultural land and contaminating their drinking water spring.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20560>

- **Israeli Court Sentences Teenager to 4 Months in Jail**

JENIN, August 30, 2012 (Wafa) - The Israeli military court in Sale military camp Thursday sentenced a 17-year-old Palestinian to four months in jail, under the pretext of "security reasons", according to his family.

They said the court sentenced Ahmad Abu Bakr to four months in prison and imposed \$750 fine on him.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20562>

- **Israeli Forces Destroy Bedouin Sheds east of Bethlehem**

BETHELEHEM, August 30, 2012 (Wafa) – Israeli forces Thursday destroyed seven Bedouin residential tents and sheds in the grazing fields, east of Bethlehem, according to a local activist.

Coordinator of the Popular Committee against the Wall and settlements in Bethlehem, Hassan Brijieh, told Wafa that a large Israeli military force, accompanied by bulldozers, attacked the Bedouins and destroyed seven residential tents and sheds, leaving their residents without a home.

He called upon human rights organizations and all relevant parties to provide the necessary help in order to strengthen the steadfastness of the local residents, adding that this is the third time the Israeli forces attack them.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20561>

- **Netanyahu aims to avoid early election on budget**

Officials close to PM say he will do "everything to pass state budget," avoid elections believed to be bad for Likud.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu will do everything possible to pass the 2013 state budget and avoid initiating early elections that he believes would be bad for Israel and for the Likud, officials close to Netanyahu said Thursday.

The officials reacted to reports that senior Likud politicians were urging him to initiate an immediate election in order to avoid making inevitable cutbacks. The Likud politicians warned that making the cuts before the election could harm the party and help Labor.

Netanyahu said Wednesday that "what Israel needs now is a responsible budget." He warned that delaying making difficult economic decisions led to serious problems for other countries.

A Likud official loyal to Netanyahu said he knew for a fact that the prime minister had not made a decision on whether to initiate an early election. He said it was likely that two central factors involved in that decision would be whether the budget could be passed and how the Iranian issue is decided.

"The option of early elections is obviously there," the official said. "If he goes to elections now, he can't say on the campaign trail that there won't be cutbacks if he doesn't want to be perceived as a liar. He is talking to the heads of the parties in the coalition about the budget and the gaps are not wide."

Sources in Yisrael Beytenu and Shas said they wanted the next election to be held on time in October 2013 but that would not be a rubber stamp for cutbacks they find unacceptable. Likud officials denied a report that Shas had been given an ultimatum on the budget.

"We need to be concerned about what would happen if the budget passed in the government and then our coalition partners prevented it from passing in the Knesset," Vice premier Silvan Shalom told

Israel Radio. “The worst scenario is that the Likud will be blamed for the cutbacks and the budget does not even get passed.”

The budget is expected to come to a vote in the cabinet in mid-October. It must be presented to the Knesset by the end of October.

A Likud MK revealed that Netanyahu said in closed conversations that he regretted forming a short-lived national-unity government with Kadima and not initiating an election that would have been held last Tuesday.

Netanyahu met with Kadima leader Shaul Mofaz on Thursday and updated him on diplomatic, security and socioeconomic issues. The meeting took place 10 days after Mofaz wrote Attorney-General Yehuda Weinstein complaining that Netanyahu was not fulfilling his legal obligation to update the opposition leader monthly.

In the letter, Mofaz demanded an immediate meeting to discuss Netanyahu's preparations for a potential unilateral strike on Iran. He sent a

confidential document on Iran to Weinstein with the letter that was not released to the press.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=283295>

- **PA's Abbas to delay pursuit of UN statehood**

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas will not ask the UN General Assembly to recognize a Palestinian state next month, Foreign Minister Riad Maliki said on Thursday.

Abbas had said that he would seek the status of nonmember for a Palestinian state in the UN during next month's General Assembly meeting despite opposition from the US and Israel.



But Maliki said that instead Abbas would only deliver a speech at the General

Assembly session on September 27, where he was planning to announce his intention to seek the status of non-member in the UN.

“President Abbas will ask the head of the Palestinian mission to the UN to launch contacts with regional groups in the UN and the secretary-general about the best formula for presenting a request for membership that would win the support of a majority of countries,” Maliki told the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper.

Abbas’s decision to delay the new statehood bid will spare him a confrontation with the US administration, whose representatives have been exerting pressure on him in recent weeks to refrain from such a move on the eve of the American presidential election.

A senior PA official in Ramallah told The Jerusalem Post that Abbas decided to delay the statehood bid because of US “threats and extortion.” The official said that the US administration and some EU countries had threatened financial sanctions against the PA if Abbas insisted on filing another request with the UN for

recognition of a Palestinian state next month.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=283327>

- **Rocket fired from Gaza strikes house in Sderot**

Two rockets fired into southern Israel; Sderot home sustains rocket damage for the second time; one person suffering from shock.

A rocket fired from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel struck a house in the Sderot area on Friday morning.

The house sustained some damage and one person was suffering from shock as a result of the attack.

An additional rocket set off the red alert warning system in the area and is believed to have fallen in an open field in the Sha'ar Hanegev Regional Council. On Thursday night a rocket landed in the Ashkelon Coast Council area, causing no injuries or damage.

The attack marked the second time that the same Sderot home had been damaged

in a rocket attack, according to Israel Radio. Security forces arrived on the scene to remove the remains of the rocket.

The area has seen several rockets fall in the last few days since children returned to school from summer vacation on Monday. The IDF struck munitions depots in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday in response to the rocket fire.

According to the IDF Spokesman's Office, some 450 rockets have been fired from Gaza into southern Israel since the beginning of the year.

<http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Article.aspx?id=283346>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Censorship returns to Tunisia: Journalists accuse ruling Islamists of clampdown**

Authorities say they want to 'clean up' system of fallen regime accomplices as journalists accuse them of seeking to take control of country's media.

TUNIS - Tunisian journalists and media figures on Thursday accused the

government of clamping down on freedom of expression, as the Islamist-led state is criticised for tightening its grip on the press.

Two state-run newspapers said their new director, who they consider too close to the ruling Ennahda party, censored an article they were to publish criticising his appointment by the government.

And the head of a TV channel gave himself up to the authorities on Thursday under an arrest warrant, claiming this was ordered in retaliation for a political satire show his station aired.

International NGOs have recently criticised the Tunis government for seeking to manipulate the media, including by appointing new directors to head public media groups without consulting their staff.

"This is harassment," a journalist and unionist said of the alleged censorship by state-owned Dar Assabah press group director Lotfi Touati of newspapers Le Temps and Essabah.

The two dailies were to run an article criticising Touati's recent appointment to his position by the government, but he stopped it being printed overnight Wednesday and called the police to the office, Sana Farhat said.

"The new heads want to control the newspapers' editorial line," Farhat added, accusing the director of taking orders from the government.

She said the article, which was also to announce a September 11 strike, was replaced by commercials.

Meanwhile Sami Fehri, head of Ettounsiya TV, turned himself in to the attorney general's office almost a week after his arrest warrant was issued, his lawyer said.

In a video statement released during the night, Fehri said he was going to the attorney general to allege unlawful prosecution and an attack on freedom of expression.

"Freedom of expression with which we live since January 14 (2011, the day Ben Ali fled Tunisia) is threatened," said Fehri.

He believes his arrest was ordered because of his channel's satirical puppet show, which was recently and abruptly halted allegedly under pressure from the authorities.

Fehri last week told Express FM radio he would not fight the warrant.

"A huge machine has crushed us to death," he said of the government. "I would never have imagined it could happen like that. They have crossed every red line."

Official news agency TAP has said Fehri was being charged with "illegal use of Tunisian state television resources" during the rule of Ben Ali.

The authorities say they want to "clean up" the system of accomplices of the fallen regime, like Fehri who was an associate of Belhassen Trabelsi, brother of Ben Ali. Trabelsi has fled to Canada.

The warrant against Fehri came days after protests by Tunisian journalists accusing the government of seeking to curtail press freedom and take control of the country's media.

Reporters Without Borders on Wednesday condemned the government for tightening its control of state media, highlighting the "urgent need" for independent regulation of the broadcasting sector.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54130>

- **From his 'exile', Shafiq lashes out at 'political' travel ban**

Former premier denounces as 'political' a travel ban which may lead to his arrest upon returning to Egypt.

CAIRO - Former premier Ahmed Shafiq denounced on Thursday as "political" a travel ban which may lead to his arrest upon returning to Egypt, in remarks to the Abu Dhabi-based Arabic Skynews channel.

"This is a political decision that has no legal basis," Shafiq said in an interview conducted in Dubai, adding that he would not hesitate to return to Egypt when "it is necessary."

On Wednesday, judicial sources in Cairo said Shafiq had been placed on a watchlist and slapped with a travel ban.

Shafiq, a former air force chief appointed prime minister by president Hosni Mubarak before his overthrow early last year, is under investigation for an allegedly illegal sale of state land to Mubarak's sons.



He travelled to the United Arab Emirates after losing to his Islamist nemesis Mohamed Morsi in June's presidential election. Shafiq's spokesman said at the time that he would return to Egypt and form a party.

Shafiq strongly criticised the new government in Egypt.

"The Freedom and Justice Party (political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood) is

mistaken if it thinks it can rule Egypt with a few small parties," he said.

He also confirmed his intention of forming a party called the National Movement for Egyptians.

A source said on Wednesday it was unclear what would happen to Shafiq if he returned to Egypt. In the past, people placed on the watchlist have been detained on arrival.

A number of former regime officials, including Mubarak himself, have been convicted of corruption or killing protesters during the 18-day uprising that unseated the dictator last year.

Mubarak's party leader and senate speaker Safwat al-Sharif was on Wednesday referred to trial along with his two sons for allegedly making 600 million pounds (roughly \$100 million) in illicit gains.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54132>

- **Tunisia: battle for freedom of expression reaches new highs**

Tunisia newspapers accuse Ennahda newly appointed head of Dar Assabah press group of censoring article criticising his nomination.

TUNIS - Tunisian newspaper staff on Thursday accused their controversial new director, appointed by the Islamist-led government, of censoring an article criticising his nomination.



Two state-owned dailies were to publish a piece condemning the appointment of Lotfi Touati, who they consider too close to the ruling Ennahda party, and announcing a September 11 strike, journalist and unionist Sana Farhat said.

Touati stopped the printing of Le Temps and Essabah on Wednesday night, called the police to the office where staff were protesting and replaced the column with commercials, said Farhat.

"It was censored... this is harassment," he said.

"The new heads want to control the newspapers' editorial line," Farhat added, accusing the director of taking orders from the government.

The national union of journalists and international NGOs have criticised the Tunis government for seeking to manipulate the media, including by appointing new directors to head public media groups without consulting their staff.

Touati heads the Dar Assabah press group, which incorporates Arabic-language Essabah and French-language Le Temps.

Reporters Without Borders on Wednesday condemned the government for tightening its control of state media, highlighting the "urgent need" for independent regulation of the broadcasting sector.

The authorities say they are working to remove from the media landscape those

who worked for the ousted regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54125>

- **Morsy's visit to China reinforces old regime's economic ties**

China's President Hu Jintao (L) and his Egyptian counterpart Mohamed Morsy (R) inspect the honour guards during an official welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, 28 August 2012.

President Mohamed Morsy's trip to China this week was deemed intuitive by analysts, given a thriving trade connection between the two countries. But it also is an index of Morsy's reliance on the old regime's economic order.

A strong trade relationship with China is "very much an idea borne from the [Hosni] Mubarak regime, so it's representing the ongoing structure. The Egyptians and Chinese have been talking for several years," says Farah Halime, founder of the Rebel Economy website, who has been researching Egypt-China relations.

Bilateral cooperation increased to US\$8.8 billion in 2011, up from \$7 billion in 2010, unlike bilateral cooperation with other trade partners, which has decreased because of the turbulence amid Mubarak's ouster. China exports \$7.2 billion to Egypt while \$1.6 billion goes in the opposite direction.

Morsy is traveling with an 80-member delegation of businessmen headed by Muslim Brotherhood member and businessman Hassan Malek. Much of the delegation includes businessmen affiliated with the Mubarak regime and the defunct National Democratic Party because of their pre-existing ties in the area of Chinese trade cooperation.

Yet, according to analyst Shana Marshall, in one respect Morsy's visit does represent a break with Egypt's prior practice. "Whereas Mubarak usually planned his visits to coincide with multilateral summits that overshadowed his own individual meetings with Chinese leaders - no doubt in deference to the U.S. - Morsy made China the centerpiece of his travel agenda," Marshall told Egypt Independent. "But this isn't a Morsy-

specific policy - it's just a reflection of China's enormous capacity for overseas investment."

"There's politics and there's economics in business, and in the case where there is a pre-existing relationship, it would be foolish to ignore it. Morsy is being strategic," says Deborah Brautigam, professor and director of the International Development Program at John Hopkins University.

The two countries are expected to sign eight different trade agreements in various sectors, such as electricity and water desalinization, according to Industry and Trade Minister Hatem Saleh.

"Historically, the relationship has been skewed in the direction of Chinese exports to Egypt, so these new discussions are more about cementing a long-term investment in Egypt from China. We're hearing that specific sectors will be ring-fenced for investments, such as solid-waste processing and industrial construction infrastructure. The Chinese do this everywhere — they're very good at putting money into huge industrial developments," Halime says.

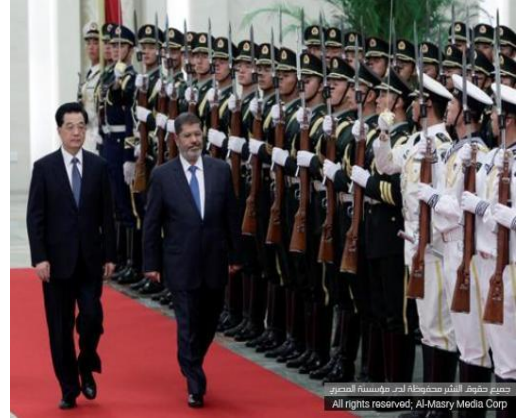
However, Brautigam says it was more about targeting specific sectors rather than ring-fencing them.

“China takes this approach with other countries, where it works out areas of specific engagement that would interest both sides,” she says. “The oldest trade and cooperation zone in Africa and one of the most longstanding worldwide is in Egypt, and originated in 1994 at the Egyptian government’s request to China.”

She says at this stage, Egypt needs foreign direct investment, and calls it a “good move.”

Halime says that for China, the move has precedent.

“China is a country that is not political with its business decisions. It will invest in risky countries like Angola, Sudan and Libya, and it does that with the aim of building a footprint, but it will still be beneficial for the other side,” Halime says.



“Looking at the figures, Chinese exports to Egypt have increased. Chinese officials were telling me that while investors from other countries remained in Egypt, they were hesitant and wary, but China continued its investment and exports,” she adds.

There have been mutterings of possible military cooperation as well, in which China would provide Egypt with armaments. However, Ahmed Salam, media coordinator for the Egyptian Embassy in Beijing, refutes this, saying it obviously wasn’t on the agenda because there were no military figures in the Egyptian delegation.

However, Halime points out that China has sent over hundreds of police vehicles to Egypt in a recent deal.

“That’s a security investment. It may be indicative of further armaments investment,” Halime says.

Brautigam explains that armament is an area of cooperation that China is interested in.

“For the arms exporters, it’s the middle-income and low-income markets they target, because Chinese weapons aren’t good enough to sell elsewhere, so Chinese armaments exporters are interested in expanding their business in these markets,” she says.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/morsy-s-visit-china-reinforces-old-regime-s-economic-ties>

- **Morsy's Iran visit sparks controversy**

Egypt's President Mohamed Morsy (L) speaks to Iran's Executive Vice President Hamid Baghai (R) during their meeting at Mehrabad airport in Tehran ahead of the 16th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, 30 August 2012. Morsy arrived in Tehran on Thursday, the first Egyptian leader to visit Iran since its Islamic revolution in 1979.

President Mohamed Morsy arrived in Tehran on 30 August to participate in the Non-Aligned Movement summit, in a contentious leap towards diplomatic relations, which have been severed for more than 30 years.

Morsy is the first Egyptian president to set foot in Iran since 1979, following Iran’s Islamic Revolution and Egypt’s peace treaty with Israel. Both countries have depended on interest sections, a low level of diplomatic representation, since their diplomatic ties were severed.

The visit is deemed contentious for a host of players both inside and outside Egypt.

Hamid Gul Sharifi, an Iranian journalist based in London, says there are many obstacles preventing the revival of diplomatic ties between Egypt and Iran — notably, the US and Israel.

“The US and Israel are wary of this visit and how it will affect their interests in the region, and they tried to prevent it from taking place,” Sharifi told Egypt Independent, suggesting that Morsy needs to proceed with caution with Iran,

especially ahead of his planned visit to the US in September.

Another player cynically observing the visit is the Gulf, contends Emad Gad, international affairs expert at Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, and former MP. Besides an intricate web of political relations between Egypt and the Gulf, the former is a recipient of important aid packages from the region, which are often negotiated through soft diplomacy.

On the domestic front, Salafi groups have openly condemned the visit, citing Iran's alliance with the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, which for more than a year has been violently cracking down on an ongoing revolution.

"Iran wants to exploit the Non-Aligned Movement summit to break the political isolation imposed on it...This is one of the most important cards [we have] to force the fall of the Syrian regime," wrote Nader Bakkar, spokesperson of the Salafi Nour Party, in an article titled "No need for [visiting] Iran, Mr. President," published by the state-run daily Al-Ahram.

However, Mahmoud Hussein, secretary general of the Muslim Brotherhood, voices a different opinion, saying Morsy's visit could help sway Iran from backing Assad's regime. He says the Brotherhood supported Morsy's visit to Iran as a "positive step," while maintaining their call for Assad to step down in response to the revolutionaries' demands.

Earlier this month, the new Egyptian president — who has been in power since June — proposed the establishment of a mediation committee including Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to help end the bloodshed in Syria. Iranian officials welcomed the proposal.

But more urgent than Syria for Egyptian Salafis is the question of Shias, with some groups expressing their worries that strengthening relations with Iran would help boost the "Shia surge" in a Sunni-dominated Egypt.

According to Bakkar, exporting the "Shia surge" to Africa, and especially Egypt as one of the biggest Islamic countries, is a "hobby" for the Iranian regime.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/morsy-s-iran-visit-sparks-controversy>

- **Tunisians fear growing salafist violence**

A wave of attacks by religious extremists has some Tunisians worried about the state of democracy.

Tunisian artists, intellectuals and activists are speaking out about a spate of salafist attacks across the country.

In one of the latest attacks, poet Mohamed Sghaier Ouled Ahmed was violently assaulted on Saturday (August 25th) after a television appearance in which he criticised salafists in Tunisia.

"I have had my share of the culture that Rachid Ghannouchi said the salafists are promising," Ould Ahmed reportedly wrote on his Facebook page. "I'm not the first to have been assaulted and will not be the last."

On August 16th, salafists attacked a cultural festival in Bizerte using swords, wounding four people.

On August 14th, salafists prevented Tunisian actor Lotfi Abdelli from

performing his comedy act "100% Halal" at Menzel Bourguiba in Bizerte under the pretext that it included expressions offensive to Islam and because of the actor's deliberate mocking of religion.

Following the attack, Abdelli confirmed that he received threats of murder and beating, noting that an imam of a mosque in the area incited the people against him and urged them to boycott his play.

A French advisor on a visit to the tourist city of Bizerte wasn't spared by the salafist wave of violence in the country.

Jamel Gharbi, a Tunisian-born member of Le Mans city council, said that while he was on a tour with his family near the Bizerte port, about 50 people armed with sticks and batons surrounded him and spoke directly to his wife and daughter under the pretext that their clothes were indecent, "although their clothes were not provocative".

In a statement made to French media, Gharbi said that the salafists pointed out to him that he was in a Muslim country, then rebuked him and beat him with their batons.

After the attack on the Bizerte festival, the Tunisian culture ministry spoke out against the growing wave of violence.

"The Ministry of Culture condemns this dangerous and strange downfall and believes that such incidents don't only represent an assault on freedom of expression and innovation, but also threaten sectarian tensions strange to our Tunisian society which is known for its moderation and tolerance," the August 21st statement read.

The Ministry urged all entities "to confront such extremist phenomena" and to "hold the perpetrators accountable and not to be lenient with them".

Tunisian rights groups have criticised the government's inefficiency in confronting the salafists' violence and accused it of being lax in enforcing the law.

"The more lax the authority is in enforcing the law and protecting personal freedoms and rights of citizens and innovators, the greater opportunity it gives to groups and individuals to continue their attempts to impose their views and convictions by

force," Salaheddine Jourchi, a specialist in Islamic movements said.

Meanwhile, the Euro-Mediterranean Observatory for Human Rights (EMOHR) urged Tunisian authorities in a statement August 18th "to take strict legal measures to stop violations by salafist groups" in the country.

In its turn, the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights demanded the administrative and security authorities in the country bear their responsibility in full without any further hesitation in order to contain the salafist violence phenomenon, track down those involved and open an immediate investigation about all entities that may be behind them or colluding with them.

It also stressed the need to enforce the law and to protect the country against the dangers of sliding into a whirlpool of violence that may have fatal consequences.

http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2012/08/30/feature-01

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Al-Qaeda threat against Lebanon
Shiites genuine, serious**

BEIRUT: The recent warning by the Abdallah Azzam Brigades against Shiites in Lebanon amounts to a serious threat of violence that could spark off a resurgence of sectarian conflict in Lebanon.

The statement, which appeared as an audio message on a jihadist website on Aug. 17 and was recently picked up by the media, warned Shiites in Lebanon that “the positions of Hezbollah and the Amal Movement vis-à-vis the Syrian revolution do not serve the sect’s best interest ... If you maintain your arrogant attitude, you will be punished, and you will pay. You only have yourselves to blame.”

The message said Shiites in Lebanon would bear the consequences if they insist on linking themselves to the Syrian President Bashar Assad.

“If you stay with him, you shall go with him,” it said.

The statement was attributed to the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, an alleged Al-

Qaeda branch that is active in Lebanon and Syria. It has claimed rocket attacks from Lebanon into Israel in the past.

Stephen Tankel, an assistant professor at American University in Washington, D.C., and a non-resident scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said the statement by the group was not at all surprising.

“The Abdallah Azzam Brigades is certainly not ideologically opposed to targeting Shiites, and we shouldn’t be surprised to see that type of behavior escalate in line with sectarian violence in Syria,” he said.

“It’s unclear whether that will mean going after Hezbollah and Amal specifically. This wouldn’t be the first time a group of jihadists threatened actions they weren’t able to back up, or bit off more than they could chew,” he added.

Tankel, a terrorism expert, said the Abdallah Azzam Brigades “has likely got some connectivity with militants based in North Lebanon and possibly a small foothold for itself as well.”

The Al-Qaeda threat is genuine and serious, according to Ahmad Moussalli, political science professor at the American University of Beirut and an expert on political Islam. “The Abdallah Azzam Brigades are active in the North [of Lebanon], and they have been moving freely between Lebanon and Syria as a result of the Syrian crisis,” Moussalli said.

“They consider this to be a golden opportunity to strike against targets that were far from their reach in the past ... Looking at the border situation now, they can transfer militants from Syria to Lebanon in order to carry out attacks against Hezbollah and Amal Movement,” he added.

Sheikh Shadi Jebara, a Tripoli-based Salafist leader, denied any presence of the Abdallah Azzam Brigades in northern Lebanon.

“I can assure you, and I know what I am talking about, that Abdallah Azzam Brigades are not present in the north,” he said.

“I was accused in the past of being affiliated with Al-Qaeda, and I happen to

know most of the Salafists and Salafist jihadists in Lebanon, and I know as a matter of fact that we do not have Al-Qaeda people among us,” he added.

Salafism is a form of Islam that advocates a return to the roots of the religion by following the lifestyle of the Prophet Mohammad and his companions. It is a nonviolent movement in its origin, however, a new form of Salafism – often referred to as Jihadist Salfism – emerged with the birth of Al-Qaeda in the late 1990s.

Salafist jihadists believe that the use of violence is legitimate to achieve social and political goals and have previously threatened and carried out attacks on Shiites in various countries.

Jebara condemned the Al-Qaeda statement and said it does not serve the interests of Salafists in Lebanon. “Salafists have a clear agenda. We want to topple the Syrian regime and we are not interested in stirring violence in Lebanon, especially when it comes to targeting an entire sect,” he said.

“Yes, we fought against pro-Syrian regime militants in Jabal Mohsen because we came under attack ... The problems with Jabal Mohsen are not new, but this has nothing to do with the Alawites. We are not targeting Alawites,” he added.

Clashes between anti-Assad Sunnis of Bab al-Tabbaneh and pro-Assad Alawites of Jabal Mohsen rocked the northern city of Tripoli earlier this month, leaving at least 16 people killed and more than 120 wounded, before a cease-fire was agreed.

Jebara, who took part in the Tripoli clashes, said he believed Al-Qaeda was not interested in taking its fight from Syria to Lebanon.

“Al-Qaeda’s strategy is to focus on Syria and unify its efforts to target the Syrian regime. I do not think they are interested in opening a new front here in Lebanon,” he explained.

Tankel, however, said it remains unclear whether “it makes sense for the Sunni jihadist movement to shift the focus from Syria at this stage.”

“Depending on the degree that Al-Qaeda and associated movements benefit from instability, they may see helping to spread that instability throughout the region as a net plus for them. That said, there are arguably wiser ways of doing so than taking on Hezbollah,” he added.



Meanwhile, Qassem Qassir, an expert on Islamist movements, said Lebanese security forces had received information in the past two months about possible terrorist operations that target Lebanese religious and political figures.

“We all heard about the threats against Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, so in that context I would not be surprised if Al-Qaeda tries to launch attacks in Lebanon,” he said.

Berri, the head of the Shiite Amal Movement, was allegedly on a hit-list and

was warned by security forces about possible attempts against his life.

“I think Hezbollah is aware of such threats and is taking pre-emptive measures,” Qassir said.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Aug-31/186237-al-qaeda-threat-against-lebanon-shiites-genuine-serious.ashx#ixzz256m1YnFj>

- **Lebanon's Arabic press digest - Aug 31, 2012**

Following are summaries of some of the main stories in a selection of Lebanese newspapers Friday. The Daily Star cannot vouch for the accuracy of these reports.

As-Safir

Khamenei warns against transporting regional problems to Lebanon

The upcoming Cabinet session will test its credibility in dealing with the issue of oil exploration amid the difference between its components regarding the Foreign Ministry's report on the Special Economic Zone. Meanwhile, the countdown begins to appoint members of the oil committee.

The highlight of diplomatic action Thursday was President Michel Sleiman's participation in the 16th Non-aligned Movement summit in the Iranian capital and his meeting with Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. The latter warned during the meeting that some foreign parties are trying to “transport some of the problems in regional countries to Lebanon,” noting that the parties and sects of Lebanon “can foil these movement via the resistance party.”

An-Nahar

Case of kidnapped gets mechanism for applying [political pressure]

The international day for victims of enforced disappearance drew most of the domestic attention, raising the general issue of those kidnapped and particularly those detained in Syrian prisons following the return to Lebanon of a detainee, Yacoub Shamoun, after 27 years of captivity in Syria.

Given the stances and action by committees and bodies concerned with this case, it appeared that there is

momentum for establishing the National Commission to resolve the case of victims of enforced disappearance according to the draft law presented by Justice Minister Shakib Qortbawi.

This legislative move should be met with exceptional efforts, locally and internationally, following efforts by some of the bodies to prove that there are detainees alive in Syrian prisons.

Ad-Diyar

An international phenomenon in Tehran

The summit in Iran achieved great success, bringing together countries in Iran at a time when these countries work on fighting Iran and isolating it from the world. And so the world came to Iran. If the summit had not been a major international event, Jeffrey Feltman, who is known for his animosity toward Hezbollah and Iran, would not have come.

And for the first time since 1979 and following severed ties between Iran and Egypt, Ahmadinajad met with Egyptian President Mohammad Mursi; a decision was made to resume ties between the

countries and strengthen coordination between Egypt and Iran.

The second highlight of the event was Mursi's speech, in which he attacked the Syrian regime, prompting the Syrian delegation to leave the hall.

The third highlight was President Michel Sleiman's comments that he supports all security forces and that no one should interpret his remarks as supporting one group over the other. [According to Sleiman,] in order to preserve the prestige of the Lebanese state, support should not be withdrawn from Maj. Gen. Ashraf Rifi and Brig. Gen. Wisam Hasan. The reason for [such remarks] is that the president and the prime minister regretted receiving Rifi and Hasan following the arrest of Michel Samaha, according to information obtained by Ad-Diyar.

Al-Akhbar

Kahwagi: Army capable of severely hitting gunmen

The commander of the Army addressed the political class regarding its way of dealing with the military institution,

rejecting blackmail. He also specified the local goals of his military plan, while Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri voiced his own stances regarding domestic issues Friday.

Strongly worded statements were made by Gen. Jean Kahwagi concerning the campaigns against the Army. He affirmed that the Army will not allow any political party to blackmail it on any issues. It will also not allow any party to make it seem to be in support of one party or another.

Kahwagi also said that the Army will no longer be silenced when targeted verbally or physically.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Aug-31/186245-lebanons-arabic-press-digest---aug-31-2012.ashx#ixzz256mAdJbD>

- **Security forces demand SSNP members hand over assailants**

BEIRUT: Security forces have surrounded the offices of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) in Beirut's Hamra district and are demanding the handover of assailants who attacked personnel earlier Friday.

Security sources told The Daily Star that five members of the SSNP attacked at least one member of a five-man Internal Security Forces patrol and stole his weapons.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Aug-31/186246-security-forces-demand-ssnp-members-hand-over-assailants.ashx#ixzz256mDWCBO>

6. SYRIA

- **Egypt says Syria's "oppressive regime" must go**

DUBAI/AMMAN: Egypt called on Thursday for intervention to halt bloodshed in Syria, telling a meeting of 120 nations it was their duty to stand against the "oppressive regime" of Bashar Assad, prompting a Syrian walkout.

President Mohamed Mursi, elected two months ago after a popular uprising toppled Egypt's long-standing leader Hosni Mubarak, said Assad had lost legitimacy in his fight to crush a 17-month-old revolt in which 20,000 people have been killed.

Mursi's scathing speech to a summit of non-aligned leaders, hosted by Assad's

Shiite ally Iran, prompted Syria's foreign minister to accuse the moderate Sunni Islamist leader of inciting further bloodshed in Syria.

The political broadside against the Syrian president came as rebels said they shot down a fighter plane in northern Syria, where his air force has been bombarding opposition-held towns in a fierce counter-offensive against insurgents.

It was the latest strike by Assad's foes on the air power he has increasingly relied on to crush the uprising. Rebels said this week they attacked a northern military air base and shot down a helicopter that was bombarding a district of Damascus.

"The bloodshed in Syria is our responsibility on all our shoulders and we have to know that the bloodshed cannot stop without effective interference from all of us," Mursi said.

"We all have to announce our full solidarity with the struggle of those seeking freedom and justice in Syria, and translate this sympathy into a clear political vision that supports a peaceful transition to a democratic system of rule

that reflects the demands of the Syrian people for freedom."

His comments prompted Syria's Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem to storm out of the meeting, complaining that Mursi was inciting fighters to "continue shedding Syrian blood", Syrian state television said.

Assad, in his first television interview since rebels took their fight into the heart of Damascus and the country's biggest city, Aleppo, said on Wednesday his fight to put down the uprising was going well but needed more time.

"Everyone wants this battle to be completed in days or weeks but this isn't reasonable, because we are in the middle of a regional and international struggle and it needs time to be resolved," he said.

Mainly peaceful protests were met with force by Assad's military, and the uprising has degenerated into a civil war with sectarian overtones and regional dimensions. The mainly Sunni Muslim rebels are backed by regional Sunni powers, particularly Gulf Arab states and Turkey.

Assad, whose Alawite community is an offshoot of Shiite Islam, has support from Iran, a rival of Gulf Arab states and Western powers. Lebanon's Shiite militia Hezbollah has also shown solidarity with the Syrian president.

The role of regional powers has assumed greater significance because of deadlock at U.N. Security Council, where diplomatic stalemate has marginalized the major powers.

U.S., Russian and Chinese ministers are not expected to attend Thursday's U.N. Security Council meeting on Syria, underlining the fact that both Assad's critics and backers on the council see little prospect of it taking any action.

"We wanted a resolution on humanitarian issues, but we faced a double refusal," said a French diplomat, whose country will chair the meeting in New York.

"The United States and Britain believe we have reached the end of what can be achieved at the Security Council, and Moscow and Beijing said that such a resolution would have been biased."



Nearly a year and a half after the uprising erupted, Assad's political foes are equally divided.

A member of the Syrian National Council, which once hoped to win international endorsement as the country's leadership-in-waiting, resigned this week complaining it was not doing enough to back the revolt and must be replaced by a new political authority.

"My sense was that the SNC was not up to facing the increasing challenges on the ground," Basma Kodmani, the latest council member to break from the SNC, told Reuters.

The Syrian Martyrs Brigade said on Thursday it brought down a plane near the town of al-Thayabiya. Video footage on Al Arabiya television showed what appeared to be smoke in the sky and a person

parachuting down. An army helicopter hovered over the area, apparently in search of the pilot.

"The brigade has started targeting the regime's air assets, including military airports," a member of the group said from Idlib, declining to give further details.

As well as targeting rebels, Assad's jets and artillery have also struck at least 10 bakeries in Aleppo province in the last three weeks, killing dozens of people as they waited in line to buy bread, the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch said.

It said the attacks were either deliberate or done without care to avoid the hundred of civilians forced to queue outside a dwindling number of bakeries in Syria's biggest city, a front line in the civil war.

One attack two weeks ago killed around 60 people and wounded more than 70, it said.

The fighting around Aleppo, Damascus and the southern province of Deraa, where protests against Assad first erupted in March 2011, has prompted waves of

refugees to flood into neighboring Turkey and Jordan.

Turkey urged the United Nations to protect displaced Syrians inside their own country, to take the pressure off its crowded refugee camps, and France said it was studying the issue of buffer zones in Syria, an idea Assad dismissed as unrealistic.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Aug-30/186159-syria-egypt-clash-as-rebels-claim-mig-shot-down.ashx#ixzz256mPdwK3>

- **Turkey appeals to U.N. council for Syria safe zone**

UNITED NATIONS: Turkey appealed to a reluctant U.N. Security Council for a safe haven for thousands of Syrians facing a "humanitarian disaster" as Britain and France said they would rule out no options - including a no-fly zone - to aid residents fleeing an escalating civil war.

Turkish leaders, however, held out little hope Thursday for the endorsement of a deeply divided council that has been paralyzed on taking action to stop the 18-

month uprising that has killed more than 20,000 people.

"How long are we going to sit and watch while an entire generation is being wiped out by random bombardment and deliberate mass targeting?" asked Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. "Let's not forget that if we do not act against such a crime against humanity happening in front of our eyes, we become accomplices to the crime."

Davutoglu, whose country is hosting more than 80,000 Syrian refugees, said he came to the council with hope that its members would take "long overdue steps" to help suffering people and establish camps inside Syria for those forced to flee their homes.

"Apparently, I was wrong about my expectations," he told the council. "This meeting will not even end with a presidential or press statement, let alone a robust resolution."

The path to the council's agreement on a safe zone for Syrians is fraught with obstacles, headed by the reluctance of Russia and China, Syria's most important

allies. They have vetoed three Western-backed resolutions in the Security Council seeking to pressure President Bashar Assad's government with the threat of sanctions.

Moscow and Beijing were highly critical of the no-fly zone established by NATO to protect civilians during last year's Libyan revolt against longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi, saying its enforcement went beyond the Security Council mandate. Western diplomats said enforcing the zone required taking out Libya's air defenses and attacking tanks and military vehicles that posed threats to civilians.

Russia and China, Syria's most important allies, have vetoed three Western-backed resolutions in the Security Council seeking to pressure Assad's government. They vehemently oppose any threat to Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In addition, Russia has a military base in Syria. There are also serious political differences among council members. While the U.S., its European allies and other members say Assad must go, Russia and China oppose any effort to replace him that doesn't have the support of the Syrian people.

Syria's U.N. Ambassador Bashar Ja'afari accused unnamed Security Council powers of "promoting imminent military intervention under humanitarian pretexts."

"It is clear that certain states do not see the issue of humanitarian aid any way other than as part of a biased political agenda," he said.

Before Thursday's meeting, Britain and France announced new funding for refugees and left open the possibility of more aggressive action, including a military-enforced no-fly zone to protect a safe area for those fleeing the war.

"We are not ruling out any options for the future," Britain's Foreign Secretary William Hague told a news conference.

Hague said safe zones should remain an option, although he didn't say when they might be seriously considered.

"We do not know how this crisis will develop ... over the coming months. It is steadily getting worse," Hague said. "We are ruling nothing out, and we have

contingency planning for a wide range of scenarios."

Britain and France are veto-wielding members of the Security Council as well as key NATO members. Asked whether the options would include a NATO-enforced no-fly zone, without Security Council authorization, Hague said, "We are not ruling out any options."

A U.N. diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, said the U.S. had consultations with Turkey on its safe zone proposal and the Americans, British and French are skeptical about the feasibility of NATO establishing such a zone, so "for the time being, nobody is there yet."

In his speech, the Turkish minister told the council that that the camps established for fleeing Syrians inside the country "should have full protection."

Davutoglu also called on the council to visit refugee camps in neighboring countries, to adopt a unified response to stop the indiscriminate bombing of residential areas, and to solve the issue of

Syrians displaced from their homes and trapped within the country.

Davutoglu mentioned examples of "the cost of procrastination" including the 1995 Serb massacre in Bosnia of more than 8,000 Muslims taken from a U.N. enclave in Srebrenica and Saddam Hussein's gassing of 5,000 people in the Kurdish village of Halabja in 1988.

Referring to the council divisions, Davutoglu said the Cold War is over and it's time to put aside the mindset, "sterile power struggles and competition of interests" emanating from that era.

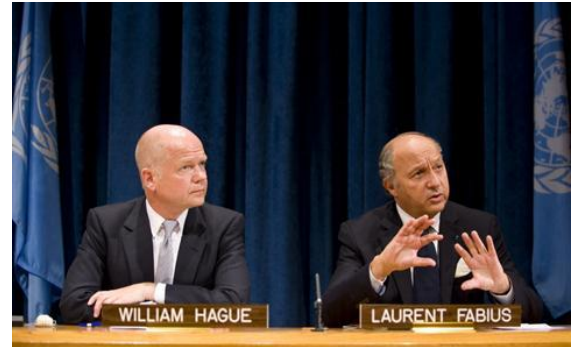
U.N. refugee chief Antonio Guterres warned the council against safe zones.

He praised Syria's neighbors for keeping their borders open to Syrians fleeing the war, and said their right to asylum "must not be jeopardized, for instance through the establishment of so-called 'safe havens' or other similar arrangements."

"Bitter experience has shown that it is rarely possible to provide effective protection and security in such areas," Guterres said.

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin strongly criticized unilateral U.S. and European Union sanctions against Syria, saying they worsened the plight of the Syrian people, and he agreed with Guterres' skepticism about safe zones.

"He made it very clear he thought that history showed that they cannot be relied on as an effective tool for protecting civilians - that we must work together in order to help alleviate and improve the humanitarian situation for the entire population of Syria," Churkin said.



China's U.N. Ambassador Li Baodong, asked about the Turkish proposal by AP, said: "I think that's not a solution. The solution is to implement a cease-fire, cessation of violence, and implementation of a political process."

"Humanitarian efforts must never be militarized," Li told the council meeting.

U.N. Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson said more than 2.5 million people - including Palestinian and Iraqi refugees - "are now in grave need of assistance and protection inside Syria," more than double the number reported in March. Guterres, the U.N. refugee chief, said as of Wednesday, 229,000 people had left Syria and registered as refugees in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

He said the U.N. humanitarian appeal for Syria seeking \$180 million is only half-funded.

Hague announced that Britain will contribute an additional 3 million pounds (\$4.7 million), to the 27 million pounds (\$42.7 million) it has already given for humanitarian aid to the displaced and to refugees. Fabius announced that France was giving 5 million Euros (\$6.27 million) in addition to the \$20 million Euros (\$25 million) it has already contributed.

[http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Aug-31/186244-turkey-](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Aug-31/186244-turkey-appeals-to-un-council-for-syria-safe-zone.ashx#ixzz256mUvuhm)

[appeals-to-un-council-for-syria-safe-zone.ashx#ixzz256mUvuhm](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Aug-31/186244-turkey-appeals-to-un-council-for-syria-safe-zone.ashx#ixzz256mUvuhm)

- **Obstacles confront hope for Syria safe zones**

British, French FM's see little hope to set up safe zones for Syrian refugees, will not rule out future action.

Major obstacles confront any bid to set up safe zones for refugees fleeing Syria's civil war, the foreign ministers of France and Britain warned Thursday, while insisting they would not rule out future action.

Britain's Foreign Secretary William Hague and France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius highlighted the military and diplomatic hurdles blocking special zones ahead of a UN Security Council meeting on Syria's humanitarian crisis.

Turkey was expected to reaffirm its call for safe zones inside Syria at the ministerial meeting.

Hague told a joint press conference with Fabius there are "considerable difficulties" with the idea.

"We are excluding no option for the future. We do not know how this crisis will develop," he said.

"It is steadily getting worse. We are ruling nothing out, we have contingency planning for a wide range of scenarios," Hague added.

"But we also have to be clear that anything like a safe zone requires military intervention and that of course is something that has to be weighed very carefully."

Hague and Fabius said the UN Security Council -- bitterly divided over the 17-month-old Syria conflict -- would be unlikely to give its crucial agreement to any military operation to protect a safe zone.

Russia and China have vetoed three resolutions which could have led to economic sanctions against President Bashar al-Assad over the conflict and totally rejected any military intervention.

Fabius echoed Hague's message. He also said "large-scale" military resources had to be found to protect refugees but said the

conflict was almost certain to worsen and "then we will have to look at the different solutions."

Turkey has said there are more than 80,000 Syrians in camps in its territory and it will not be able to cope when the number reaches 100,000.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said Wednesday he was in talks with the United Nations on sheltering refugees inside Syria.



"We expect the United Nations to step in for the protection of refugees inside Syria and if possible housing them in camps there," Davutoglu was quoted as saying by the Anatolia news agency on Wednesday.

The United Nations says there are now 221,000 refugees registered in camps in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq which

are all worried about security fallout from the influx.

Numbers fleeing Syria have grown in recent weeks as Assad's forces have stepped up their battle with opposition rebels. Syrian activists say more than 25,000 people have died in the conflict, while the United Nations puts the figure at almost 20,000.

France and Britain also announced new financial aid to UN efforts to help relief efforts inside Syria and in the camps in neighboring countries.

France will give five million euros (\$6.2 million) on top of the 20 million euros already allocated. Britain will give an extra three million pounds (\$4.75 million) on top of the 27.5 million pounds it has already contributed.

A UN appeal for \$373 million for relief operations for Syria and refugee camps outside the country has raised barely \$196 million.

The United Nations said fresh cash is urgently needed, and Fabius and Hague

said other countries had to step up financial assistance.

"We call on other nations to increase their funding -- and on Security Council members to set a strong lead," Hague said.

Fabius said much of the new French money would go to "liberated areas" inside Syria which are now in opposition control.

The UN estimates there are 1.2 million displaced people sheltering in public buildings and many more sought refuge with family and friends to escape cities where Assad's forces are battling opposition rebels.

Some 2.5 million people have been affected by the conflict and a UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimate made in June said three million people are "food insecure".

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54133>

- **Syria's air force as main target: Rebels claim downing of MiG plane**

Free Syrian Army claims shooting down fighter jet in Idlib, as a watchdog reports fresh eruption of violence across eastern suburbs of Damascus.

The opposition Free Syrian Army claimed shooting down a fighter jet in the northwest province of Idlib on Thursday, as a watchdog reported a fresh eruption of violence across eastern suburbs of the capital Damascus.

"I can confirm that a MiG (plane) was shot down this morning by our men using automatic weapons, shortly after taking off from Abu Zohur military airport in Idlib province," the FSA's Idlib province chief, Colonel Afif Mahmoud Suleiman, said.

"The two pilots who parachuted from the plane were captured," the head of the Military Council in Idlib said in claims that could not be immediately verified.

On August 13, rebels claimed the downing of a Russian-made MiG in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor and the capture of its pilot.

State media said a military plane on a training mission crashed in the east of the country after suffering a malfunction and that the pilot had ejected.

On Monday, rebels in Damascus said they had shot down an army helicopter during fierce fighting in the eastern suburb of Qaboon, saying it was to avenge the "massacre" of over 330 people in the town of Daraya blamed on regime forces.

State television said the helicopter crashed near a mosque but gave no further details.

Suleiman's claims follow reports by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights that rebels took over parts of a military airport in Idlib overnight, and that sounds of explosions could be heard inside the facility.

Rebels had on Wednesday said they destroyed five helicopters at a military airport between the northern cities of Aleppo and Idlib, but state media rejected the claims and said no material damage had been caused.

Elsewhere in Idlib on Thursday, the Britain-based Observatory reported fierce shelling on the village of Kfar Nabal, which came under a fierce army bombardment earlier in the week when at least 13 civilians were killed.

In the eastern province of Deir Ezzor, rebels lobbed mortar shells at a military security headquarters in the town of Albu Kamal, the Observatory said, adding that fierce clashes also broke out near another military security headquarters in Deir Ezzor city.

In the capital, gunfire reverberated Thursday across Qaboon, according to the Syrian Revolution General Council, a network of local activists.

Another activist network, the Local Coordination Committees, said that fighting also erupted in the capital's southern Tadamun district.

In the northern city of Aleppo, the contested southern districts of Salaheddin, Saif al-Dawla and Sukari were again the scene of fierce fighting and shelling, the Observatory said.



One civilian was killed in Damascus province, while four were killed in the southern province of Daraa, and another died in Deir Ezzor province, the watchdog added.

The violence followed a bloody day in which 44 civilians were killed in Damascus province alone, according to the Observatory, which said the majority died in or around the eastern belt of the capital, where fighting has centered for the past week.

It reported a total of 128 people -- 77 civilians, 19 rebels and 32 soldiers -- killed nationwide on Wednesday.

The watchdog also reported six unidentified bodies found in the Damascus neighbourhoods of Jubar and Qadam while more casualties were suspected after heavy shelling and

shooting overnight on the eastern suburb of Zamalka.

The Observatory says that over 25,000 people have been killed since the uprising against Assad's rule broke out in March last year. The figures are impossible to verify.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54124>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Manama confident Tehran ties will improve**

Foreign ministers hold rare public meeting to discuss bilateral relations

Manama: The foreign ministers of Bahrain and Iran have held a meeting in rare public direct contact since their diplomatic relations plummeted in March last year.



The meeting between Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmad Al Khalifa and Ali Akbar Salehi in Tehran covered the agenda of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit, with both leaders stressing the significance of reinforcing the movement, enhancing its work and fulfilling the interests of the member countries, Bahrain News Agency (BNA) reported.

The meeting also covered bilateral relations and ways to improve them for the sake of both countries, the official news agency said.

In Iran, the media reported that Shaikh Khalid said that Bahrain was optimistic about relations between Manama and Tehran and that the history of their bilateral ties is well known and that they have been transparent for decades.

Shaikh Khalid reportedly said that both capitals have been able throughout the years to overcome “issues” and expressed confidence that “it will be the case this time as well”.

The Bahraini minister is heading his country’s delegation to the 16th summit of the movement.

Manama this month reinstated its ambassador its Tehran following a 17-month absence.

“The ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the Islamic Republic of Iran has returned to his work in Tehran,” Shaikh Khalifa said on his Twitter account.

The minister did not elaborate on the issue, but he added that it was “in line with other sisterly countries”.

Manama recalled its ambassador, Rashid Al Dossary, on March 15, 2011 after it accused Tehran of “blatant interference in Bahrain’s domestic affairs”.

Iran had criticised the arrival of troops from the Peninsula Shield, the military

arm of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), in Bahrain.

The Iranian stance and its criticism of the GCC states, particularly Saudi Arabia, were also rejected by the six-member council.

Tehran recalled its envoy in Manama in a tit-for-tat move a day after the Bahraini envoy was summoned home.

However, Tehran has not asked its top diplomat in Manama to resume his work in the Bahraini capital even though the embassy has remained open.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/manama-confident-tehran-ties-will-improve-1.1068071>

- **Qatar pays Egypt first instalment of \$2b grant**

Remaining funds to be paid next month

Cairo: Qatar has paid Egypt \$500 million (Dh1.8 billion), the Egyptian finance minister has said, in the first instalment of \$2 billion of financial support the Gulf country had promised to Cairo.

“\$500 million have been paid into the finance ministry’s account via the Central Bank [of Egypt],” Egypt’s official MENA news agency quoted Finance Minister Mumtaz Al Saeed as saying.

The minister said Qatar would pay the remaining funds in September, reminding that the Gulf country had also given Egypt an additional \$500 million in October last year.

Egypt, which is facing serious economic challenges, on Wednesday asked for a \$4.8 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, during a visit by director Christine Lagarde to Cairo.

The IMF, for its part, stressed the need for a reform programme to deal with the country’s economic crisis.

The meeting with Lagarde sent a “signal to investors... of a revival for the Egyptian economy”, said the minister.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/qatar-pays-egypt-first-instalment-of-2b-grant-1.1065909>

- **US charges Saudi over Guantanamo war crimes**

Prisoner Ahmad Al Darbi could face life in prison

Miami: Prosecutors in the Guantanamo war crimes tribunals have filed new terrorism charges against a Saudi prisoner accused of plotting with Al Qaida to blow up oil tankers off the coast of Yemen, the Pentagon said on Wednesday.

Ahmad Al Darbi could face life in prison if convicted on six charges that include conspiracy, aiding and abetting the hazarding of a vessel and aiding and abetting terrorism.

Al Darbi, 37, is accused of working as a weapons instructor at an Al Qaida camp in Afghanistan in the late 1990s and meeting Al Qaida leader Osama Bin Laden there. He also is charged with abetting a plot to bomb civilian tankers in the Strait of Hormuz and off the coast of Yemen from 2000 to 2002.

Specifically, he is accused of using Al Qaida money to buy a boat and GPS navigational devices and helping obtain travel documents for Al Qaida operatives.

He also is accused of abetting the plot to bomb a French oil tanker, the MV Limburg, off Yemen in 2002. The blast killed a Bulgarian crewman and dumped tens of thousands of gallons of oil into the Gulf of Aden.

“Al Darbi’s alleged crimes are serious violations of the law of war that were committed to terrorise and wreak havoc on the world economy,” Brigadier General Mark Martins, the chief prosecutor for the Guantanamo tribunals, said in a statement.

Al Darbi’s lawyer did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Wednesday.

Al Darbi, who was captured in Azerbaijan in 2002, said previously he used his boat only to carry sheep across the Strait of Hormuz.

If Al Darbi were to plead guilty and cooperate with Guantanamo prosecutors in exchange for leniency, he could be a useful witness against another prisoner facing death penalty charges stemming from Al Qaida attacks on vessels.

That prisoner, alleged Al Qaida chieftain Abd Al Rahim Al Nashiri, is accused in the plot to attack the Limburg, as well as sending suicide bombers to ram a boat full of explosives into the side of the USS Cole in the Port of Aden in 2000. The attack on the US warship killed 17 sailors.

Charges similar to those announced on Wednesday were filed against Al Darbi in 2007 and referred for trial in 2008 in the Guantanamo war crimes tribunals. A lawyer familiar with the original charges said Darbi was given \$50,000 (Dh183,647) of Al Qaida money to further the boats plot but spent a lot of it on prostitutes and drugs.

Those charges were dismissed in 2009 to give the Obama administration time to review its Guantanamo policy. President Barack Obama tried unsuccessfully to shut down the Guantanamo detention camp, which still holds 168 foreign prisoners, and move the prosecutions into US civilian courts.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/us-charges-saudi-over-guantanamo-war-crimes-1.1067858>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **5 Australian Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan**

VOA News
August 30, 2012

Five Australian soldiers have been killed in what Prime Minister Julia Gillard calls the country's "single worst day in Afghanistan."

NATO officials say a person wearing an Afghan National Army uniform shot and killed three soldiers late Wednesday at a base in southern Afghanistan.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai said the incident took place in the Surkh Rez district of Uruzgan province and that two Australian soldiers were wounded in the attack.

It was the latest in a series of incidents in which Afghans in security force uniforms have turned their guns on coalition troops. At least 15 NATO soldiers, mostly Americans, have been killed in such attacks this month. More than 45 foreign troops have been killed in such attacks this year.

Two other Australian service members died early Thursday when their helicopter crashed in Helmand province. NATO said there was no enemy activity in the area at the time of the crash, and that both incidents are under investigation.

Gillard says Australia cannot let such deaths change its strategy, and that the country remains committed to completing its mission. Australia has more than 1,500 troops in Afghanistan. It announced earlier this year that its forces will withdraw from the country in mid-2013, a year earlier than previously planned.

The latest deaths bring the number of Australian troops killed in the Afghan war to 38.

NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen tweeted Thursday, "our thoughts are with the loved ones of those killed and wounded in Afghanistan, and with the Australian people."

Karzai said acts targeting foreign forces are designed to foster distrust between Afghan forces and their international partners. He noted in a statement that

"there are foreign circles that have continually tried to impede Afghanistan from getting back on its feet."

NATO says there are several factors behind the insider attacks, including personal grievances and arguments. The coalition attributes about 25 percent of such attacks to the Taliban.

Foreign combat troops are transferring security control to Afghan forces and are scheduled to be out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

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

- **2 NATO soldiers killed as helicopter crashes in S. Afghanistan**

KABUL, Aug. 30 (Xinhua) -- Two NATO soldiers were killed Thursday morning when a military helicopter crashed in restive southern Afghanistan, the military alliance said.

Backgrounder: NATO air crashes in Afghanistan in 2012

KABUL, Aug. 30 (Xinhua) -- Two soldiers with the NATO-led coalition or International Security Assistance Force

(ISAF) were killed when a military helicopter crashed in Garmser district of restive southern Helmand province Thursday morning.

The following is the coalition's air crash incidents in Afghanistan so far in 2012.

On Aug. 28 -- An ISAF helicopter made a forced landing in eastern Logar province, leaving no casualties.

On Aug. 16 -- Seven U.S. troops, three Afghan soldiers and a local translator were killed when a Black Hawk helicopter crashed in Shah Wali Kot district of southern Kandahar province.

On Aug. 3 -- No crew members were injured when a helicopter made a forced landing in western Afghanistan.

On July 18 -- Two ISAF soldiers were injured when a helicopter went down in western Afghanistan

On June 21 -- A NATO aircraft made a forced landing in eastern Afghanistan, causing no fatalities.

On June 6 -- Two NATO soldiers were killed when a military helicopter crashed in eastern Ghazni province.

On May 28 -- A NATO helicopter crashed in eastern Wardak province, leaving two U.S. service members dead.

On May 28 -- A NATO aircraft crashed in eastern Afghanistan, causing no casualties.

On April 19 -- Four U.S. soldier lost their lives when a helicopter crashed in Garmser district of Helmand province.

On March 25 -- A NATO aircraft made a hard landing in southern Afghanistan with no casualties.

On March 16 -- Twelve Turkish soldiers with the NATO-led ISAF and four civilians on the ground were killed when an ISAF helicopter crashed in eastern part of capital city of Kabul.

On Feb. 6 -- A NATO helicopter crashed in eastern Afghanistan, no casualties.

On Jan. 19 -- Six U.S. soldiers lost their lives in a helicopter crash in Musa Qala district of Helmand province.

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

- **US-led airstrike kills 12 Afghan villagers**

Press TV

August 30, 2012

At least 12 villagers have been killed in an airstrike carried out by US-led foreign forces in Afghanistan's Ghor Province, Press TV reports.

Eight people were also wounded in the attack on Wednesday.

The US-led NATO confirmed the attack, but it claimed the airstrike targeted militants.

The attack comes ten days after another US-led airstrike killed scores of people in eastern Afghanistan.

Many civilians have lost their lives in the US-led operations in various parts of Afghanistan over the past months, with Afghans becoming increasingly outraged

at the seemingly endless number of the deadly assaults.

The issue of civilian casualties in Afghanistan is highly sensitive and has been a major source of friction between President Hamid Karzai and the United States.

Washington claims that its airstrikes target militants, but local sources say civilians have been the main victims of the attacks.

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

- **Two NATO oil tankers torched in western Afghanistan**

Press TV
August 30, 2012

At least two NATO tankers supplying foreign forces in war-torn Afghanistan with fuel have been torched by Taliban militants in the country's west.

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

The offensive removed the Taliban from power, but years into the invasion,

insecurity continue to rise across the country despite the presence of thousands of foreign troops in the war-weary nation.

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

This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistants Nebahat Tanriverdi 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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